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# Lucy Furman: Life & Works

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Neal,

Julia

1933

LUCY FURMAN:  
LIFE AND WORKS

BY

JULIA NEAL

A THESIS  
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS

WESTERN KENTUCKY STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE

AUGUST, 1933

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" "

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PREFACE

The greater part of the material used in the following study has been obtained directly from Miss Furman and from her relatives and acquaintances. It will not be possible to enumerate all of those who have been so kind and helpful; but I wish especially to express appreciation to Miss Katherine Pettit, Lexington, Kentucky, and to Miss Susan Towles, Henderson, Kentucky, for their interest and assistance.

Above all, I am deeply indebted to Miss Furman for her cordial consideration of my efforts and for the many courtesies she has shown me during the preparation of the thesis and in her Miami home.

Since much of the material embodied in the study was obtained during a personal interview with Miss Furman, it has not been thought necessary to record the indebtedness for the facts item by item in the footnotes. All other material, however, has been assigned to the proper sources.

Appreciation is due Little, Brown, and Company for the loan of both published and unpublished material which has been of much value.

In the course of my investigation my attention has been called to certain errors in statements concerning Miss Furman and her works. In J. W. Townsend's Kentucky in American Letters, 1870 is given as the birth date of Lucy Furman. The correct date is June 7, 1869. The first name of Miss Furman's father was Williams and not William as given by Townsend and in Who's Who in America. The date of publication of Stories of a

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Sanctified Town has been listed by Townsend as 1896. The stories appeared in The Century in 1894, 1895, and 1896, but the volume was not brought out until 1897.

To Dr. Earl A. Moore of the Department of English in Western State Teachers College, I wish to express my earnest appreciation for his sincere criticism of the following study.

Western Kentucky State Teachers College

Bowling Green, Kentucky

August, 1933.

## CHAPTER I

### EARLY YEARS

Four years subsequent to the close of the great conflict between the North and the South there was born in the neutral state of Kentucky, a woman who was destined to serve with great earnestness and to immortalize with great talent the mountain people of her native state. It is through a sympathetic portrayal of the characteristics of the Southern Highlanders that she has achieved an enviable place as a local color writer in American letters.

Lucy Furman, who was born June 7, 1869, in Henderson, Kentucky, was a member of a family which was not undistinguished. A great-great-grandfather, Dr. Richard Furman of Charleston, South Carolina, was a very noted Baptist preacher during Revolutionary days.

He was so active patriotically that Cornwallis offered a reward of a thousand pounds for his head, and so eloquent that he was invited to preach before Congress some years afterward, and did so. Dr. Furman was the founder of Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina, and of other educational institutions.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Samuel Furman, grandfather of Lucy Furman, was a medical doctor who moved some years before the Civil War from South Carolina to De Soto Parish in northern Louisiana. Williams Barnard and Samuel, sons of Dr. Furman, followed the traditional profession of the family, the former as a physician, the latter

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<sup>1</sup>Lucy Furman, letter to the writer, May 9, 1933.

as a dentist.<sup>2</sup> Soon after his marriage to the beautiful young Jessie Collins of Kentucky, Dr. Williams Barnard Furman moved to Henderson, Kentucky, and lived at a quaint, old hotel called the Hoard House. Here he became a prominent young physician and was familiarly known as Dr. Willie.<sup>3</sup> The young dentist also moved to Henderson, where he was known for his honesty and gentleness.

On the maternal side, the ancestors were Kentuckians, who had come out from Virginia in the very early days. Dr. Orville Collins, a great-great-grandfather, lived in or near Winchester for many years. Later he left that section and moved to Western Kentucky, where he lived at different times in Hopkinsville, Madisonville, and other places.

He was a physician by profession, but becoming converted to the Christian or Campbellite faith, preached it throughout Western Kentucky starting many churches. His eldest son, Dr. John Dillard Collins, settled in Henderson, Kentucky, to practice medicine, living there until sometime in the late eighties, when he moved to Covington, Kentucky, and practiced until his death at the age of eighty-five in 1908.<sup>4</sup>

It was beside the Ohio River at Henderson, Kentucky, that Lucy Furman spent her childhood. One of her early joys was to walk along the river bank with her mother and gather "butter and

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Susan Towles, President of the Henderson County Historical Society, conversation with the writer.

<sup>4</sup>Lucy Furman, op. cit.

eggs" and other wild flowers.<sup>5</sup>

More of the early childhood days is learned by reading an account written by Mrs. Grace Jones, an acquaintance of Miss Furman.

In speaking of her childhood once Miss Furman said that her earliest recollections of life are associated with the boats making their way up and down the Ohio River. The melodious, deep-toned whistles of the big steamboats filled her mind with their suggestion of travel, adventure, and romance. Another mysterious joy to the imaginative little girl was the small ferry-boat at the foot of the cobblestone levee, which took passengers and vehicles over to the other shore. Hearing the grown-ups talking about the ferry-boat, the child always thought they said "Fairy Boat", and when her father, who was a physician, would take the ferry across the river to visit patients on the opposite shore, little Lucy pictured him on a fairy boat in the magic company and keeping of the fairy folk.<sup>6</sup>

When Lucy Furman was only seven years of age, and her sister, Rosalie, the only other child, was two, their mother died, and a few years later the father also died. It was then the two little girls went to live with their mother's sister, Miss Rosalie Collins. Miss Collins, a woman of remarkable charm and mental ability, was a teacher in the Henderson Female Academy. After the establishment of the public high school, Miss Collins was a member of its faculty. Later she was a teacher in

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<sup>5</sup>Grace Jones, "Lucy Furman, Social Worker and Story-Teller," Boston Evening Transcript, November 5, 1927.

<sup>6</sup>Loc. cit.

the high school at Evansville, Indiana.<sup>7</sup> Those who knew her remember Miss Collins as a wonderful teacher and as one whom children adored.

It is to the early training she received from her devoted aunt and foster-mother that Miss Furman attributes much of her talent for writing.

For an hour every night before they went to bed the aunt would read to the children. Nothing was permitted to interfere with this story hour. Not only children's classics were read, but Dickens, Thackeray, Hawthorne, George Eliot. "Strong meat these would be considered nowadays," says Miss Furman, "but we listened fascinated." Thus at a very early age was developed in the child a love of good literature and an appreciation of the beauty of the written word.<sup>8</sup>

Under the guidance of her aunt, Lucy Furman, or Pearl Furman as she was known to her schoolmates, entered the Henderson Seminary, which has been described by one of its graduates as a small school of high standing, a school where one could go from "bottom to top" and be beautifully equipped for life.

Later while living for a year with her aunt in Evansville, Indiana, the little girl "enrolled in a private school taught by Misses Hooker and Hough."<sup>9</sup> From here the young student went to Sayre Institute, Lexington, Kentucky, where she graduated at

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<sup>7</sup> Mrs. Emily S. Meadows, a cousin of Lucy Furman, letter to the writer, March 23, 1933.

<sup>8</sup> Grace Jones, op. cit.

<sup>9</sup> Mrs. Emily S. Meadows, op. cit.

the age of sixteen. A schoolmate of Miss Furman says, "I remember Lucy Furman at Sayre as a very pretty blonde with red cheeks (no rouge), sparkling eyes and a very vivacious manner, much enthusiasm always, good student, cultured."<sup>10</sup>

During the next two years of her life, one at Henderson, Kentucky, and one at the home of the Furman grandparents in Shreveport, Louisiana, Lucy Furman was a veritable Southern belle interested chiefly in having a gay time.<sup>11</sup> A friend remembers her at this time as "a very lovely, dainty, golden-haired, blue-eyed little fairy---or a chirpy little bird---for life for her then was just a song."

