

WPA Alabama Writers Project
ETHNICS: Social Studies
Evans, Foster, Kytte, Rogers

"EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL"

Correlated to, and in a way surpassing the earlier Jewish myths and legends, are the personal experience-stories of the Jewish immigrants who, fleeing from intolerable conditions abroad, have successfully established themselves in this country.

Highly colored with the elements of conflict ... and the events which constitute dramatic action in the course of our own lives, these achievement records, replete with stirring events, were directly that the far-away happenings that supposedly occurred centuries ago. And since the learning of our generation has become the folklore of the past, any analysis in this field should include a detailed study of the early hardships and means of accomplishment by which individual Jews have attained economic and racial security.

It is the opinion of Rabbi Benjamin G. Binschberg of Agudath Israel, Orthodox Synagogue in New York, that the personal experience-narratives of Jewish immigrants are not merely entertaining documents, but that such deliberations may sympathetically render, and to create and preserve a continuity that will speed the oscillating cycles of progress which characterize Jewish advancement.

Through the personal adventures of his own parents, the Rabbi, whose extreme youth presents a striking contrast to his venerable title, is able to reconstruct and re-analyze the scenes of his birth in the ghetto.

See Folklore, Philadelphia University, 1937, edition.

surroundings of Czarist Russia; a savage black land of unparalleled per-
secutions from which "EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL"... sister migrated in
the memorable year of 1918.

Correlated to, and in a way surplanting the ancient Rabbinic myths
and legends, are the personal experience-stories of the Jewish immigrants
who fleeing from intolerable conditions abroad, have successfully es-
tablished themselves in some phase of America's commercial, professional,
or political life.

Richly colored with the elements of conflict ... metamorphis ... and
the eventual triumph which outstanding dramatists define as the essence
of good theatre, these achievement records, replete with stirring events
of our own times, stimulate the hopes and ambitions of the younger Jews
more directly than the far-away happenings that supposedly occurred cen-
turies ago. And since the learning of one generation may become the
folklore* of the next, any analysis in this field should include a de-
tailed study of the early hardships and means of accomplishment by which
individual Jews have attained economic and racial security.

It is the opinion of Rabbi Benjamin G. Eisenburg of Agudath Israel
(Orthodox) Synagogue in Montgomery, that the personal experience-
narratives of Jewish immigrants are not merely entertaining documents,
but that such delineations when sympathetically rendered, tend to create
and preserve a continuity that will span the oscillating cycles of pro-
gress which characterize Semetic advancement.

Through the personal adventures of his own parents, the Rabbi, whose
extreme youth presents a striking contrast to his venerable title, is
able to reconstruct and re-animate the scene of his birth in the somber

*See Folklore, Encyclopaedia Britannica, 14th, Edition

surroundings of Czarist Russia; a savage bleak land of unparalleled persecutions from whence he and his parents and a younger sister migrated in the memorable year of 1918.

At that time, Russia's separate peace treaty between the German Government and the Bolsheviks had been in existence only a few months. Nicholas the 11 having been imprisoned by the new regime, was murdered in July of 1918 at *Ekerterenburg. Lenin, the blood maddened spirit of the Revolution held Russia in his inexorable grasp, and Jew and Gentile, Tartar and Slav, suffered alike in the fantastic deluge of horror that came with the downfall of the Imperial Government.

At Sleuthe in the province of Minsk, Benjamin's father, a Rabbi of the Orthodox Jewish faith, was arrested by the Bolsheviks and held in prison for an entire night while the family, unaware of his incarceration, awaited his return with indescribable anxiety. On the following morning, the Rabbi however was released from the Soviet prison to which he had been committed for unavoidably breaking a curfew ordinance forbidding any citizen to walk abroad after seven oclock in the evening.

As the Soviet rule was extremely hostile to all religions, a party of Bolsheviks entered the Synagogue at Sleuthe one day, and after threatening the Rabbi with violence, tore the sacred silver letters from the Temple Veil.

Afterward, other depravations in the province ensued. So the Rabbi, having heard of the freedom and security which every class and nationality experienced as a matter of course in America, decided to bring his family to the United States.

Obtaining permission to cross the frontier proved very difficult. But at last the little party began the journey. On going from Russia into

* Spelling varies.

Poland they were forced to endure a tedious delay of four months, until their passports could be approved. Finally the visé arrived, and they traveled from Poland into Germany, and from thence into Belgium, and on to Cherbourg France. Sailing from the latter port, they were met on their arrival in New York by representatives of the Hiask (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) and escorted to a Home maintained by the Society, where transient immigrants were hospitably received and entertained until it was agreeable for them to resume their journey.

In this instance, the Eisenburgs being wholly orthodox, were forbidden to travel, or to engage in any business or pleasure outside of their religious duties on the Sabbath. So having reached New York on Thursday, it was apparent that the family, in order to keep the Sabbatical observance, must remain with the Hiask until the following Monday.

Fortunately the strangers were so pleasantly lodged, and so courteously welcomed that the days passed very happily in an atmosphere where every conceivable attention had been provided. There was a library in the House, and a small auditorium where lectures and plays were sometimes presented. The institution even had its own Synagogue, located on the top floor, so that the guests would not be obliged to venture out into an unknown city to attend divine services. In fact there was no omission, or lack of any feature that might serve the happiness and well being of the immigrants who were beginning a new life in the New World.

On Monday, when the Eisenburgs were leaving the Hiask for their destination in St. Paul Minnisota, they were presented with a farewell gift of ten dollars, and the cordial good wishes of the Society's officials. Thus fortified they were ready to complete the journey they had begun so many months before.

In St. Paul, they were met by Mrs Eisenburg's brother, George Glickman, who had sent them the money with which to make the trip. It was for this uncle that Rabbi George G. Eisenburg of Agudath Israel Synagogue in Montgomery was named. From her brother too, Mrs Eisenburg and her husband had received their first glowing accounts of America's way of life. And now that they were all actually together, Mr. Glickman at once showing them the little oddities, and countless phenomena that foreigners in the United States find so engrossing.

Accordingly the next few weeks in St. Paul were spent riding on street-cars, attending movies and recreation centers, and consuming a prodigious quantity of hot-dogs and ice-cream cones. Little Benjamin was particularly fascinated by the torrents of water that could be induced to flow so easily from the bathroom faucets, and by the electric lights which he was able to flash off and on at will. America was indeed a great country. And Uncle George, who had been the means of bringing his people to this marvelous place, was a great and good man.

When the Eisenburg family left St. Paul to make their home in Chicago, the idea of America's beneficence accompanied them.

In Russia, the army, the navy, the diplomatic service, the universities, and consequently the professions, were forbidden to the Jew. Only the trades were open to them, and even those who grew rich were forced to live - if allowed to live at all - in restricted pales of settlement. In theatres they sat apart ... many restaurants would not serve Jews And there was always the dread of a pogrom!

But America was different! In the United States Jews were people ... some of them good ... some of them bad. But none were pilloried because they were Jews.

In this haven of security they could attend universities ... they could be lawyers ... doctors ... soldiers ... professors They could live where any one else lived ... do what any one else did! They could love America too, with a devotion that transcended the jingoism of many so called patriots, who having known no other country, had no vantage ground of comparison from which they viewed this land of liberty .. fellowship ... and "equal opportunities for all."

And if at the beginning of their induction into American citizenship, Chicago appeared to her alien children as a stultifying, unaccountable, yet withal wonderful city in which to terminate their wanderings, the Eisenburgs were not long in adapting themselves to the novel circumstances of their environment.

One of the many Orthodox Synagogues in Chicago engaged the services of the Rabbi. His wife discovered friends with whom she could discuss the household problems and exchange reminiscences. While Benjamin and his sister Sylvia were soon absorbed in the various activities of the American schools.

In addition to his classes in the public schools of Chicago, Benjamin studied in a Hebrew school at night. Later when he decided that he too - like his father - would become a Rabbi, he graduated from a Hebrew Theological Seminary, and is now at the Agudath Israel Synagogue in Montgomery.

A profound student, and a gentleman of perceptible polish and savoir-faire, Rabbi Eisenburg has become, during his comparatively short stay in ~~Montgomery~~ Montgomery, a potent spiritual and intellectual force.

Interested in all worth-while movements, he has been of incalculable assistance in the social-ethnic study of Montgomery's foreign born Jews,

and his graciously accorded interviews have clarified many of the subjects listed in the ethnic survey's Manuel.

With seventy percent of his congregation born in Poland, Lithuania, Russia, Galicia, or Rumania, the Rabbi is necessarily well informed in regard to European backgrounds; ways of living; causes of immigration; social life; customs and folklore.

Founded in 1902, when the Orthodox Jews in Montgomery numbered only ten, the congregation of Agudath Israel Synagogue now has more than one hundred members who support numerous philanthropical and social organizations, including a cultural and social club called "Philo", that is limited to young men between the ages of twenty two and thirty; a junior Zionist organization known as "Masada," for those from eighteen to twenty one; and a young Judea for the groups between sixteen and eighteen.

The women in the congregation take an active part in the Ladies Hebrew Society; a Church Auxillary; the Hadassa (for older women); and a Business and Professional Club for the younger set.

There is no falling away from attendance of the Synagogue services by the younger generation. There is however a decided loss of interest in ritual and dogma, a result attributed directly to the Jewish inability (for economic reasons) to keep the old Mosiac laws governing the Sabbath.

No foreign language press is published in Montgomery. But a number of the Rabbi's congregation read and subscribe to the Morning Journal (Yiddish) from New York. In Yiddish also, are the songs similar to the petite chansons of the French, that constitute the main body of Jewish folk music.

Hebric folklore is drawn chiefly from the great Rabbis; from Talmudic and Medieval stores; and the Chasidic Rabbis.

But the fact remains, as the Rabbi has repeatedly emphasised, that the stories which are told and re-told to Jewish children are those derived from the personal experiences of their parents.

He believes therefore, that the personal experience-narratives that are being collected through the ethnic study of Montgomery's foreign born Jews, will bring the present, as well as future generations to a better understanding of the Semetic race.

And from a true understanding, tolerance, esteem, and affection will inevitably flower.

Isaac Johnson,
Happy Hill Community,
near Chatom, Ala.

Ethnic

Jack Kytle,
Editorial Department.

ISAAC JOHNSON: CAJAN TURPENTINER

There is a desolate stretch of gullied, sandy land on the western banks of the Tombigbee River, in Alabama's southwestern corner. The land is poor, covered by cutover pine timber and scrub oaks. Raw gashes, with tin turpentine cups nailed beneath them, are on all the pines; but the resin drains sluggishly. The trees are too small to produce a more steady flow.

Threading through the region are dim logging roads, neglected for years, and filled with stump ends and brush. They are flanked by forests inhabited by razorback hogs, wild turkeys, deer, and other game. And far back from the roads, in isolated places and sometimes as many as ten miles apart, are squat, weathered huts that house a people of unknown racial origin.

This is the land known to Alabamians as the "Cajan Country." Here for more than a hundred years the dark, solemn men, women and children have existed on what they earned from turpentine and lumbering. Now, with these resources almost gone, many of them admit that they are facing an uncertain future.

The Cajan houses never have more than three rooms, and most of them are either one or two-room structures. The windows have no glass panes, no screens. Plain pine boards nailed to hinges keep out the winter winds, and in summer, flies swarm through them unmolested.

Many of the Cajans have withdrawn so completely into isolation that they are unable, or unwilling to obtain outside aid. Their means of earning a livelihood have become almost non-existent and they live in bitter poverty. But there are others who struggle to better their

condition, and who are unwilling to admit that the future is without hope. Isaac Johnson is that kind of man.

He is a wiry Cajan, nervous of movement. In his early thirties, he has lived in Washington County all of his life. Since he can remember, he has worked in turpentine and lumber. His father was a turpentine and lumber worker before him, although the father sometimes managed to pay all his debts and still have some money left, but this Isaac says he has not been able to do. The father managed even to buy forty acres of land; but trees were larger and more plentiful then, and prices were better.

Johnson and his family of three live in an unpainted pineboard cabin of three rooms in a community called "Happy Hill." Like several others of his race, he married a white woman, and they have two children; a girl twelve years old, and a baby boy. Johnson is proud of his people, claiming good Spanish and Indian blood.

He stood surveying his land with solemn eyes, his dark head bare and erect. Ditches pierced the sandy earth between the slim pines. The land looked as though it had never been turned by a plow, but Isaac Johnson said: "Maybe I can a-grow something here; I theenk it might make corn; yes, and some cotton."

He turned as he stood in the weed-flanked trail and looked back upon his cabin, some fifty yards away. "See," he said, "I have jus' built her. She's a purty house, I theenk; better anyway, than the one we moved out of about three miles over yonder. She still needs steps and a ceiling. Maybe I can a-get to that later on."

The cabin stood, stark in yellow newness, among the small pines, some of whose branches brushed the roof. All of the windows were without panes. The weeds and brush had not yet been cleared from the yard, although Johnson explained that he would get to the task later. A large

circular block of pine, apparently sawed from the stump of a tree, was placed before the front door to serve as a temporary step.

Johnson walked with his visitor up the newly beaten trail, and together they entered the cabin. In what he called the front room was an iron-post bed, better than those usually found in Cajan houses, and a somewhat battered dresser. A rag rug, *gay* in its red and blue coloring, was on the floor in the center of the room. The white woman he married sat on the edge of the bed, her baby cuddling at her large breasts. She said loyally: "One good thing about this country; it may be lonely, but we never have to worry about being robbed, as do you people in Birmingham. We never have had anything stolen from us out here, and even when I am alone, I never bother to lock a door."

She shifted the baby to her knee and bounced him until he laughed gleefully. "Of course, our place isn't pretty now," she smitted, "but we will improve it as we go along. I teach over at the Happy Hill Cajan school, you know, and I have very little time now to tidy things up. I just have to leave a girl here with the baby, working haphazardly about the house. You see, I have not even had the time to hang my pictures."

Johnson led the way from the front room into the kitchen, where a squat wood stove stood in one corner. In the center of the room was a long pine table upon which was heaped a small cluster of commodities. These included salt pork, lard, salt, a paper sack filled with flour, and another with corn meal. He explained that they ate only the simplest things, "Because, you see, I am the cook; and I can't a-cook much. My wife, she too tired for anything when she gets done with the kids up there in the school."

The visitor was not taken into the other room, but a glance through the open door revealed only odds and ends of furniture. These included

a chair bottomed with calfskin, and a washstand. Several pictures yet to be hung were on the floor, leaning against the rough walls.

Returning to the bedroom, Johnson drew up chairs about the large open fireplace, in which burned a blaze made of pine knots. He talked then about the turpentine business. "It's a-no good," he explained. "It hasn't been for a long time. A man, he can't a-live on fourteen cents a day, and that is all the turpentine brings a gallon. Rosin, it brings only 'bout four cents a pound.

"One time there was a-money plenty to be made in these woods. Some people got lots of it. But now the trees, they are jus' too little. It will take years 'fore they grow up to be any good again."

"I used to get some work in the sawmills 'bout here, but mos' of them have a-closed down now. It's got to where there's no work for anybody. I sometimes walk all the day around to my turpentine cups, but it's awful to fin' such a little bit of rosin. It makes me theenk that we're a-jus' wasting our time fooling around with it.

"I theenk maybe some big industry should a-come down in here, even if I don't know what it would be. So mahy of our people could be helped that way. Something's got to come, or else they must go away somewhere. But they're all like me, I guess. I was a-born on this place; I helped my father here, and it would be a bad thing to leave. I don't think any of us will a-have to leave. Something's bound to come along.

"We've been lucky in a way, me and my family. When my wife's teaching, we get along as well as mos' anybody. That gives us better'n twenty dollars a month. I jus' don't know what i'd a-done without her."

Lucille Johnson glanced at her husband, drawing the baby closer. She smiled a little, saying: "We never suffered for anything, and we've been together, more than twelve years."

She is a sturdy woman, short and a little plump. Her eyes are brown

and frank, her hair dark and done up in a knot at the back of her head. Fourteen years ago she came to Washington County from her home in Bessemer, Alabama, to teach in the Cajan schools. And teaching here, she fell in love with Isaac Johnson, "Because he was the most considerate and most lovable man I had ever known." They were married, and she said proudly: "We agree on about everything; we never have any quarrels." She glanced again at her husband, brushing strands of hair away from her face with her free hand, and he nodded solemn agreement.

Isaac and Lucille Johnson have never minded the antagonistic attitude of some people living in Washington County who oppose the marriage of white and Cajan. In this county, Cajans are classed as "colored people," and a great deal of concern has been aroused by the problem of intermarriage, which is by no means rare. The Johnsons agree: "Our marriage is our own business. So long as we are happy together, why should it concern anyone else?"

Their daughter, Norma, attends the Happy Hill Cajan school, where she is in the fifth grade. The school has only seven grades, and after she finishes, the Johnsons hope to send her to high school; perhaps to college. They realize that she can never attend high school in Washington County, where anyone with a trace of Cajan blood is forbidden to enter the white schools; but they have made plans to complete her education, even if she is forced to attend school outside of Alabama.

She is a ~~sky~~ girl, large for her age. Her features are like those of her mother, but her eyes and hair are a shade darker. She hopes some day to study music although there is not a piano in her community. She has no means even of obtaining the latest sheet music, because Cajans seldom venture into town, and they never have the money to buy anything except necessities. But she hums the few religious hymns and spirituals she has learned.

Isaac Johnson, like nearly every other Cajan, has only a limited education. He can read, and he says that he can do fairly well at the task of writing a letter; but he admits that most of his learning has come from his wife. She is a graduate of Jacksonville State Teachers' College, and she taught him to write after they were married. He says that he wishes he knew more, and for that reason he is anxious for his children to have an education.

"What we need here," he said in his drawling tone, "is a high school for my people. If we could a-get the high school, then we might some day have a college. The Negroes have their college up at Tuskegee. Why can't we have one?"

"Why, these kids over in my wife's school are bright as they can be. They learn everything fast. Jus' think what it would a-mean to them if they knew they could keep learning past the seventh grade. How would you feel if you knew the State wouldn't a-give you a chance to get any further?"