When Lucy Furman was nineteen years old, a sudden change in the fortunes of the family brought this gay life to an abrupt end. Going to Cincinnati, Ohio, the young girl took a short course in stenography in order that she might earn her own living. Returning to Evansville, where her aunt Miss Collins then taught, she secured employment first with the Louisville and Nashville Railroad Company. Later she was a court stenographer in the Circuit and Superior Courts.

In the early nineties it was not a common occurrence for a young girl to earn her living as a stenographer. The readiness with which Lucy Furman met the emergency is indicative of the splendid manner in which she has met all of life's problems.

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<sup>10</sup>Katherine Pettit, letter to the writer, March 27, 1933.

<sup>11</sup>Anonymous, unpublished manuscript, owned by Little, Brown, and Company.

CHAPTER II  
LITERARY BEGINNINGS

As a young girl, Lucy Furman had no thought of ever becoming a writer. Yet, when she felt a desire for self-expression, she turned quite naturally to pen and paper.

A reference has already been made to the influence of Miss Rosalie Collins on the literary training of her young niece by bringing to her attention only the best in books and magazines. There was another who had much to do with Lucy Furman's literary tendencies, and this person was Professor Maurice Kirby, a great uncle. Professor Kirby, a very interesting character, was the first superintendent of public schools in Henderson. He was later made principal of the Male High School in Louisville, which position he held until his death, on January 3, 1897. In an article which appeared in a Louisville paper at the time of his death, there is the following testimony to his literary attainments:

Professor Kirby was on speaking terms with almost every man of letters in England. He could give in a minute's reflection the circumstances in the life of any writer or thinker of that country. He admired and loved all who thought and wrote, but he gave to Samuel Johnson and Oliver Goldsmith the wreath of his affections. He would never tire of describing the unique characteristics of "Old Sam," speaking in such terms of Boswell's mentor as would convince one that Professor Kirby and Samuel Johnson had been friends for life.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Courier Journal, January 4, 1897.

It is said that Professor Kirby's library was probably the finest in Louisville. One of the treasures of the library was a Marston edition of The Compleat Angler with autograph etchings. Another was a G. Birkbeck Hill edition of Boswell's Life of Dr. Johnson.<sup>2</sup>

In a sketch written for the Henderson County Historical Society, Lucy Furman pays tribute to this eminent scholar and acknowledges her indebtedness to him for stimulating her interest in literature.

The writer of this sketch, a grand niece of Professor Kirby's wife, remembers having the impression as a little girl that he must have known and associated daily with Dr. Johnson, Oliver Goldsmith, David Garrick, and other lights of that period. She also remembers listening spellbound to his talk in the evenings at home, and bitterly rebelling when sent off to bed.

Guided thus in her literary tastes, it is no wonder that Lucy Furman at the age of twenty-three found herself an author.

(The first literary achievement of the young girl was a series of short stories written as a result of visits to a small village in Henderson County, Kentucky, at a time when the entire community was experiencing a wave of religious enthusiasm. At that time "the Station" "was a small and obscure town, quite as unambitious and forlorn-looking as the usual country village."<sup>3</sup> There were, however, "a peculiar atmosphere and a

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<sup>2</sup>Louisville Times, January 4, 1897.

<sup>3</sup>Lucy Furman, Stories of a Sanctified Town (New York: The Century Company, 1896), p. iv.

zest of spiritual life"<sup>4</sup> present in the town. In speaking of the literal interpretation given so often to the Scriptures by the villagers, the author says,

The Bible is their one book, newspaper, fashion-plate, almanac, and guide in all matters of soul and body. They know it from "lid to lid"; and if at times they dwell rather upon the letter than upon the spirit of its teachings, it is a fault of mind and not of heart.<sup>5</sup>

Although she had great respect for the religious convictions of the people, the young visitor saw the humorous side at once, and on returning to Evansville she wrote a series of sketches or short stories depicting some of the happenings. The writing was done mostly at night after a hard day's work at court.<sup>6</sup>

Having read The Century Magazine from early childhood, the young writer did not know until later what an unusual thing she had done by sending her first work to this outstanding periodical and having her stories published therein. In 1894 and 1895 the stories appeared in The Century along with stories and articles by John Burroughs, Theodore Roosevelt, William Dean Howells, Samuel L. Clemens, and Sarah Orne Jewett.

In 1897 the Century Company published in book form these sketches which had appeared in the magazine, and this volume is known as The Stories of a Sanctified Town. The book, dedicated to "Rosalie Allan Collins, My Aunt and Dearest Friend," was

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<sup>4</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>5</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>6</sup>Grace Jones, "Lucy Furman, Social Worker and Story-Teller," Boston Evening Transcript, November 5, 1927.

praised by William Dean Howells as being "most delightful and a favorite book of mine."

And indeed the stories are delightful. One meets such characters as Melissy Allgood, Brother Rolly, and Kate Negley. One of the human-interest stories concerns Melissy Allgood, the village dressmaker. Melissy has just finished a wedding dress for Daught Pickett, and the puffed sleeves in that dress are a source of joy to both the bride and Melissy. A sore throat and a snowstorm prevent her attendance at the wedding, but Melissy consoles herself with the reading of her Bible. However, her calmness is soon turned to consternation, for her eyes chance to fall on Ezekiel xiii:18: "Thus saith the Lord God; Woe to the women that sew pillows in armholes." How Melissy gets to the wedding and gets Daught to change from the worldly dress with the puffed sleeves to a simple white one makes an interesting story. There are also Melissy's experience with the Ararat Cactus Company of Texas, and many other extraordinary happenings which make Stories of a Sanctified Town an unusual literary achievement.

J. W. Townsend has spoken of the book as one of the most charming works yet published by a Kentucky woman.<sup>7</sup>

(Soon after the publication of these stories the Furman grandparents took their granddaughter Lucy up East for the summer vacation. While visiting in New York City, the home of the Century Publishing Company, the party received an invitation

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<sup>7</sup>Kentucky In American Letters, 2 vols. (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: The Torch Press, 1913), II, 248.

from Mr. Gilder, editor of The Century, to visit the editorial rooms. It was not unusual for the editor of The Century, to entertain his contributors, but it was unusual for him to entertain one so young and so vivacious. Dressed in beautiful clothes, given to her by her grandparents, the girl looked much younger than her actual age of twenty-three. Not only was Mr. Gilder astonished at the youth and beauty of his visitor, but he was more astonished when, asking her to tell him of her literary career, he received the embarrassed answer that she had no literary career of which to tell.

The future looked bright. The first literary accomplishment was commented on favorably. Among those who congratulated Miss Furman and her publishers was James Whitcomb Riley, who said, "In this region [Indiana] the book is a success and a most wholesome and delightful one. All of us here are very proud kith and kin of both author and her characters."<sup>8</sup> Many publishers asked the young author for contributions,<sup>9</sup> but aside from one other story, "The Flirting of Mr. Nickins," which appeared in The Century October, 1897, it was to be thirteen years before another work would appear written by the author of The Stories of a Sanctified Town.

The next ten years of her life Lucy Furman experienced continuous sickness and sorrow. Miss Collins, the aunt whom Lucy Furman loved so devotedly, became very ill with arthritis.

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<sup>8</sup>The Monthly, March, 1897.

<sup>9</sup>Grace Jones, op. cit.

So the two women left Evansville, Indiana, and went to live in a warmer climate. The years were spent in Florida, South Texas, and along the Jersey Coast.<sup>10</sup> Miss Furman had herself begun to suffer cruelly from the insomnia which was never afterwards to leave her. After some years she went with her aunt, whom she was now no longer strong enough to nurse, to the home of her grandfather Dr. John D. Collins, in Covington, Kentucky, and here, though very ill, she enrolled in September, 1905, for special courses in the college of Liberal Arts of the University of Cincinnati. Although suffering frightfully from a nervous breakdown, she finished the courses in English for which she was enrolled with the high record of three A's and one B.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>J. W. Townsend, op. cit., p. 247.