He shook his head slowly, looking into the fire, but his wife said: "I have children over there who would grow into fine men and women if they were given a better chance. There is no thing lazy about them, no matter what the people over in town (Chatom) say. They want to learn. I tell you, when children come to school without any breakfast, and many times without enough clothing to keep them warm, they have something about them that you won't find in every child.

"You were over at the school to see those children," she said to the visitor. "You saw children who were without shoes, and it was cold this morning. You also saw that some of the children's eyes are very bad; that they need glasses badly." She paused a moment, looking into the fire. Then she said: "I wish I had enough money to take all of them to Mobile and buy them some glasses. It must be terrible with your eyes hurting you all of the time. Isn't it asking a little too much to expect

cold and hungry children to learn a great deal!

"Of course, we are always planning something better for them, but it seems that we never have enough money. We are talking about setting up a lunch counter, to be run on something like a cooperative plan. I don't know whether it will work, but it's worth trying. Anything would be better than watching them stand about the grounds at lunch time without any lunch to eat."

Isaac Johnson, like his wife, resents the claims of some that his people are shiftless, and unwilling to help themselves. "You will find lazy people everywhere," he said, "and you will find some smart people, too. I don't a-believe anybody could call me lazy. Since I was a boy, I have been up before daylight, and I never stop a-working until it is after dark."

He flung a glance at his wife. She smiled and nodded.

Neither Isaac nor his wife take any active interest in either local or national politics. They do not vote, and as Isaac explains: "I guess the people who do the electing know what they are a-doing; anyway, I hope they do. I think that Mr. Roosevelt had done his very best to help the poor class of people, but one man can't a-do everything. We need hundreds like him, and we need some of them right a-down here in Washington County."

"Why, I tell you, if people knew how some of us have to live, they'd be dumbfounded. There are lots of Cajans who'd a-get out and do something if they had somebody to set them on their feet just once. But you know it's hard to do anything when you are kept busy trying to jus' get up something to eat. If these woods weren't full of wild game, lots of Cajans would be hungrier than they are. But it won't take no time a-down here to get a 'possum, rabbit, or squirrel. And now and then, we get a wild turkey."

Johnson says that he has often been without funds, but that he has never asked anyone for help. "I have always a-managed to get along some way or other," he said, "and I guess I can a-keep getting along that way. I found out a long time ago that most people won't a-help you unless they are a-going to get something out of it. But I guess that's jus' people's way. I don't a-blame them none for it. I'm not the kind that runs about asking favors.

"I tell you, when things was so bad back in 1932, I'd a-get up in the mornings, and I swear I didn't know where I was a-going to get something to eat for the day. But I got it, jus' the same. I guess life's like that; you got to scratch for everything."

Isaac believes in religion, which is not true of many Cajans, but he says: "I've never a-seen much good in setting up in church and listening to a man talk. And anyway, I'd rather stay at home on Sundays. It's so far to the churches that we don't get a chance to go much, but my wife always says that she would like to go every Sunday. I guess that she would, because she used to go before she came off a-down here. The way I see it, if a man a-lives right all the time and does the best he can, he'll a-get to Heaven right along with the church-going people."

It was getting late now, and the visitor rose from his chair to leave. In the kitchen, there was a scund of meat frying, and the pungent odor had come into the front room. The daughter, Norma, was cooking supper. Without rising from his chair, Isaac said: "You can't a-leave without eating. Stay with us and get something under your ribs before you go." Mrs. Johnson seconded the invitation, apologizing: "You won't find much to eat, but you are welcome to anything that we have."

When the visitor explained that he had to get back on the highway before good darkness, Isaac followed him to the door where a circular block of pine served as a step. He said: "When you come back maybe

I'll a-have my house done. I want to coil her and clean up the yards good. I theenk then she'll be as good as anybody could want."

His tall figure was framed in the darkening doorway. He did not respond to a farewell wave of the hand, but he smiled a little.

11/29/38

S.J.

old song

Copy 5

There were many verses, and then another song:

Lord, I want to be ready,

"LIKE LOST CHILDREN"

Yes, I want to be ready,

I want to be ready to suffer

They stood timid and embarrassed in a raggedly ~~kept~~

Just as my Savior did--

line. There were five boys and seven girls, their ages ~~aging~~

As they sang, their faces were expressionless, unless sud-
ranging all the way from six to twelve. It was November, and frost
had fallen that morning, but only two of the children were wearing
shoes. Some of the little girls had no coats, only thin cotton
dresses. The boys were dressed in overalls that were badly faded,
and often without ^{braces} gaffuses. This latter condition necessitated the
use of twine to prevent the overalls from falling about their
ankles.

The two visitors sat on a bench in the school room
facing the children, but they looked only at the teacher, who was
clothed little better than they. She held a bright yellow ruler in
her hand, using it as an instrument to maintain singing rhythm that
was never maintained. She turned to her small charges.

"Can you sing for the people?"

They hesitated a moment, uncertain and ill at ease.

Then the tiny girl with a faded blue ribbon knotted about her hair
began this song:

Oh, if you look for me

And I'm not there,

You'll know I'm climbing

A stardust stair--

There were many verses, and then another song:

Lord, I want to be ready,

Yes, I want to be ready,

I want to be ready to suffer

Just as my Savior did--

As they sang, their faces were expressionless, unless sadness, blank behind hollow eyes, is an expression. They lifted their eyes from the floor only when they looked at their teacher; for she was one of their own kind. Already they had learned that the average white comes to them only to pity and stare in open-mouthed wonder. Already, many of them had heard the thrust, "Dirty Cajan!"

The Tombigbee River, with its high, white cliffs glistening in the sunlight, flows majestically across the pine-wrapped lowlands of Washington County, in Alabama's southwestern corner. Branching from its banks to the west is wild country, in which the fleeting glimpse of a racing deer is not uncommon. This country is blanketed by scrub pine and sparse oak. The land is poor and pierced by gullies, a desolate stretch of forest and white sand. Now and then a dim logging road, that is more trail than road, is encountered with disarming suddenness. And squatting out in the pine woods at the sides of these trails, often several miles apart, are the dilapidated shanties that house the people known as Cajans.

The name is not applied correctly. They are not related to the Cajans of Louisiana. The Louisiana Cajan can trace his ancestry

through a proud strain, but this is not true of the Alabama people. And in that truth lies their misfortune and a hundred years of oppression. The Alabama Cajan, himself, cannot trace his ancestry beyond a few ~~immediate~~ family generations.

Where one Cajan will say that he descended from a South Carolinian who came into Alabama and married a Creek Indian woman, another will relate that it was really a Mexican who married a French woman of ~~some~~ noble lineage. Still another will insist that the Cajans descended from Gulf Coast pirates who intermarried with Indian women. But the rural white people of Washington County say with unconcealed scorn: "Their ancestors don't worry us none. Why, they're niggers and troublemakers."

The Cajan denies Negro blood with a surprising virulence. But in justice to the Negro, it can be recorded that he disclaims the Cajan with equal vehemence. And certainly, the Alabama rural Negro's home, even to that of the most ignorant cropper, is cleaner and more comfortable than that of the average Cajan.

There are, of course, exceptions; but these exceptions usually will be found in instances where ~~the~~ Cajan and white have intermarried. A striking characteristic of white-Cajan marriage lies in the fact that the white (intelligent and educated) either lifts his, or her, mate, or else is drawn downward to a surprising depth.

But regardless of which direction the match turns, the Cajan woman follows her chosen man with dog-like devotion. The Cajan husband also is good to his wife. And, when married legally,

Insert Page 4 Cajans after paragraph ending "some dreadful calamity--"

they do not often join the unwedded members of their kind in a flagrant violation of But even in marriage (more of which is being urged among the Cajans) there can ~~be~~ be deplorable conditions. The visitors paused at one hut, squatting far off to itself, in the Happy Hill Community. On the slanting back porch were two women, a baby playing in ~~the~~ filth, and a girl who could not have been more than eleven or twelve years old. Nodding toward the latter, one of the visitors asked: "Why isn't the little girl in school?"

For a moment the two grown women looked coldly at the questioner, then they exchanged glances and giggled. "That-a-girl," they said finally in high glee, "is a married 'oman." The child only stared with hollow eyes, drawing her bare feet under the folds of a bright red dress.

With faces bearded and toughened as leather, they talk in a monotone that seems never to change. Only their eyes betray their feelings. And when they do not like a person, the eyes can be fully cold.

The scorn of the white man has caused the Cajan to withdraw into his shell of isolation. It is something of a self-imposed exile, and, more than any other single factor, has wrecked the Cajan's chances to better his condition. A tourist traveling by public highway would never know of his existence. His cabins are never on the main roads. He selects the most inaccessible spots ~~available to him~~ and all he asks is that the white man stay away.

icy
icy
cold

they do not often join the unwedded members of their kind in a flagrant violation of moral standards. Even as they respect the conjure doctor, they respect the marriage vow. They believe that violation would bring some dreadful calamity.

Insert

Until she shows her teeth, the average Cajan woman is pretty in an exotic way. Her features are finely chiseled, and her limbs well rounded. Some of them ^{women} wear red or yellow scarves wound tightly about their hair, and the great majority make a glittering display of cheap jewelry.

the Cajan woman

But ~~she~~ is handicapped by teeth that are stained and often broken, a condition that seems characteristic of the people as a whole.