<sup>11</sup>L. G. Hartman, Registrar, letter to the writer, January 31, 1933.

CHAPTER III  
LIFE AT HINDMAN

In 1899 there was inaugurated in the Kentucky Mountains "the first experiment in rural settlement work ever made in this country---or anywhere else in the world, for that matter."<sup>1</sup> Under the sponsorship of the Federation of Woman's Clubs of Kentucky, Katherine Pettit, of Lexington, and May Stone, of Louisville, accompanied by four other young Blue Grass women, went up into the heart of the feud-ridden mountains two days' journey from a railroad to engage in social work and to see what needed to be done.

Their first summer was spent in tents at Hazard, the small county seat of Perry County, where the terrible French-Eversole feud, in which at least seventy men perished, had recently closed; their second on Troublesome Creek at the village of Hindman in Knott County; their third on Carr's Fork in Perry County.

At the end of the close and friendly contact of three summers with the people Miss Pettit and Miss Stone knew what the real needs of the section were and met them by opening in 1902, in Knott County, a large school, the Hindman Settlement School, which combined industrial and academic training with many forms of social service.

News of the work being done by Miss Pettit and Miss Stone reached Lucy Furman, who had just finished her special work in

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<sup>1</sup>A. Bradley, "Women on Troublesome", Scribner's, LXIII (1918), 317.

the University of Cincinnati. Remembering Katherine Pettit as a former schoolmate, Miss Furman wrote to her and asked permission to spend a month with the group in the mountains. In recalling this visit, Miss Furman said,

I didn't know whether Miss Pettit would remember me or not. When we went to school at Sayre Institute in Lexington, Kentucky, I was very young and giddy; but I always admired Katherine, who was very serious.

Whether Miss Pettit would remember Lucy Furman was not the question so much as whether she would recognize the visitor, now so worn, ill, and depressed, as the same lively girl she had known at Sayre.

Miss Furman hoped she might find some light outdoor work at the school in which she could engage. And in this she was not disappointed. Someone was needed to take charge of the gardens and grounds; so she offered her services. Miss Pettit tells something of her unceasing energy in the following incident:

She was full of a desire to be a real help during those weeks. We were living in a very primitive way, and when Miss Furman asked for a job I told her to make a good salad every night for supper. She enthusiastically said, "All right, where shall I get the material?" I replied, "We haven't any thing. You will just have to find something."

Two days' journey from the railroad she had a good salad for us every night. We never knew how or where she got the material. That was characteristic of her always. Whatever she did she not only did well but in the most approved method.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Letter to the writer, March 27, 1933.

At the opening of the school in August she remained to take permanent charge of the gardens and grounds, and from that time on she spent many hours daily out of doors, supervising the work of the boys. This helped her insomnia to some extent. The garden activities were fraught with many problems. Miss Pettit tells of one of them:

One day Miss Furman came running into the office exclaiming, "Miss Pettit, I just can't stand these Hindman hogs another minute. I spent all day yesterday helping the boys to fix the fence and now the hogs are all in again. Before I was out of my room this morning Shadrach came to my door saying, 'Miss Furman, the garden is plumb full of hogs. I drove two out the gate and the others just clumb the fence.' You have just got to get us a new fence."

I told her to write me a letter saying why we needed the fence. That letter was a classic.<sup>3</sup> It brought the fence and more besides.<sup>3</sup>

And so in the summer of 1907 Lucy Furman entered, rather unexpectedly, a work in which she was to be engaged for seventeen and one-half years.

In the beginning there were only three acres of school land. This was later increased to nearly two hundred; so the farming operations soon included a dairy and the growing of feed for the cows and farm mules, as well as for the school family of one hundred and fifty. All the work done on the farm was done by the boys, large and small, under Miss Furman's direction. She describes farming as the most interesting work she ever did,

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<sup>3</sup>Letter to the writer, May 5, 1933.

and the kind she likes best.

Later in that first fall, she assumed another responsibility. Small boys had not been taken to live in the school before that term, and ran away because of homesickness faster than their parents could bring them in. The only man on the faculty, a young manual training teacher, lived with the small boys at their cottage, but the boys did not feel at home. Miss Furman saw the little fellows weeping or glooming around at their work, felt very sorry for them, and became deeply interested in them. Finally she asked the Head-workers to let her go over to the small boys' cottage and see whether she could not get the boys rooted. The heads gladly consented and from that time on the little wild boys became not only Miss Furman's joy, but when shortly afterward she lost her aunt and grandfather, the boys were her family and her very life as well, giving her courage to go on living. A record of the days spent by Lucy Furman as house-mother to these small mountain boys is given in her delightful book entitled Mothering on Perilous.

## CHAPTER IV

### MOTHERING ON PERILOUS

Beginning in December, 1910, and continuing through July, 1911, The Century Magazine published a series of stories by Lucy Furman under the following titles:<sup>1</sup>

1. The Two Homesicks
2. The Pure Scholar
3. The Fightingest Boy
4. The Born Trader
5. The Boy That Fit the Marshal
6. The Tender Passion
7. Nucky Mars, Hero
8. Nucky's Big Brother

In 1913 The Macmillan Company published the book, Mothering on Perilous, which was a compilation of the stories previously printed by The Century Company.

To read Mothering on Perilous is to feel at once the enthusiasm and sincerity of the author in her treatment of all the incidents chronicled within its pages. The book is written in the first person rather than in the third person as found in the stories. The form, that of a diary, adds to the feeling of intimacy.

Miss Furman says:

I was in the school several years before

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<sup>1</sup>The Century, LXXXI (1910), 296-302; 445-449; 561-565; 767-774; 853-859; LXXXII (1911), 57-64; 297-304; 391-396.

"The Heads" would let me write at all. They were afraid I would hurt the feelings of the mountain people. "You let me alone," I said, "I know what to leave out." Nevertheless, I wrote under their protest.

When asked why she wrote the book, Miss Furman answered very emphatically, "I wrote because I had to, because I loved the little boys and found them so endlessly interesting."

"Are the incidents all true ones, or are they imaginary?" the writer asked. She replied, "Many of the smaller incidents are true, and the whole is a true picture of the life we lived then."

Another picture of Miss Furman's life at this time is given by a Hindman teacher in the mountain speech:

About then, another woman, name o' Furman, come in to dwell amongst us and her delight was in the boys. Just like a loving maw she was to them. She made 'em work, too! Gee, oh, how them little fellers did scrub! She didn't hold with them layin' back and sayin': "That's wimmen's work." She'd work outdoors with 'em herself, putting in gyarden truck and lovelie rambling posies.

Nights, afore books, they'd frolic a spell. You could hear 'em all up and down Trouble-some . . . Picking the banjo and doing steps or playing the old dulcimer and singing ballad-tunes. And if so be they got skeered o' their own hant-tales or wanting their mammies, she'd baby 'em a lettle and get 'em in heart for the lonesome night.<sup>2</sup>

Beginning with the last Thursday in July and running to Easter Sunday, we have in Mothering on Perilous the record of the joyful, tragic, nerve-racking, and humorous events that took

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<sup>2</sup>Ann Cobb, "The Little Brown House," At the Hindman Mountain School (pamphlet).

place in that home for small boys. One of the most interesting features of the entire book is the changing attitudes and reactions of both Miss Furman and the twelve little mountain boys to each other. The following passages will reveal to the reader the evident healing of the heart and spirit of Miss Furman through her busy days of responsibility.

After seven days of experience with the boys we find the author saying, because of their terrific fights:

Of course it is all a mistake, and I must give it up, even sooner than I had anticipated. But I am sorry, . . . the boys are most attractive, and time spent with them passes with lightning swiftness, . . . incredible as it seems, for seven whole days I have not had a chance to think of myself, my grief, my loneliness.<sup>3</sup>

Later we find this conclusion: ". . . but distraction is far better than desolation."<sup>4</sup>

A month later comes the confession:

Four weeks to-day since I acquired my family of sons, and now it seems as if I had had them always. So far from being ready to leave now my month is out, wild horses could not drag me away . . . My days are crammed with human interest, exciting as a dime novel.<sup>5</sup>

After the celebration of Thanksgiving day comes the reflection: "When was a lonely heart more truly comforted, a forlorn creature snatched from greater desolation to brighter

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<sup>3</sup>Lucy Furman, Mothering on Perilous (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1913), pp. 42-43.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 84.

cheer?"<sup>6</sup>

Reaching the last page of the book, how a reader's heart thrills with the sincere words of the author: "Henceforth my home is here, . . . here, where my once lonely and drifting barque is held in a fair harbor by twelve strong anchors."<sup>7</sup>

Miss Furman recently said, "A life of responsibility is the only one."

To read the book is to be exceedingly conscious of the unfolding of heart and warming of spirit in each of the boys. There are twelve mountain children, all different in type. Some are hero-worshippers; some braggarts, some motherless, one a born trader, all strengthened by a hand-to-hand struggle with nature. The outstanding characteristic of the group, next to their warlikeness, is certainly reserve. Strangely enough, candy, bright red paint for the "fireboards," wall paper with red roses, and "fotched-on" corn poppers had a great deal to do with the breaking down of this wall.

From Iry Atkins, ten years old and a "pure scholar," came the first intimation to this lonesome woman of the place she was occupying in the hearts of her boys.

Telling of an occasion when she rebuked Iry for the use of oaths, she says:

I told him the only way for him to stop was to keep on trying, and how very happy it would make me when he should succeed; and he

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 177.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 310.

promised to try and try, "Because," he added in a whisper, "I like you." How happy his words made me, and they are the first to indicate that any of my boys care for me.<sup>8</sup>

It remained for Nucky Mars, age eleven and the most distant and combative, to show her just what she needed to do to get closer to her charges.

I was surprised to see Nucky halt before me and eye me frowningly from head to foot.

"What makes you allus wear ole ugly black clothes?" he inquired. "Haint you got no pretty ones, like t'other women?"

"You don't like it?" I asked.

"I'd as soon look at a coal-bank, or a buzzard," he replied.<sup>9</sup>

So, acting upon his advice, she changed to a white dress. The reaction on the boys was surprising.

Nucky was responsible for yet another change. A bright red dress was ordered. Miss Furman left nothing undone that would help her succeed in her undertaking. That the red dress helped, one knows when he reads:

Red, the color of life, certainly appeals to boys; when I put on the cardinal dress, they love to stroke it with their hands, or to rub their heads against my shoulders as I read.<sup>10</sup>

Reading Mothering on Perilous brings to one a happy insight into the character of the author. The traits of resourcefulness,

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 71-72.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 162.

tact, and humour, her love of children, and deep responsiveness to the beauties of nature are all to be gleaned through the reading of the personal account of actual happenings in the settlement school.

There are so many delightful incidents in the story that it has been difficult to choose from them one to use in illustration of Miss Furman's adeptness in handling children.

Each little boy felt it a disgrace to perform any task that could not be classified as a "man's work." Consequently Miss Furman often had to use great strategy in handling situations.

On a certain morning Nucky and Killis rebelled at making beds, and stated their intentions to leave unless given "men's work" all the time.

Let us see in Miss Furman's own words what took place:

My reply, "But making beds is men's work," was met with incredulous whistles.

"Now, boys," I said, "how about soldiers, . . . do you call them men?"

"By grab, them's the only men is men, . . . " said Nucky.

"Well, soldiers make their beds every day," I said; "I have a cousin right now at West Point, . . . and he makes his bed every morning, and couldn't be a soldier if he didn't."

The two stood, dazed and pondering, for some minutes; then Nucky quietly flung an end of the sheet across to Killis, with the words, "There, son, take-aholt of that kiver, and le's lay it straight!"<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 72-73.

Lucy Furman, a lover of literature, was anxious to instil in her boys a similar interest in books. She often read to the boys or told them stories, but at first they were completely bored. Nucky voiced the sentiment of the crowd when he interrupted the story of Robinson Crusoe to ask, "Didn't he never get into no fights, or kill nobody?"<sup>12</sup> These boys who lived in a feud district "had nothing but contempt for Achilles, sulking in his tent, and for Menelaus letting his wife be stolen."<sup>13</sup>

Later the Trojan war stories produced a different effect. The boys became so imbued with the spirit of the heroes of Troy that fighting became the order of the day.

Even little Jason slipped out under the benches at church this morning while I played the organ, and was found later out in the road in front of the courthouse, covered with mud, but glowing with the white-hot joy of having "whipped-out four-at-a-time" of the little village boys.<sup>14</sup>

Lucy Furman was not to be discouraged with the results of her stories. She very tactfully turned to stories of heroes who won glory by fighting, not one another, but dragons and giants. After two weeks' association with Hawthorne's Wonder Tales the boys became very enthusiastic explorers "of caves, coal-banks, and rock dens for minotaurs and dragons, and found nothing worse than a few rattlesnakes and copperheads---a tame substitute and

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>13</sup>Grace Jones, "Lucy Furman, Social Worker and Story-Teller," November 5, 1927.

<sup>14</sup>Lucy Furman, op. cit., p. 82.

an old story."<sup>15</sup>

Many were the experiences of the author as recorded in Mothering on Perilous. Often she found it necessary to sally into the midst of twelve fighting boys and separate them with the aid of a broom-stick or a hoe handle. Once the entire household was quarantined with "eech."<sup>16</sup> On another occasion Miss Furman was thrown on her own resources to save a child desperately ill with croup.<sup>17</sup> And yet, through it all she passed in triumph aided by a good sense of humor and a restored optimism.

The book under consideration, as well as the later novels of the author, gives to us a true picture of customs prevalent in the mountains of her native state. One feels that here is a woman who speaks authoritatively upon the mountain practices of delayed funeral occasions, celebration of "Old Christmas," and the belief in certain superstitions.

The book is rich in words that have come to us unchanged from the Anglo-Saxon. There are also other queer expressions used by the boys. These expressions had been noted and preserved by the author to be used later. For example, when Nucky brags that he "hain't afeard," Joab drily answers, "Hain't afeard got his neck broke yesterday."<sup>18</sup> Or in reply to his

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 222.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 174.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 167.

teacher's remark "You ought to be ashamed," Philip answers flippantly, "I was behind the door when shame passed by."<sup>19</sup> And another contemptuous remark of Philip, "Handsome never earnt his salt; when a man steps in the door, looks fly up the chimbly."<sup>20</sup> These and other expressions give to the book much of the freshness and quaintness for which it is known.

Each of the twelve boys in the book has his own charm that places him forever in the heart of the reader. Serious-minded Nucky, involved as he is in tragedy, is very outstanding. It is interesting to know that Nucky is now a very successful business man in Cleveland, Ohio. Little Hen, the personification of independence and chief news-gatherer, is delightful. Philip Sydney Floyd certainly stands out in the mind of the reader, first as the careless, "sassy," stingy boy, entirely unlike the other Philip Sydney; later, as the epitome of style. The — miraculous transformation was effected by Dilsey Warrick, the girl who became the idol of Philip's heart.<sup>21</sup> Now that Philip and Dilsey are grown, she has become the wife of another man, and he has married another girl.