The men are rarely handsome, and most of them never smile. With faces bearded and toughened as leather, they talk in a monotone that seems never to change. Only their eyes betray their feelings. And when they do not like a person, the eyes can be icily cold.

The scorn of the white man has caused the Cajan to withdraw into his shell of isolation. It is something of a self-imposed exile, and, more than any other single factor, has wrecked the Cajan's chances to better his conditions. A tourist traveling by public highway would never know of his existence. His cabins are never on the main roads. He selects the most inaccessible spots ^S ~~to~~ *available to him* ^A ~~live that the mind can imagine~~; and all he asks is that the white man stay away.

-imposed

Whether this self-isolation is brought about by pride or timidity is a conjecture. Certainly, some of the Cajans evidence a superb pride that seems tragic in their bare hovels. Others will not face a stranger, retreating into the woods at his approach.

While some appear outwardly appreciative of the efforts of white social workers to help them, others are openly resentful. One woman, living at the end of a trail so rough that her shanty could be reached only by walking, told social workers: "We need nothing; let us alone!" Investigation showed that she had been begging among her Cajan neighbors to feed herself and her "nine head" of fatherless children.

This article is in no way concerned with the controversy on Cajan ancestry, but one striking fact should be noted. In a single family one may find a child with black, kinky hair and black eyes; another with deep blue eyes and hair the color of molasses. And both parents may be decidedly dark complexioned.

Some have attempted to explain this conflict in types by pointing to the loose moral standard prevailing among the people. This standard does prevail, to an alarming extent, but there are families in which the mother is known by all the community to be unquestionably chaste. And the conflict in types is found here as elsewhere.

The moral standard of the Cajans is a ~~most~~ ^g difficult and complex problem. Their language concerning relations is completely

open. If a Cajan man is living with a woman who is not his wife, he does not attempt to conceal the fact. He seems to see no violation of the ethics of human existence. The Cajan woman feels the same, as is illustrated by a case several miles from Chatom.

We will call her Sally Reed. She is a widow with seven children, and for several months had been receiving commodities ^{from} ~~the welfare department~~. These commodities were stopped suddenly, so she ventured into town for an explanation. "Why," she was told in effect, "you have been reported as having had an illegitimate child." She puzzled a moment, and then replied: "That's a-no reason. Why, Mees, five of mine been thees way!"

Such a standard has brought its inevitable curse upon the Cajans, and it will not be stamped out easily. Some of them do not know what is wrong. At one cabin a mother stood in the doorway, her hand against her throat. "It been so bad," she confided, "Like boils or sumpin'." And she did not realize why her little blind baby had died.

Such stories are not beautiful to write; but neither are they beautiful to see. It was not beautiful to see the tiny boy with brown eyes and curly hair trying to stand on legs thin as matchsticks, a glub foot at the end of one of them. His mother said: "He'll pick up some weight, wait an' see." It was not beautiful to see the little girl groping for her mother's dress--groping because she was blind.

In these hovels that breed disease, there is only filth and human misery. All Cajan huts are similar, but some are better equipped

There were many voices, and then another sang:

Lord, I want to be ready,

Lord, I want to be ready,

"LIKE LOST CHILDREN"

I want to be ready to suffer

Just as my Savior did--

They stood timid and embarrassed in a ragged line.

There were five boys and seven girls, their ages ranging all the way from six to twelve. It was November, and frost had fallen that morning, but only two of the children were wearing shoes. Some of the little girls had no coats, only thin cotton dresses. The boys were dressed in overalls that were badly faded, and ~~often~~ ^{some} without braces. This latter condition necessitated the use of twine to prevent the overalls from falling about their ankles.

The two visitors sat on a bench in the school room facing the children, but they looked only at the teacher, who was clothed little better than they. She held a bright yellow ruler in her hand, using it as an instrument to maintain singing rhythm that was never maintained. She turned to her small charges.

"Can you sing for the people?"

They hesitated for a moment, uncertain and ill at ease. Then the tiny girl with a faded blue ribbon knotted about her hair began this song:

Oh, if you look for me

And I'm not there

You'll know I'm climbing

A stardust stair--

There were many verses, and then another song:

Lord, I want to be ready,

Yes, I want to be ready,

I want to be ready to suffer

Just as my Savior did--

As they sang, their faces were expressionless, unless sadness, blank behind hollow eyes, is an expression. They lifted their eyes from the floor only when they looked at their teacher; for she was one of their own kind. Already they had learned that the average white comes to them only to pity and stare in open-mouthed wonder. Already, many of them had heard the thrust, "Dirty Cajan!"

The Tombigbee River, with its high, white cliffs glistening in the sunlight, flows majestically across the pine-wrapped lowlands of Washington County, in Alabama's southwestern corner. Branching from its banks to the west is wild country, in which the fleeting glimpse of a racing deer is not uncommon. This country is blanketed by scrub pine and sparse oak. The land is poor and pierced by gullies, a desolate stretch of forest and white sand. Now and then a dim logging road, often more trail than road, is encountered with disarming suddenness. And squatting out in the pine woods at the sides of these trails, often several miles apart, are the dilapidated shanties that house the people known to Alabamians as Cajans.

The name is not applied correctly. They are not related to the Cajans of Louisiana. The Louisiana Cajan can trace his ancestry through a proud strain, but this is not true of the Alabama people. And

in that truth lies their misfortune and a hundred years of oppression. The Alabama Cajan, ~~himself~~ cannot trace his ancestry beyond a few generations.

Where one Cajan will say that he descended from a South Carolinian who came into Alabama and married a Creek Indian woman, another will relate that it was really a Mexican who married a French woman of noble lineage. Still another will insist that the Cajans descended from Gulf Coast pirates who intermarried with Indian women. But the rural white people of Washington County say with unconcealed scorn: "Their ancestors don't worry us none. Why, they're niggers and trouble-makers."

The Cajan denies Negro blood with a surprising virulence. But in justice to the Negro, it can be recorded that he disclaims the Cajan with equal vehemence. And certainly, the Alabama rural Negro's home, even to that of the most ignorant cropper, is cleaner and more comfortable than that of the average Cajan.

There are, of course, exceptions; but these exceptions usually ~~will be found~~ occur in instances where Cajan and white have intermarried. A striking characteristic of white-Cajan marriage lies in the fact that the white (intelligent and educated) either lifts his, or her, mate, or else is drawn downward to a surprising depth.

But regardless of which direction the match turns, the Cajan woman follows her chosen man with a dog-like devotion. The Cajan husband also is good to his wife. And, when married legally, they do not often join the unwedded members of their kind in a flagrant violation of moral standards. Even as they respect the conjure doctor, they

respect the marriage vow. They believe that violation would bring some dreadful calamity.

But even in marriage (more of which is being urged among the Cajans) there can be deplorable conditions. The visitors paused at one hut, squatting far off to itself in the Happy Hill Community. On the slanting back porch were two women, a baby playing in filth, and a girl who could not have been more than eleven or twelve years old. Nodding toward the latter, one of the visitors asked: "Why isn't the little girl in school?"

For a moment the two grown women looked at the questioner coldly, then they exchanged glances and giggled. "That-a-girl," they said finally in high glee, "is a married 'oman." The child only stared with hollow eyes, drawing her bare feet under the folds of a bright red dress.

Until she shows her teeth, the average Cajan woman is pretty in an exotic way. Her features are finely chiseled, and her limbs well rounded. Some of the women wear red or yellow scarves wound tightly about their hair, and the great majority make a glittering display of cheap jewelry. But the Cajan woman is handicapped by teeth that are stained and often broken, a condition that seems characteristic of the people as a whole.

The men are rarely handsome, and most of them never smile. With faces bearded and toughened as leather, they talk in a monotone that seems never to change. Only their eyes betray their feelings. And when they do not like a person, the eyes can be icily cold.

The scorn of the white man has caused the Cajans, numbering some 12,000, to withdraw into their shell of isolation. It is something

of a self-imposed exile, and, more than any other ^{one} ~~single~~ factor, has wrecked the Cajan's chances to better his condition. A tourist traveling by public highway would never know of his existence. His cabins are never on the main roads. He selects the most inaccessible spots available ~~to him~~, and all he asks is that the white man stay away. Whether this self-imposed isolation is brought about by pride or timidity is a conjecture. Certainly, some of the Cajans evidence a superb pride that seems tragic in their bare hovels. Others will not face a stranger, retreating into the woods at his approach.

While some appear outwardly appreciative of the ^{helpful} efforts of white social workers to help them, others are openly resentful. One woman, living at the end of a trail so rough that her shanty could be reached only by walking, told social workers: "We need nothing; let us alone!" Investigation showed that she had been begging among her Cajan neighbors to feed herself and her "nine head" of fatherless children.

This article is in no way concerned with the controversy on Cajan ancestry, but one striking fact should be noted. In a single family one may find a child with black, kinky hair and black eyes; another with deep blue eyes and hair the color of molasses. And both parents may be decidedly dark ~~complexioned~~. - skinned ☉

Some have attempted to explain this conflict in types by pointing to the loose moral standard prevailing among the people. This standard does prevail, to an alarming extent, but there are families in which the mother is known by all the community to be unquestionably chaste. And the conflict in types is found here as elsewhere.

The moral standard of the Cajans is a difficult and complex

problem. Their language concerning relations is completely open. If a Cajan man is living with a woman who is not his wife, he does not attempt to conceal the fact. He seems to see no violation of the ethics of human existence. The Cajan woman feels the same, as is illustrated by a case several miles from Chatom.

We will call her Sally Reed. She is a widow with seven children, and for several months had been receiving commodities from the Welfare Department. ^{Arrival of} These commodities ^{was stopped} ~~were stopped~~ suddenly, so she ventured into town for an explanation. "Why," she was told in effect, "you have been reported as having had an illegitimate child." She puzzled a moment, and then replied: "That's a-no reason. Why, Mees, five of mine have been thees way!"

Such a standard has brought its inevitable curse upon the Cajans, and it will not be stamped out easily. Some of them do not know what is wrong. At one cabin a mother stood in the doorway, her hand against her throat. "It been so bad," she confided, "Like boils or sumpin'." And she did not realize why her blind baby had died.

Such stories are not beautiful to write; but neither are they beautiful to see. It was not beautiful to see the tiny boy with brown eyes and curly hair trying to stand on legs thin as matchsticks, a club foot at the end of one of them. His mother said: "He'll pick up some weight, wait an' see." It was not beautiful to see the little girl groping for her mother's dress--groping because she was blind.

In these hovels that breed disease, there is only filth and human misery. All Cajan huts are similar, but some are better equipped than others. Usually, there are but two rooms. The cooking is done in

one of these, while the entire family sleeps in the other; and sometimes these families may consist of ten persons. At one place there was only one room used for sleeping, covered by a leaky roof. The stove was on a rudely built porch outside, open to the weather.

The Cajan's furniture consists of odds and ends. Most of the beds and chairs are homemade, and the average Cajan's craftsmanship is crude. There may be a picture or so portraying some Biblical scene, although the average Cajan is not a religious person. A broken piece of mirror may adorn the wall, although one grizzled Cajan confided: "I ain't a-seen myself in years an' years." And he was a fortunate man, indeed.

Flies swarm unnoticed. None of the huts have screens, only pine boards nailed to hinges. Sometimes there are no doors at all, with the hut built high up from the ground to keep out "prowlin' varmints."

The Cajan has a childlike attitude about all of living that has been the despair of many desiring to help him. There are times when he appears absolutely powerless to take any sort of initiative, although he is not usually a lazy person. At a filth-laden hovel near Chatom the visitors found a mother and five children, one of whom was a baby cuddling at the breast. They were seated about a fireplace in which not an ember burned. All were barefoot and scantily clad. All were shaking with the cold. The mother whined: "We're a-jes' sittin' here freezing."

They were huddled there beside an empty fireplace "freezing" in a country where rich pine knots are to be had at one's very door! Amazed, one of the visitors asked: "Where is your husband?" and the woman said: "He's out a-back gettin' ready for a 'possum hunt." The

visitors stepped out the back door, and there beside a tiny blaze, on which he was melting lead to make buckshot, was the lean, bronzed "man of the house" who looked up from his task with hostile eyes.

Outside of the venereal diseases, the Cajan's greatest enemies are pellagra, hookworm, "sore eyes" and diphtheria. Pellagra runs rampant, with most of the adults affected. Gazing at her cracked hands, one woman said in wonder: "Strange, I ain't been frostbit."

The contributing cause to the great wave of pellagra lies in the fact that the Cajan refuses to eat anything except meat. When he can go into the woods and get game, or when he can capture one of the wild hogs that roam the countryside, he will not attempt to raise a garden. If seed are provided he will plant a plot of ground, but he invariably will allow it to run up in weeds. He has not learned to like green foodstuffs, and, except in a very few instances, he refuses to grow them.

Until only a few years ago, Cajan children did not know how to play. No games were traditional with them. They had no songs taught to them by the parents. Consequently, their games are similar to those of every school child, and their songs are more like spirituals than any other form. In singing, they sway their bodies, but they do not possess the Negro's rhythm.

On the school ground at Calvert, Mrs. R.M. Averitt, teacher, allowed the children a short recess so that the visitors could see how well they had learned to play. She said: "When I came here eight years ago they would only stand and stare at each other. They had never been taught the meaning of play, but now that they have learned, they seem

to play with more zeal and real happiness than white children.

"We are trying to teach them happy songs, but they are slow to take these up. They much prefer singing Deep Dark Sea and such morbid tunes. We want them to learn happiness instead of sorrow."

But back over the flat, pine-wrapped roads to the school at Happy Hill Community, the visitors found easily how difficult it will be to blot out sorrow. There, Mrs. Isaac Johnson, the teacher, told of two absences caused by hunger. Other children could not attend school for the reason that they did not have sufficient clothing.

The Cajan schools are fairly comfortable considering that the State must maintain a tri-racial system (white, Negro and Cajan). They are unpainted, boxlike structures with desks of many types and sizes, but they have heat and window panes. For the Cajan child who must trudge long distances to study in them, they must seem like castles when compared to home.

The great ^{at} present difficulty is keeping competent teachers. The Cajan parents will not tolerate Negro teachers, and many influential persons of Washington County object to white instructors going into the Cajan settlements. This objection has been caused by several instances of intermarriage, none of which ever ended in divorce.

Those who are interested in the welfare of these people believe that the solution to the school problem lies in worthwhile Cajan teachers. But, they ask, how will Cajan teachers be obtained when Cajans are denied admittance to State colleges? None are wealthy enough to attend northern and eastern schools.

A scattered few have managed to finish college in Alabama, but they have done so by concealing the fact that they were Cajans; they

were among the fortunates who have fair skins. But in other instances a Cajan striving for education has been asked to leave Alabama colleges.

The need for Cajan teachers appears most in relations between instructors and parents. Out of seven Cajan women interviewed by the writer of this article, only one knew the meaning of the initials, P.T.A.

While such slow (but certain) progress is being made in the schools, the churches are experiencing the most discouraging difficulties. The adult Cajan is not one to congregate, except with his own established associates. He also likes his Sunday leisure, and he does not sacrifice it easily for church. This is true especially where the preacher refers to subjects such as drinking, rowdying, and the living of men and women together out of wedlock. The churches have made valiant efforts, but even today there are adult Cajans who never heard of Jesus.

Yet, despite his irreligion, the average Cajan has a high sense of honor. He will walk miles to jail if an officer whom he likes sends him word to come in. Recently one Cajan stabbed another seriously, and was himself considerably cut up. As he lay at home in bed, he received word that a certain Mobile County officer wanted him. And without question or complaint, he arose, dressed himself, and walked seven painful miles into Citronelle.

Once he has learned to trust a person there can be no friend more loyal; but his trust comes slowly. Inherently suspicious, and by habit a solitary figure, he considers every man his enemy until extended time proves friendship.

The immense distrust evidenced toward every stranger was

shown to visitors at a Cajan shack far back in the pine country north of Citronelle. It was dark, and the only light in the cabin was furnished by a feeble blaze that splashed a sickly yellow upon the unpainted pine walls. The visitors approached in an automobile, throwing the headlights against the front of the shanty. The horn was blown several times, because it is not ethical to approach one of these houses without first giving some sort of "approach warning." The horn had not sounded a second time before a figure darted from beside the fireplace to the back of the house, vanishing from sight as if he were a ghost. And not until the visitors had alighted from the car and stated their business was the mysterious figure seen again. Then he showed himself at a darkened window, turned away slowly, and replaced his shotgun in the corner.

The Cajan's superstitions are manifold and deep-rooted. He believes devoutly in conjure. He believes in witchcraft, and the awful apparitions of the forest night that he calls "hants," or "boogers." He believes that every murdered thing, man or animal, has the power to return to life. Consequently, the Cajan murderer lives in constant dread that his victim will return in the role of avenger.

There are those who have worked among these people for years who are convinced that some improvement in their outlook on life has been made during the last ten years. Of course, there has been no improvement in living conditions; none in morals, and only a little in the eradication of disease. But there is less rowdying and savage fighting than in the old prohibition days when moonshine whiskey flowed like water at backwoods "gatherings." The Cajan at last is learning to visit without believing that the visit should culminate in a

free-for-all fight.

These visits are unlike ^{those} ~~any~~ in ~~any~~ other parts of the world. If a Cajan is invited into the home of another, he may remain a week, or he may decide to stay a month. In one instance a visitor prolonged his stay until the tubercular "man of the house" died, and then he remained on "to console and help" the widow.

On some early future day--and this statement is not made without authority--the bulk of the Cajan population will be without a means of livelihood. They know no occupation except turpentine ^{and} and lumbering. Their turpentine brings but fourteen cents a gallon. The pine forests have been cut over so many times that years will be required to grow new timber. The sawmills long since have stilled their machinery.