Of the twelve boys described in Mothering on Perilous no other one is quite so interesting as Geordie, the born trader. At regular intervals Geordie starts a new fashion for which only he can supply the demand. Whatever he takes in on a trade he

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 58.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 247.

uses again to start some other fad. Pop-guns, balls, stilts, and marbles all hit the boys regularly under Geordie's connivance. And his "born trader's ability in supplying a demand is exceeded only by his genius in creating it."<sup>22</sup>

In talking of Geordie Miss Furman said:

The last I heard of him he was making money hands over fist with a chain of shows. After he left the school, he came back on a visit and put on so many airs that the boys said they would like to have ridden him on a rail.

I wish my boys wouldn't leave the mountains. I'd like for them to settle there in their own communities. Some of the boys have disappointed me, but it is not their fault, only their background. Others are successful. Many have married well, and some have named their children for me.

What has been the general criticism of Mothering on Perilous?

The author calls this "the book of her heart and loves it better than anything else she has written."<sup>23</sup> It is dedicated to the boys about whom she wrote.

Miss Furman is very appreciative of the illustrations in the book. "I think that it is marvelous," she said, "how Mr. Gruger and Mrs. McMillan caught the spirit of the mountain story when neither of them had ever visited the mountains."

Mr. Horace Keppart, author of Our Southern Highlanders and an authority on mountain people, said, "Miss Furman knows the mountain people better than they know themselves."

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 252.

<sup>23</sup>Grace Jones, op. cit.

The editor of The Century Magazine, Mr. Gilder, remarked, "These are real stories of real little boys."

It is a distinct and unusual compliment to the author of Mothering on Perilous that the book has been used as supplementary reading material in an education course in Western Kentucky State Teachers College, Bowling Green, Kentucky, taught by Dr. A. L. Crabb. This well known Southern educator says:

I thought the book by Miss Furman had in it some very good side lights on the process of teaching. In a phrase, it humanized teaching; and, therefore, I thought it belonged very appropriately to the list of books which a prospective teacher might read with great credit. As a matter of fact, it did not bear directly on teaching; but some of the very best lessons are taught by indirection.<sup>24</sup>

Young E. Allison, Sr. once made the remark that "in her book Mothering on Perilous, Miss Furman has unconsciously but very accurately presented a good deal of her life."<sup>25</sup> A large part of the success of the book may be attributed to the personal element.

Since the publication of Mothering on Perilous there have come from the pen of this observer of highland life three other mountain novels, none of which has quite the same freshness in style and appeal as this first volume that chronicles the incidents experienced by the author in her years of mothering on Perilous.

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<sup>24</sup>Letter to the writer, March 30, 1933.

<sup>25</sup>Young E. Allison, Jr., letter to the writer, May 4, 1933.

CHAPTER V  
OTHER MOUNTAIN NOVELS

An important feature of the Hindman Settlement School had always been the hospital and nursing department. In 1912 there was published in The Century a short story by Lucy Furman which gives some idea of this branch of the work.<sup>1</sup> In 1915 the story appeared as a small volume entitled Sight to the Blind.<sup>2</sup> The book contains an introduction by Ida M. Tarbell and an afterword written by the author, in which she gives a summary of the work done by Katherine Pettit and May Stone.

The tenderly written story contained in the book concerns Aunt Dalmanuthy, a proud mountain woman, who is blind from cataracts. Aunt Dalmanuthy is suffering more because she is pointed to by the ignorant mountain preachers as one who has been cursed for her rebellious attitude at the death of her "onliest little gal Evy." Under the tactful persuasion of the school nurse Aunt Dalmanuthy goes down into the "level land" and is relieved of her trouble by a surgeon. By way of celebration the mountain woman adorns herself with bright-colored store-clothes and store teeth and returns to the mountains, where she entertains her friends and neighbors with an account of her ride on the "cyars" and of her subsequent adventures.

In the introduction Ida M. Tarbell says, "a more

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<sup>1</sup>The Century, "Sight to the Blind," LXXXIV (1912), 390-397.

<sup>2</sup>Lucy Furman, Sight to the Blind (New York: Macmillan Company, 1914).

illuminating interpretation of the settlement idea than Miss Furman's stories Sight to the Blind and Mothering on Perilous does not exist."

Life in and about the settlement school was never monotonous. Each day brought its quota of exciting, amusing, and often sad happenings. To Lucy Furman, all the passing scenes wove themselves into stories, and the author was anxious to utilize the material at hand. She was anxious to tell something of the work carried on so remarkably by Miss Pettit and Miss Stone. However, they objected. "You may write about yourself," they said, "but we don't want publicity, and you can't write about us until the school is at least twenty years old."

With this promise in mind, Lucy Furman wrote her stories, and in May, 1922, exactly twenty years from the formal opening of the school, the first story of "The Quare Women" series appeared in The Atlantic Monthly. From May until December of the same year, there appeared each month in The Atlantic a new episode concerning the doings of the "fotched-on women."

These stories, with four additional ones, appeared in book form<sup>3</sup> in 1923 with the following preface:

The atmosphere of this story, its background, and even many of its incidents, arise from the author's connection with the Hindman Settlement School in Knott County, Kentucky.

The reader is introduced to the "quare women" by Ruthena's conversation with Aunt Ailsie.

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<sup>3</sup>The Quare Women (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1923).

Maw, there's a passel of quare women come in from furrin parts and sot 'em up some cloth houses there on the p'int above the courthouse, and carrying on some of the outlandishest doings ever you heared of. And folks a-pouring up that hill till no jury can't hardly be got to hold court this week.<sup>4</sup>

Uncle Lot, an Old Primitive, remembered Solomon's counsel to "Bewar of the strange women," and coming home from court he spoke of the women as "quare fatched-on ones that blows in from God knows whar, and darrs their Maker with naught but a piece of factory betwixt them and the elements!"<sup>5</sup>

From the day the "quare women" pitched their tents until the end of that first summer we have a record of "the experiences of these young women set forth with Miss Furman's rare gift for humor and pathos."<sup>6</sup>

After a summer spent in being neighbors, comrades, and learners as well as teachers,<sup>7</sup> the "quare women" received an urgent invitation from the citizens through their spokesman, Uncle Ephraim Kent, to "stay with us and do something for our young ones, that mostly run wild now, drinking and shooting. We will give you land to build a school on."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>6</sup>Grace Jones, "Lucy Furman, Social Worker and Story-Teller," Boston Evening Transcript, November 5, 1927.

<sup>7</sup>Ida M. Tarbell, Introduction to Lucy Furman's Sight to the Blind (New York: Macmillan Company, 1914).

<sup>8</sup>Lucy Furman, Sight to the Blind, Afterword.

There were offers also of labor and timber. The invitation was too pressing to be refused; so Amy and Virginia, who in reality were Misses Stone and Pettit, answered the call in the affirmative.

A new series of stories called "The Return of the Quare Women," appeared in The Atlantic Monthly in 1925. These stories, with additional ones, were published in the form of a novel in 1925,<sup>9</sup> and they continue the story of The Quare Women. The book, which is called The Glass Window, is dedicated to May Stone who is still the head of the Hindman School, Katherine Pettit having left in 1913 to start a new school at Pine Mountain in Harlan County. The reader of The Glass Window is an enthusiastic onlooker at the "school raising"; and later, at the Christmas tree, he certainly shares some of the excitement of the children and women who see their first store dolls or "poppets." As the story of the growth of the school continues, one meets characters who are stamped indelibly in the memory. Little Lowizy should be entitled to a place in the ranks of the immortal children of literature. Interest is sustained throughout the book by Aunt Ailsie's well-laid plan for gaining Uncle Lot's permission to place a glass window in the wall of their old log house. With the strategy of a general she at last wins not one glass window but two.

In The Quare Women and The Glass Window Lucy Furman has logged the progress of the Hindman Settlement School with an

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<sup>9</sup>Lucy Furman, The Glass Window (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1925).

unerring hand. In addition "she has painted with fidelity and humor a little-known corner of America."<sup>10</sup>

Each of these books has had a wide circulation. While traveling in South America, Miss Pettit found a copy of The Quare Women in an American library in the heart of the Andes Mountains. Many missionary societies have made requests to use The Quare Women and The Glass Window as the text in mission study classes.<sup>11</sup>

In writing her fourth novel, Lucy Furman did not follow her former plan. Lonesome Road, published in 1927, does not concern life at the school; neither was it written first in the form of short stories. This book is the author's first full-length novel. Miss Furman has said that she had never thought of writing a novel of such length, but "this one was there and had to be written."<sup>12</sup>

The title of the book was taken from a song. Only the first two lines of the song's refrain were known by Miss Furman, but she was much attracted by them. With these lines as a basis, she wrote the song that appears in the story. Another illustration of the author's ability to write verse modeled after the true ballad is found in Blant's ballad in Mothering on Perilous.

Lucy Furman has a deep appreciation of the mountain songs. "Nothing," she says, "throws such light on the life of people

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<sup>10</sup>Arthur Pound, "Trouble Shooting on Troublesome," The Independent, CXIV (1925), 708.

<sup>11</sup>Jennie Bright, Secretary of Baptist Woman's Missionary Union of Kentucky, conversation with the writer.

<sup>12</sup>Grace Jones, op. cit.

as its songs. That the Southern Highlanders remain to this day unknown and misunderstood is probably owing to the fact that no one, so far, has made a really intimate study of their songs."<sup>13</sup>

Lonesome Road is the story of a mountain youth who for many years knows only tragedy. However, as the novel draws to a close, life takes on a brighter aspect.

The book has many well delineated characters. Among these are Cindy, the grandmother; Poppet, who brings tragedy to those who love her best; Minta, who was deprived of her childhood; and Jared, a talented young mountaineer.

There is also the character of old Doc Ross. Doc Ross, as he was called in the novel, was a real person. His father had come from North Carolina to Kentucky bringing with him works of the British poets. From this source the son received his only education. Jared gained a great deal of philosophy of life from the old doctor, who believed that "Hit's the humble that sees both nature and God."<sup>14</sup>

One feels in reading Lonesome Road that the author has interwoven much of her own feeling of tragedy into the story. Certainly it was her own experience that aided her in writing the song "Lonesome Road."

I started down life's beckoning road,  
A-drinking youth's sweet wine;  
Afore me all was beautiful-fair,

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<sup>13</sup>Lucy Furman, Foreword to Jean Thomas' Devil's Ditties (Chicago: W. W. Hatfield, 1931), p. iv.

<sup>14</sup>Lucy Furman, Lonesome Road (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1928), p. 271.

And all I seed was mine.

Oh, life is a long and a lonesome road,  
 Don't set your hopes too high, Oh!  
 Full many a danger's lurking there,  
 Full many a snare and sigh, Oh!

My payrents held me by the hand,  
 No cold blast blowed on me,  
 All safe and sheltered, I allowed  
 That sorrow e'er must shun me.

But at a turn, Oh where was they  
 That companied me so loving?  
 Oh, gone, oh vanished from my sight,  
 Oh, lost past all recovring!

The next two stanzas contain in brief the story of the book.

I loved a woman, fair beyand  
 The power of words to borrow.  
 Oh, where is she, the false true-love  
 That pierced my soul with sorrow?

I had a friend, a bosom friend,  
 Than brother dear, far dearer,  
 O God, and was his hand the one  
 To plunge the knife more nearer?

Oh, life is a long and a lonesome road,  
 Don't set your hopes too high, Oh!  
 Full many a danger's lurking there,  
 Full many a snare and sigh, Oh!<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp. 4-5.

## CHAPTER VI

### SHORT STORIES AND ARTICLES

Primarily a short story writer, Lucy Furman has written a number of stories besides those which have been compiled and published in book form.

A year after the publication of Stories of a Sanctified Town, there appeared in The Century a new story which had not been included in the volume.<sup>1</sup> Tommy Nickins, a character in the other stories of "The Station," is the hero of the new sketch. The title, "The Flirting of Mr. Nickins," is suggestive of the theme of the story. However, one must finish the last paragraph to learn the surprising outcome of the flirtation. Humor and a realistic, small-town atmosphere characterize the sketch.

The love affair between Dilsey and Philip, which had been partially narrated in Mothering on Perilous, is further developed in a new story entitled "Course of True Love."<sup>2</sup> A third member of the "eternal triangle" is introduced in the character of Lige Munn. Hen, the observant, feels that the advantage belongs to Lige, "Of course Lige being fifteen and a head taller and a town boy, and his paw keeping store, all goes agin' Philip. Women they like size and style and presents, the scurvy little jades."

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<sup>1</sup>The Century, "The Flirting of Mr. Nickins," LIV (1897), 830-845.

<sup>2</sup>The Century, LXXXIV (1912), 498-504.

Philip's correspondence during this time shows that he does not intend to lose his girl.

Dear Friend I now rite you these few lines to inform you I am well and hope you are the Same I would of rote before but it keeps me Buizzey riting to Dilsey what spair time I got I bought her a Silk Handkerchef with Blossoms all imbroyed in the corner off Geordie Yonts theres few girls gets the money spent on them she does. Your Best Frieind

Philip Floyd.

The fact that Dilsey accepts an apple, five sticks of peppermint candy, and a "poke of liquorice-draps" and "eats 'em right spang under Philip's eyes" develops a Munn-Floyd Feud which according to Hen "was aiming to be a sizeable one."

An accidental shot in Philip's leg brings the feud to a close and sends Dilsey back to Philip, who exclaims joyfully, "Gee oh, I wished I'd a' got shot sooner."

In 1912 Lucy Furman started a new series of short stories. This series was to have appeared later in book form. In regard to these stories the author says, "There was one other series for The Century called "Doings on Perilous," which I began but could not complete on account of illness."<sup>3</sup>

Leaving her work for a short time, Miss Furman went away for rest and medical care. On her return she looked so much improved that one of the mountaineers declared she "looked pine-blank like a poppet-doll."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Lucy Furman, letter to Miss Susan Towles, n. d.

<sup>4</sup>Grace Jones, "Lucy Furman Social Worker and Story-Teller," Boston Evening Transcript, November 5, 1927.

Four stories from this incomplete series were published under the titles "Hard-hearted Barbary Allen," "The Most Knowingest Child," "The Scarborough Spoons," and "Christmas Tree on Clinch."<sup>5</sup>

Miss Furman considers "The Christmas Tree on Clinch" her best short story. The story relates the experience of one of the social workers who made it possible for the people "on Clinch" to have their first Christmas tree. Joy and pathos are intermingled throughout, and the climax is reached when the Goodloe-Jeems Feud is brought to an end under the spell of the message, "Peace on earth, good will toward men."

In her story "The Scarborough Spoons" Miss Furman has indirectly discussed the ancestry of the mountaineer. In the trek from the Coast over the Appalachians to the land that is now Kentucky and Tennessee, many of the first families settled in the Cumberland Mountains. Descendants of good English stock, the present mountaineers have lost some of the "vigor and hope of their forefathers, the pioneers who followed Daniel Boone to the hills, but not their courage or their pride."<sup>6</sup> It is not an uncommon occurrence for relationship between mountain families and those elsewhere in the state to be discovered. This fact was brought vividly to the attention of Miss Furman by an experience of a school visitor. The visitor, a

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<sup>5</sup>The Century, LXXIII (1912), 739-744; LXXXV (1912-1913), 763-769, 126-135, 163-171.