Perhaps old Emily Bird, direct descendant of the colorful Red Bird ~~whose exploits will be recorded in another article~~ summed up the problem of her people most completely ^{with these words};

"They are like lost children whose folks have forgotten about them."

pick up bibliography--

Insert Cajans Page 7 after paragraph ending "prowling varmints--"

than others. Usually, there is but one room. The cooking is done in one of these, while the entire family sleeps in the other, and some-
times there is a small room for the children.
The Cajan has a childlike attitude/that has been
about all of living
the despair of many desiring to help him. There are times when he
appears absolutely powerless to take any sort of initiative, al-
though he is not usually a lazy person. At a ~~filthy~~ filth-
laden hovel near Chatom the visitors found a mother and five child-
ren, one of ^{whom} ~~which~~ was a baby cuddling at the breast. They were seat-
ed about a fireplace in which not an ember burned. All were barefoot
and scantily clad. All were shaking with the cold. The mother whined:
"We're a-jes' sittin' here freezing."

They were huddled there beside an empty fireplace
"freezing" in a country where rich pine knots are to be had at one's
very door! Amazed, one of the visitors asked: "Where is your husband?,"
and the woman said: "He's out a-back gettin' ready for a 'possum hunt."
The visitors stepped out the back door, and there beside a tiny blaze,
on which he was melting lead to make buckshot, was the lean, bronzed
"man of the house" who looked up from his task with hostile eyes.

part, with most of the adults affected. Staring at her affected husband,
one woman said in wonder: "Strange, I ain't been here yet."

The contributing cause to this great wave of pellagra lies
in the fact that the Cajan refuses to eat anything except meat. When
he can go into the woods and get game, or when he can capture one of the
wild dogs that roam the countryside, he will not attempt to raise a
pig. If seed are provided he will plant a plot of ground, but he in-
variably will allow it to run up in weeds. He has no interest in the

than others. Usually, there is ^{are} but two rooms. The cooking is done in one of these, while the entire family sleeps in the other; and sometimes ~~these~~ these families may consist of ten persons. At one place there was only one ^{room} ~~house~~ used for sleeping, covered by a leaky roof. The stove was on a rudely built porch outside, open to the weather.

Furniture ~~of~~ the Cajan^s consists of odds and ends. Most of the beds and chairs are homemade, and the average Cajan's craftsmanship is crude. There may be a picture or so portraying some Biblical scene, although the Cajan is not a religious person. A broken piece of mirror may adorn the wall, although one grizzled Cajan confided: "I ain't a-seen myself in years an' years." And he was a ~~most~~ fortunate man, indeed.

Flies ~~swarm~~ swarm unnoticed. None of the huts have screens, only pine boards nailed to hinges. Sometimes there are no doors at all, with the hut built high up from the ground to keep out "prowlin' varmints."

Insert → Outside of the venereal diseases, the Cajan's greatest enemies are pellegra, hookworm, "sore eyes" and diptheria. Pellegra runs rampant, with most of the adults affected. Gazing at her cracked hands, one woman said in wonder: "Strange. I ain't been frostbit."

The contributing cause to this great wave of pellegra lies in the fact that the Cajan refuses to eat anything except meat. When he can go into the woods and get game, or when he can capture one of the wild hogs that roam the countryside, he will not attempt to raise a garden. If seed are provided he will plant a plot of ground, but he invariably will allow it to run up in woods. He has not learned to like

green foodstuffs, and, except in a very few instances, he refuses to grow them.

Until only a few years ago, Cajan children did not know how to play. No games were ~~handed down to~~ ^{traditional with} them. They had no songs taught to them by the parents. Consequently, ~~these~~ ^{their} games are similar to those of every school child, and their songs are more like spirituals than any other form. In ~~singing~~ singing, they sway their bodies, but they do not possess the Negro's rhythm.

On the school ground at Calvert, Mrs. R.M. Averitt, teacher, allowed the children a short recess so that the visitors could see how well they had learned to play. She said: "When I came here eight years ago they would only stand and stare at each other. They had never been taught the meaning of play, but now that they have learned, they seem to play with more zeal and real happiness than white children.

"We are trying to teach them happy songs, but they are slow to take these up. They much prefer singing, Deep Dark Sea and such morbid tunes. We want them to learn happiness instead of sorrow.

But back over the flat, pine-wrapped roads to the school at Happy Hill Community, the visitors found easily how difficult it will be to blot out sorrow. ~~There, Mrs. Isaac Johnson, the~~ There, Mrs. Isaac Johnson, the teacher, told ~~of~~ of two absences caused by hunger. Other children could not attend school for the reason that they did not have sufficient clothing.

The Cajan schools are fairly comfortable considering that

the State must maintain a tri-racial system (white, Negro and Cajan). They are unpainted, ~~woodlike structures~~ ^{many types and sizes} boxlike structures with desks of ~~all descriptions~~, but they have heat and window panes. For the Cajan child who must trudge long distances to study in them, they must seem like castles compared to home.

The great present difficulty is keeping competent teachers. The Cajan parents will not tolerate Negro teachers, and many influential persons of Washington County object to white instructors going into the Cajan settlements. This objection has been caused by several instances of intermarriage, none of which ever ended in divorce.

Those who are interested in the welfare of these people believe that the solution to the school problem lies in worthwhile Cajan teachers. But, they ask, how will Cajan teachers be obtained when ^{Cajans} they are denied admittance to State colleges? None are wealthy enough to attend northern and eastern schools.

A scattered few have managed to finish college in Alabama, but they have done so by concealing the fact that they were Cajans; they were among the fortunates who have fair skins. But in other instances a Cajan striving for education has been asked to leave Alabama colleges.

The need for Cajan teachers appears most in relations between instructors and parents. Out of seven Cajan women interviewed by the writer of this article, only one knew the meaning of the initials P-T.A.

While such slow (but certain) progress is being made in the schools, the churches are experiencing the most discouraging

Insert Cajans Page 10 after paragraph ending "time proves
friendship--"

This,
The immense distrust evidenced toward every stran-
ger was shown ~~on a visit to~~ ^{to a visitor to} a Cajan house far back in the pine
country north of Citronelle. It was dark, and the only light in
the cabin was furnished by a feeble blaze in the fireplace ~~that~~
splashed a sickly yellow upon the ^{unpainted} pine walls. The visitors approach-
ed in an automobile, throwing the headlights against the front of
the shanty. The horn was blown several times, because it is not
ethical to approach one of these houses without first giving some
sort of "approach warning." ~~and~~ The horn had not sounded a second
time before a figure darted from beside the fireplace to the back
of the house, vanishing from sight as if he were a ghost. And not
until the visitors ^{had} alighted from the car and stated their business
was the mysterious figure seen again. Then he showed himself at a
darkened window, turned away slowly, and replaced his shotgun in the
corner.

Insert Page 10 Cajans after paragraph ending "in the role of avenger--"

There are those who have worked among these people for years who are convinced that some improvement in their outlook on life has been made during the last ten years. Of course, there has been no improvement in living conditions; none in morals, and only little in the eradication of disease. But there is less rowdying and savage fighting than in the old prohibition days when moonshine whisky flowed like water at backwoods "gatherings." The Cajan at last is learning to visit without believing that the visit should culminate in a free-for-all fight.

These visits are unlike any in any ^{other} part of the world. If a Cajan is invited into the home of another, he may remain a week, or he may decide to stay about for a month. In one instance, a visitor prolonged his stay until the tubercular "man of the house" died, ^{and} then he remained on "to console and help" the widow.

difficulties. The adult Cajan is not one to congregate, except with his own established associates. He also likes his Sunday leisure, and he does not sacrifice it easily for church. This is true especially where the preacher ^{refers to} ~~makes mention of~~ subjects such as drinking, rowdying, and the living of men and women out of wedlock. The churches have made valiant efforts, but even today there are adult Cajans who never heard of Jesus.

Yet, despite his irreligion, the average Cajan has a high sense of honor. He will walk miles to jail if an officer whom he likes sends him word to come in. Recently one Cajan stabbed another seriously, and was himself considerably cut up. As he lay at home in bed, he received word that a certain Mobile County officer wanted him. And without question or complaint, he arose, dressed himself, and walked seven miles into Citronelle.

Once he has learned to trust a person there can be no friend more loyal; but his trust comes slowly. Inherently suspicious, and by habit a solitary figure, he considers every man his enemy until extended time proves friendship.

Insult — The Cajan's superstitions are manifold and deep-rooted. He believes devoutly in conjure. He believes in witchcraft, and the awful apparitions of the forest night that he calls "hants" or "boogers." He believes that every murdered thing, man or animal, has the power to return to life. As a consequence, the Cajan murderer lives in constant dread that his victim will return in the role of avenger.

On some early future day--and this statement is not made without authority--the bulk of the Cajan population will be without a

means of livelihood. They know no occupation except turpentine and lumbering. Their turpentine brings but fourteen cents a gallon. The pine forests have been cut over so many times that years will be required to grow new timber. The sawmills long since have stilled their machinery.

Perhaps Old Emily Bird, direct descendant of the colorful Red Bird whose exploits will be recorded in another article, summed ^{it} the problem of her people ^{up} most completely:

"They are like lost children whose folks have forgotten about them." Johnson, teacher at Sappy Hill School.

add accompanying
page.

Cayan 12

Bibliography for ~~Cajan story~~ "Like Lost Children"

Mrs. Cecil B. Ford, Chatom, Ala.

Miss Alice May, WPA health officer, Washington County.

Mrs. R.M. Averitt, teacher, Calvert, Ala.

Rev. R.M. Averitt, Calvert, Ala.

Rev. Pattillo, Citronelle, Ala.

W.M. Whitsett, rooming house proprietor, Chatom, Ala.

Mrs. Isaac Johnson, teacher at Happy Hill School.

Personal observation and visits to each place mentioned.

"LIKE LOST CHILDREN"

They stood timid and embarrassed in a ragged line. There were five boys and seven girls, their ages ranging all the way from six to twelve. It was November, and frost had fallen that morning, but only two of the children were wearing shoes. Some of the little girls had no coats, only thin cotton dresses. The boys were dressed in overalls that were badly faded, and some without braces. This condition necessitated the use of twine to prevent the overalls from falling about their ankles.

The two visitors sat on a bench in the school room facing the children, but they looked only at the teacher, who was clothed little better than they. She held a bright yellow ruler in her hand, using it as an instrument to maintain singing rhythm that was never maintained. She turned to her small charges.

"Can you sing for the people?"

They hesitated for a moment, uncertain and ill at ease. Then the tiny girl with a faded blue ribbon knotted about her hair began this song:

Oh, if you look for me
And I'm not there
You'll know I'm climbing
A stardust stair--

There were many verses, and then another song:

Lord, I want to be ready,
Yes, I want to be ready,
I want to be ready to suffer
Just as my Savior did--

As they sang, their faces were expressionless, unless sadness, blank behind hollow eyes, is an expression. They lifted their eyes from the floor only when they looked at their teacher; for she was one of their own kind. Already they had learned that the average white comes to them only to pity and stare in open-mouthed wonder. Already, many of them had heard the thrust, "Dirty Cajan!"

The Tombigbee River, with its high, white cliffs glistening in the sunlight, flows majestically across the pine-wrapped lowlands of Washington County, in Alabama's southwestern corner. Branching from its banks to the west is wild country, in which the fleeting glimpse of a racing deer is not uncommon. This country is blanketed by scrub pine and sparse oak. The land is poor and pierced by gullies, a desolate stretch of forest and white sand. Now and then a dim logging road, often more trail than road, is encountered with disarming suddenness. And squatting out in the pine woods at the sides of these trails, often several miles apart, are the dilapidated shanties that house the people known to Alabamians as Cajans.

The name is not applied correctly. They are not related to the Cajans of Louisiana. The Louisiana Cajan can trace his ancestry through a proud strain, but this is not true of the Alabama people. And in that truth lies their misfortune and a hundred years of oppression. The Alabama Cajan, cannot trace his ancestry beyond a few generations.

Where one Cajan will say that he descended from a South Carolinian who came into Alabama and married a Creek Indian woman, another will relate that it was really a Mexican who married a French woman of noble lineage. Still another will insist that the Cajans descended from Gulf Coast pirates who intermarried with Indian women. But the rural white people of Washington County say with unconcealed scorn! "Their ancestors don't worry us none. Why, they're niggers and troublemakers."

The Cajan denies Negro blood with a surprising virulence. But in justice to the Negro, it can be recorded that he disclaims the Cajan with equal vehemence. And certainly, the Alabama rural Negro's home, even to that of the most ignorant cropper, is cleaner and more comfortable than that of the average Cajan.

There are, of course, exceptions; but these exceptions usually occur in instances where Cajan and white have intermarried. A striking characteristic of white-Cajan marriage lies in the fact that the white (intelligent and educated) either lifts his, or her, mate, or else is drawn downward to a surprising depth.

But regardless of which direction the match turns, the Cajan woman follows her chosen man with a dog-like devotion. The Cajan husband also is good to his wife. And, when married legally, they do not often join the unwedded members of their kind in a flagrant violation of moral standards. Even as they respect the conjure doctor, they respect the marriage vow. They believe that violation would bring some dreadful calamity.

But even in marriage (more of which is being urged among the Cajans) there can be deplorable conditions. The visitors paused at one hut, squatting far off to itself in the Happy Hill Community. On the slanting back porch were two women, a baby playing in filth, and a girl who could not have been more than eleven or twelve years old. Nodding toward the latter, one of the visitors asked: "Why isn't the little girl in school?"

For a moment the two grown women looked at the questioner coldly, then they exchanged glances and giggled. "That-a-girl," they said finally in high glee, "is a married 'oman." The child only stared with hollow eyes, drawing her bare feet under the folds of a bright red dress.

Until she shows her teeth, the average Cajan woman is pretty in an exotic way. Her features are finely chiseled, and her limbs well rounded. Some of the women wear red or yellow scarves wound tightly about their hair, and the great majority make a glittering display of cheap jewelry. But the Cajan woman is handicapped by teeth that are stained and often broken, a condition that seems characteristic of the people as a whole.

The men are rarely handsome, and most of them never smile. With faces bearded and toughened as leather, they talk in a monotone that seems never to change. Only their eyes betray their feelings. And when they do not like a person, the eyes can be icily cold.

The scorn of the white man has caused the Cajans, numbering some 12,000, to withdraw into their shell of isolation. It is something of a self-imposed exile, and, more than any other one factor, has wrecked the Cajan's chances to better his condition. A tourist traveling by public highway would never know of his existence. His cabins are never on the main roads. He selects the most inaccessible spots available and all he asks is that the white man stay away. Whether this self-imposed isolation is brought about by pride or timidity is a conjecture. Certainly, some of the Cajans evidence a superb pride that seems tragic in their bare hovels. Others will not face a stranger, retreating into the woods at his approach.

While some appear outwardly appreciative of the helpful efforts of white social workers, others are openly resentful. One woman, living at the end of a trail so rough that her shanty could be reached only by walking, told social workers: "We need nothing; let us alone!" Investigation showed that she had been begging among her Cajan neighbors to feed herself and her "nine head" of fatherless children.

This article is in no way concerned with the controversy on Cajan

ancestry, but one striking fact should be noted. In a single family one may find a child with black, kinky hair and black eyes; another with deep blue eyes and hair the color of molasses. And both parents may be decidedly dark-skinned.

Some have attempted to explain this conflict in types by pointing to the loose moral standard prevailing among the people. This standard does prevail, to an alarming extent, but there are families in which the mother is known by all the community to be unquestionably chaste. And the conflict in types is found here as elsewhere.

The moral standard of the Cajans is a difficult and complex problem. Their language concerning relations is completely open. If a Cajan man is living with a woman who is not his wife, he does not attempt to conceal the fact. He seems to see no violation of the ethics of human existence. The Cajan woman feels the same, as is illustrated by a case several miles from Chatom.

We will call her Sally Reed. She is a widow with seven children, and for several months had been receiving commodities from the County Welfare Department. Arrival of these commodities was stopped suddenly, so she ventured into town for an explanation. "Why," she was told in effect, "you have been reported as having had an illegitimate child." She puzzled a moment, and then replied: "That's a-no reason. Why, Hees, five of mine have been thees way!"

Such a standard has brought its inevitable curse upon the Cajans, and it will not be stamped out easily. Some of them do not know what is wrong. At one cabin a mother stood in the doorway, her hand against her throat. "It been so bad," she confided, "Like boils or sumpin'." And she did not realize why her blind baby had died.

Such stories are not beautiful to write; but neither are they beautiful to see. It was not beautiful to see the tiny boy with

brown eyes and curly hair trying to stand on legs thin as matchsticks, a club foot at the end of one of them. His mother said: "He'll pick up some weight, wait an' see." It was not beautiful to see the little girl groping for her mother's dress--groping because she was blind.

In these hovels that breed disease, there is only filth and human misery. All Cajan huts are similar, but some are better equipped than others. Usually, there are but two rooms. The cooking is done in one of these, while the entire family sleeps in the other; and sometimes these families may consist of ten persons. At one place there was only one room used for sleeping, covered by a leaky roof. The stove was on a rudely built porch outside, open to the weather.

The Cajan's furniture consists of odds and ends. Most of the beds and chairs are homemade, and the average Cajan's craftsmanship is crude. There may be a picture or so portraying some Biblical scene, although the average Cajan is not a religious person. A broken piece of mirror may adorn the wall, although one grizzled Cajan confided: "I ain't a-seen myself in years an' years." And he was a fortunate man, indeed.

Flies swarm unnoticed. None of the huts have screens, only pine boards nailed to hinges. Sometimes there are no doors at all, with the hut built high up from the ground to keep out "prowlin' varmints."

The Cajan has a child-like attitude about all of living that has been the despair of many desiring to help him. There are times when he appears absolutely powerless to take any sort of initiative, although he is not usually a lazy person. At a filth-laden hovel near Chatom the visitors found a mother and five children, one of whom was a baby cuddling at the breast. They were seated about a fireplace in which not an ember burned. All were barefoot and scantily clad. All were shaking with the cold. The mother whined: "We're a-jes' sittin' here freezing."

They were huddled there beside an empty fireplace "freezing" in a

country where rich pine knots are to be had at one's very door. Amazed, one of the visitors asked: "Where is your husband?" and the woman said: "He's out a-back gettin' ready for a 'possum hunt." The visitors stepped out the back door, and there beside a tiny blaze, on which he was melting lead to make buckshot, was the lean, bronzed "man of the house" who looked up from his task with hostile eyes.

Outside of the venereal diseases, the Cajan's greatest enemies are pellagra, hookworm, "sore eyes," and diphtheria. Pellagra runs rampant, with most of the adults affected. Gazing at her cracked hands, one woman said in wonder: "Strange, I ain't been frostbit."