<sup>6</sup>E. Poole, "Nurse on Horseback," Good Housekeeping, XCIV (1932), 205.

great-granddaughter of Governor Shelby, was highly educated and was accustomed to all social advantages. During her visit she heard of a family of her own name. Upon investigation she was surprised to learn that members of the family visited, and members of her own family migrated from, the same locality in Virginia at the same time. Also, the family characteristic of height was noted, which confirmed her belief that there in the heart of the hills she had found some of her own relatives.

With the true story as a basis, Lucy Furman wrote the imaginary story of "The Scarborough Spoons." In no other work has the Kentucky writer pictured the ancestral pride of the mountain people any better than in this story. The story concerns Emily Scarborough, a well-known essayist, who identifies unknown relatives in the Kentucky mountains by means of the names Emily, Guilford, and Theodosia, which have been kept in the family through the centuries. While visiting her new-found kinspeople, Emily gives Dusia a set of silver spoons that has come from the old home in England. The manner in which the spoons are received best illustrates the unconscious pride of the mountaineer.

J. W. Townsend, author of Kentucky in American Letters, has selected "Hard-hearted Barbary Allen" as one of the best stories written by Lucy Furman.<sup>7</sup> The heroine of the story, with traits similar to those of cruel Barbary of ballad fame, is a typical coquette.

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<sup>7</sup>J. W. Townsend, Kentucky in American Letters, 2 vols. (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: The Torch Press, 1913), II, 248.

In the story "The Most Knowingest Child" we have a more detailed account of Lowizy Rideout, a character who later appeared in The Glass Window.

In all of her stories and books on the modes and manners of the Kentucky mountaineer, Lucy Furman has written nothing more captivating than her story of mountain travel told in "Out by Ox Team."<sup>8</sup> In giving her personal recollection of the journey Lucy Furman not only has given an authentic account of mountain travel, but has unconsciously written a character sketch of herself as traveler. The story reveals the author's sense of humor as well as her ardent interest in all the people she meets. When the story appeared in The Outlook, it was featured in large type on the cover of the magazine.

The Outlook had published another contribution by Lucy Furman, "The Right Sheriff," which is an article and not a short story, and which is an unbiased discussion of "moonshining."<sup>9</sup> The article was written in appreciation of a Knott County sheriff who was not afraid to perform the duties of his office. Public opinion in the mountains is somewhat divided on the age-old subject of "stilling." Miss Furman has given both points of view. The first was heard repeatedly from the mountain wives and mothers. "I tell you, women, we have got a right sheriff now! He's a breaking up stills, and tarrifying the stillers, and saving our boys for us." The second opinion

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<sup>8</sup>Outlook, CXXKIII (1923), 655-658.

<sup>9</sup>Outlook, CXXKXI (1922), 460-463.

is given in the words of a venerable citizen who said, "Eh law, this fifty-dollar-a-still bounty is the pure ruin of the country, making men turn traitor agin' their own flesh and blood and hunt 'em down like varmints!" The author gives her own viewpoint in the closing paragraph, "Unfortunately a sheriff cannot succeed himself. Whether there will ever be any further enforcement of liquor laws in Knott County remains to be seen."

Certain incidents came under Miss Furman's observation which caused her to write an article entitled "Why We Need Certified Charities."<sup>10</sup> In this article she made an earnest appeal for an organization that would be responsible for classifying and inspecting charitable institutions.

Miss Furman is interested not only in the welfare of people, but of animals as well. Her humanitarian principles are set forth in an article, "The Price of Fur," which was written for The Atlantic Monthly in the interest of cruelly-trapped fur bearing animals.<sup>11</sup> In this heartfelt plea for humane trapping, Miss Furman advocates the use of traps which instantly kill or do not injure, fair methods of shooting, or the new and growing method of fur farming.

Lucy Furman knows the mountain people, and she has written her impressions in a simple and sincere manner. Too often writers of mountain fiction have concentrated upon stories of feud and moonshine, and upon love affairs conducted by shot-guns.

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<sup>10</sup>Christian Century, XLV (1928), 879-881.

<sup>11</sup>The Atlantic Monthly, CXLI (1928), 206-209.

Consequently the works of these fictionists do not reflect the true atmosphere of the Southern Highlands as do the works of Lucy Furman.

## CHAPTER VII

### LATER YEARS

In the fall of 1924, after seventeen and one-half years of social service in the mountains of her native state, Lucy Furman realized that she must give up her work. Repeated attacks of influenza made it necessary for her to leave Kentucky and live in a southern climate.<sup>1</sup> Since that time she has lived mostly in Miami, Florida. During the summer months she usually visits her sister, Mrs. Newman Collins, in Cranford, New Jersey. Mrs. Collins is Miss Furman's literary critic<sup>2</sup> and is also interested in science.

At the time Miss Furman found it necessary to leave Hindman, she was living with four small boys in a cottage which she herself had built on a cliff above the other settlement buildings. In this group was a little boy, ten years of age, who had been taken by Miss Furman on the death of his mother six years before. Because she loved him so devotedly, Lucy Furman took the lad with her to Florida.

During the second year of his stay there, the boy heard that his father had been badly injured in a wagon accident. He was content no longer, for now he felt that his place was in Kentucky caring for "paw and the property," his father being alone in the home. With a real understanding of his homesickness

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<sup>1</sup>Grace Jones, "Lucy Furman, Social Worker and Story-Teller," Boston Evening Transcript, November 5, 1927.

<sup>2</sup>Susan Towles, conversation with the writer.

and feeling of responsibility, Miss Furman sent the boy back to his father. Through the years that followed this sturdy youth performed the home and farm tasks which were his and, in addition, walked five miles back and forth to school in Hindman, where he graduated at the head of his class.

In the fall of 1932, assisted by Miss Furman, the boy entered Berea College, Berea, Kentucky. Soon after his entrance into the school he received new honors by winning a three-mile race in the College Track Meet. In a letter to Miss Furman the winner attributed his success to his long hike back and forth to school in Hindman, which had kept him in splendid physical condition. The boy wants to enter the profession of his grandfather, "Old Doc Ross" of Lonesome Road. Miss Furman hopes that this mountain youth may have a medical course in Johns Hopkins University. Interested always in her boys, Lucy Furman has made it financially possible for a number of them to attend college. Nucky, the hero of Mothering on Perilous, was sent to Phillips-Exeter and later to Harvard.<sup>3</sup>

Through her writings Miss Furman has enlisted the sympathy and interest of many people in the mountain children of whom she writes. At one time it was suggested that the Kentucky division of the Daughters of the American Revolution might establish a large scholarship fund for these children. In response to the suggestion Miss Furman said,

If there is any work in the world that is

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<sup>3</sup>Lucy Furman, letter in files of the Henderson County Historical Society, December 10, 1914.

truly patriotic, any in which the D. A. R. especially ought to take an interest, it is this work of ours for the mountain children, practically all of whom are descended from Revolutionary officers or soldiers who received land grants for their services and settled a fine, sturdy race of pioneers in these mountains. Five generations of isolation, deprivation, and ignorance have failed to take from them their pride, their native intelligence, and their ambition to get "larning" in spite of everything.<sup>4</sup>

Although many miles are now between Lucy Furman and the mountain boys she loves, she thinks of them constantly. Nothing gives her such joy as her correspondence with them and their wives. When a child is named for her Miss Furman is delighted and feels that she is greatly honored. In answer to the question, "How many boys have you mothered?" Miss Furman replied, "Oh I don't know just how many, but there are over seventy I pray for every night."<sup>5</sup>

Henderson, Kentucky, the birthplace of Lucy Furman, is very dear to her memory. She hopes that some day she may write some stories about the early days in the historic old town. In 1923 Lucy Furman was chosen as an honorary member of the Henderson County Historical Society. The attitude of Miss Furman toward her home town is revealed in a letter written to the President of the Society at the time of her election.