The contributing cause to the great wave of pellagra lies in the fact that the Cajan refuses to eat anything except meat. When he can go into the woods and get game, or when he can capture one of the wild hogs that roam the countryside, he will not attempt to raise a garden. If seed are provided he will plant a plot of ground, but he invariably will allow it to run up in weeds. He has not learned to like green foodstuffs, and, except in a very few instances, he refuses to grow them.

County object to white instructors going into the Cajan. Until only a few years ago, Cajan children did not know how to play. No games were traditional with them. They had no songs taught to them by the parents. Consequently, their games are similar to those of every school child, and their songs are more like spirituals than any other form. In singing, they sway their bodies, but they do not possess the Negro's rhythm.

On the school ground at Calvert, Mrs. R. M. Averitt, teacher, allowed the children a short recess so that the visitors could see how well they had learned to play. She said: "When I came here eight years ago they would only stand and stare at each other. They had never been taught the meaning of play, but now that they have learned, they

seem to play with more zeal and real happiness than white children.

"We are trying to teach them happy songs, but they are slow to take these up. They much prefer singing Deep Dark Sea and such morbid tunes. We want them to learn happiness instead of sorrow."

But back over the flat, pine-wrapped roads to the school at Happy Hill Community, the visitors found easily how difficult it will be to blot out sorrow. There, Mrs. Isaac Johnson, the teacher, told of two absences caused by hunger. Of other children could not attend school for the reason that they did not have sufficient clothing.

The Cajan schools are fairly comfortable considering that the State must maintain a tri-racial system (white, Negro and Cajan). They are unpainted, boxlike structures with desks of many types and sizes, but they have heat and window panes. For the Cajan child who must trudge long distances to study in them, they must seem like castles when compared to home.

The great difficulty at present is keeping competent teachers. The Cajan parents will not tolerate Negro teachers, and many influential persons of Washington County object to white instructors going into the Cajan settlements. This objection has been caused by several instances of intermarriage, none of which ever ended in divorce.

Those who are interested in the welfare of these people believe that the solution to the school problem lies in worthwhile Cajan teachers. But, they ask, how will Cajan teachers be obtained when Cajans are denied admittance to State colleges? None are wealthy enough to attend northern and eastern schools.

A scattered few have managed to finish college in Alabama, but they have done so by concealing the fact that they were Cajans; they were among the fortunates who have fair skins. But in other instances a Cajan striving for education has been asked to leave Alabama colleges.

with more zeal and real happiness than white children.

"We are trying to teach them happy songs, but they are slow to take these up. They much prefer singing Deep Dark Sea and such morbid tunes. We want them to learn happiness instead of sorrow."

But back over the flat, pine-wrapped roads to the school at Happy Hill Community, the visitors found easily how difficult it will be to blot out sorrow. There, Mrs. Isaac Johnson, the teacher, told of two absences caused by hunger. Other children could not attend school for the reason that they did not have sufficient clothing.

The Cajans schools are fairly comfortable considering that the State must maintain a tri-racial system (white, Negro and Cajan). They are unpainted, boxlike structures with desks of many types and sizes, but they have heat and window panes. For the Cajan child who must trudge long distances to study in them, they must seem like castles when compared to home.

The great present difficulty is keeping competent teachers. The Cajan parents will not tolerate Negro teachers, and many influential persons of Washington County object to white instructors going into the Cajan settlements. This objection has been caused by several instances of intermarriage, none of which ever ended in divorce.

Those who are interested in the welfare of these people believe that the solution to the school problem lies in worthwhile Cajan teachers. But, they ask, how will Cajan teachers be obtained when Cajans are denied admittance to State colleges? None are wealthy enough to attend northern and eastern schools.

A scattered few have managed to finish college in Alabama, but they have done so by concealing the fact that they were Cajans; they were among the fortunates who have fair skins. But in other instances a Cajan striving for education has been asked to leave Alabama colleges.

The need for Cajan teachers appears most in relations between instruct-

ors and parents. Out of seven Cajan women interviewed by the writer of this article, only one knew the meaning of the initials, P. T. A.

While such slow (but certain) progress is being made in the schools, the churches are experiencing the most discouraging difficulties. The adult Cajan is not one to congregate, except with his own established associates. He also likes his Sunday leisure, and he does not sacrifice it easily for church. This is true especially where the preacher refers to subjects such as drinking, rowdying, and the living of men and women together out of wedlock. The churches have made valiant efforts, but even today there are adult Cajans who never heard of Jesus.

Yet, despite his irreligion, the average Cajan has a high sense of honor. He will walk miles to jail if an officer whom he likes sends him word to come in. Recently one Cajan stabbed another seriously, and was himself considerably cut up. As he lay at home in bed, he received word that a certain Mobile County officer wanted him. And without question or complaint, he arose, dressed himself, and walked seven painful miles into Citronelle.

Once he has learned to trust a person there can be no friend more loyal; but his trust comes slowly. Inherently suspicious, and by habit a solitary figure, he considers every man his enemy until extended time proves friendship.

The immense distrust evidenced toward every stranger was shown to visitors at a Cajan shack far back in the pine country north of Citronelle. It was dark, and the only light in the cabin was furnished by a feeble blaze that splashed a sickly yellow upon the unpainted pine walls. The visitors approached in an automobile, throwing the headlights against the front of the shanty. The horn was blown several times, because it is not ethical to approach one of these houses without first giving some sort of "approach warning." The horn had not sounded a second time before a figure

The need for Cajan teachers appears most in relations between instructors and parents. Out of seven Cajan women interviewed by the writer of this article, only one knew the meaning of the initials, P.T.A.

While such slow (but certain) progress is being made in the schools, the churches are experiencing the most discouraging difficulties. The adult Cajan is not one to congregate, except with his own established associates. He also likes his Sunday leisure, and he does not sacrifice it easily for church. This is true especially where the preacher refers to subjects such as drinking, rowdying, and the living of men and women together out of wedlock. The churches have made valiant efforts, but even today there are adult Cajans who never heard of Jesus.

Yet, despite his irreligion, the average Cajan has a high sense of honor. He will walk miles to jail if an officer whom he likes sends him word to come in. Recently one Cajan stabbed another seriously, and was himself considerably cut up. As he lay at home in bed, he received word that a certain Mobile County officer wanted him. And without question or complaint, he arose, dressed himself, and walked seven painful miles into Citronelle.

Once he has learned to trust a person there can be no friend more loyal; but his trust comes slowly. Inherently suspicious, and by habit a solitary figure, he considers every man his enemy until extended time proves friendship.

The immense distrust evidenced toward every stranger was shown to visitors at a Cajan shack far back in the pine country north of Citronelle. It was dark, and the only light in the cabin was furnished by a feeble blaze that splashed a sickly yellow upon the unpainted pine walls.

The visitors approached in an automobile, throwing the headlights against the front of the shanty. The horn was blown several times, be-

cause it is not ethical to approach one of these houses without first giving some sort of "approach warning." The horn had not sounded a second time before a figure darted from beside the fireplace to the back of the house, vanishing from sight as if he were a ghost. And not until the visitors had alighted from the car and stated their business was the mysterious figure seen again. Then he showed himself at a darkened window, turned away slowly, and replaced his shotgun in the corner.

The Cajan's superstitions are manifold and deep-rooted. He believes devoutly in conjure. He believes in witchcraft, and the awful apparitions of the forest night that he calls "ha'nts," or "boogers." He believes that every murdered thing, man or animal, has the power to return to life. Consequently, the Cajan murderer lives in constant dread that his victim will return in the role of avenger.

There are those who have worked among these people for years who are convinced that some improvement in their outlook on life has been made during the last ten years. Of course, there has been no improvement in living conditions; none in morals, and only a little in the eradication of disease. But there is less roving and savage fighting than in the old prohibition days when moonshine whiskey flowed like water at backwoods "gatherings." The Cajan at last is learning to visit without believing that the visit should culminate in a free-for-all fight.

These visits are unlike those in any other parts of the world. If a Cajan is invited into the home of another, he may remain a week, or he may decide to stay a month. In one instance a visitor prolonged his stay until the tubercular "man of the house" died, and then he remained on "to console and help" the widow.

On some early future day--and this statement is not made without authority--the bulk of the Cajan population will be without a means of livelihood. They know no occupation except turpentine and lumbering.

Their turpentine brings but fourteen cents a gallon. The pine forests have been cut over so many times that years will be required to grow new timber. The sawmills long since have stilled their machinery.

Perhaps old Emily Bird, direct descendant of the colorful Red Bird summed up the problem of her people most completely with these words:

"They are like lost children whose folks have forgotten about them."

Bibliography.

Mrs. Cecil B. Ford, Chatom, Ala.

Miss Alice May, WPA health officer, Washington County.

Mrs. R. M. Averitt, teacher, Calvert, Ala.

Rev. R. M. Averitt, Calvert, Ala.

Rev. Pattillo, Citronelle, Ala.

W. M. Whitsett, rooming house proprietor, Chatom, Ala.

Mrs. Isaac Johnson, teacher at Happy Hill School.

Personal observation and visits to each place mentioned.

11/15/38

S.J.