I am deeply complimented at being made an honorary member of your society, along with Mr. [Young E.] Allison and Mrs. [Nancy Houston] Banks. Nothing in the world could make me happier than to think I am remembered in my dear old home town, to

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Grace Jones, op. cit.

which I have so long been a stranger. There is nothing so beautiful and yet so poignantly sad as the home of one's childhood. I felt for a long time that I could never come back to Henderson but, thank Heaven, as the years pass the sadness is swallowed up in beauty and I may yet feel that I can bear to return.

In 1929 the Henderson County Historical Society celebrated the early history of the town, and Lucy Furman was invited as one of the guests of honor for the occasion. In answer to the invitation Miss Furman says,

Nothing could mean so much to me as to be present at the unveiling of the tablets on October 11, commemorating the early history of our beloved town.

It is because I love Henderson so much that I have not returned to it before now. I felt it would be very sad in some ways. And yet, it would be a happy thing for me, too, seeing those who remain, and renewing the ties broken so many years ago.<sup>6</sup>

This letter was followed by another on September 12 in which she says,

Since writing you last I have been far from well---a return of an old and very annoying trouble---and I am beginning to think I may not be able to come for the unveiling. I can't stand the least bit of cold---it simply ruins me.

In another letter to Miss Towles, in which she anticipated a visit to Henderson, Miss Furman said, "It will be lovely to get back where I am called by my old nickname 'Pearl' again."

Mention has been made of the article "Price of Fur" which was written by Lucy Furman in the interest of the Anti-Steel-Trap

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<sup>6</sup>Letter to Miss Towles, September 5, 1929.

Movement. The League, which is a national organization incorporated under the laws of the District of Columbia, has no paid officials. Lucy Furman shares the honor of the office of Vice-President with George Arliss, Katherine Mayo, Mrs. Margaret Deland, and others of similar renown.

The national President, Mrs. Edward Breck, pays tribute to Miss Furman as follows:

She is a valuable officer of our League because of her broad humanitarian principles and the fact that she is, despite her ill health and limited strength, a real crusader in the cause of trapped animals. She was one of the first writers to respond to the plea the Anti-Steel-Trap League sent out for authors to use their gifted pens in defence of our sadly exploited furbearers. Miss Furman wrote a splendid article called "Price of Fur" which was published in The Atlantic Monthly.<sup>7</sup>

In the article mentioned by Mrs. Breck, Lucy Furman sets forth the purpose of the league in her usual simple and direct manner:

The Anti-Steel-Trap League is organized with the object of getting laws passed by the legislatures of all the states against the manufacture, sale, or use of the steel trap. This league in no way opposes or antagonizes the fur trade; its sole purpose is to bring about the taking of furs in a humane way.<sup>8</sup>

Lucy Furman has worked as much as her strength permits in the interest of the league. Recently her time has been given to correspondence in order that she might influence State

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<sup>7</sup>Letter to the writer, March 10, 1933.

<sup>8</sup>"Price of Fur," Atlantic, CXLI (1928), 209.

Federations of Women's clubs to arouse sufficient public sentiment to make the passage of a law possible. Laws have been passed in three states.

During the winter of 1932-1933 Miss Furman has been working with the two hundred federated women's clubs of Florida, trying to get them all interested in the passage of the Anti-Steel-Trap bill in the next legislature.<sup>9</sup> Looking to the future, Miss Furman has said, "Next year I do hope that I may be able to get a Kentucky Division started."<sup>10</sup>

Miss Furman is interested in progress, but she regrets that the new civilization which is coming so fast into the Kentucky Mountains is affecting the quaint ancestral customs and the Elizabethan speech of the mountain folk. The vanguards of this civilization, the railroad and the mining camp, unless quickly followed by schools and churches have a bad effect on the Southern mountaineer. He catches up the vices of the incoming current only too rapidly. "The mining towns are an abomination," said Miss Furman. In further explanation she related how the mountaineer sells his land to the mining company for an amount that represents a fortune to him, but which, in reality, is only a nominal sum. He moves into the camp, where his money quickly disappears. Thus he is forced to return to the land as a renter, and never again rises to the proud position of "freeholder." Miss Furman has told something of these conditions in her novel

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<sup>9</sup>Lucy Furman, letter to the writer, January 13, 1933.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

Lonesome Road.

Lucy Furman is interested in many things, but able to do few, because of the severe insomnia which has afflicted her since her youth and which sometimes for years at a time makes it impossible for her to do any writing at all. She can never plan ahead as other writers can, but lives under a cruel handicap.

Miss Furman has written her books as a result of real literary feeling and never for the sake of propaganda. She writes only of the things she feels impelled to tell.

When the publisher of a large weekly paper asked her for a Christmas story and indicated a sum that most writers would not have had the moral courage to refuse, she declined the offer on the ground that she "simply couldn't write anything to order, but must write as her heart dictates."<sup>11</sup>

Known in her youth for her vivacity and beauty, Lucy Furman has lost little of either. Today she is a woman of great charm and personality. To meet Lucy Furman is to love her. One is first impressed with her clear blue eyes, a certain geniality of her countenance, and the mobility of her face. Her friendliness of manner and contagious enthusiasm have no doubt been important factors in bringing success to all her endeavors.

Modesty, the outstanding personal trait of Miss Furman, and her consequent dislike of publicity, combined with always frail health, which has made it necessary for her to live a quiet life, have all resulted in the public knowing little of Lucy Furman. Yet much recognition has been hers. No honor has been

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<sup>11</sup>Grace Jones, op. cit.

more appreciated by her than a recent one. The George Fort Milton Award, given by the University of Tennessee to "the Southern woman writer who has accomplished most for her sex," was received by Miss Furman in March, 1933. She was nominated for the award by the Kentucky Congress of Parent-Teacher Associations, and the honor is doubly appreciated by the author because of the recognition which came from her Kentucky admirers. She remarked, "I was delighted my own state should do this."<sup>12</sup>

The following paragraphs are quoted from an article which appeared in the Nashville Tennessean, March 14, 1933, at the time the award was announced. With this fitting tribute this study of the life and works of Lucy Furman is brought to a close.

Out of the heart of the Kentucky mountains — a record of service to womankind brings to Miss Lucy S. Furman, distinguished Southern writer, the 1932 George Fort Milton Award of \$200. The winner, nominated by the Kentucky Congress of Parents and Teachers, was announced today by the University of Tennessee, administrator of the award.

The Milton Awards were created in 1924 by the will of the late George Fort Milton, distinguished journalist, owner and editor of the Chattanooga News, who was deeply interested in the cause of women. The award goes each year to the Southern woman writer accomplishing the most for her sex. Women's organizations throughout the South contribute to the choice by submitting candidates and presenting their qualifications.

Both social service and literary excellence

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<sup>12</sup>Letter to the writer, March 2, 1933.

were involved in Miss Furman's choice. Among the well known works of the author to which the judges gave consideration were Mothering on Perilous, Quare Women, The Glass Window, and Lonesome Road.

Despite ill health Miss Furman's life has been dedicated to the mountain people through her work with the Hindman Settlement School. . . . "I feel that I have done little indeed for the mountain women whom I so love and admire"; Miss Furman says, "they have made a very special appeal to me from the beginning,--- the isolation and loneliness and drudgery of their lives, their utter devotion as mothers (seldom or never expressed in words or caresses), their strong sense of duty, and of accountability to God for their offspring, their deep faith, verging often upon the mystic---all these things inspire in me a reverence I have never felt for any other people.

In this day, when to women of the outside world wifehood and motherhood too often have no spiritual meaning, family ties are all too lightly broken, and pleasure rather than duty is the chief end, I am thankful to God for the mountain women, and feel that it is to the sons of such mothers America may soon have to look for true leadership.

"Miss Furman's work among the mountain people, and the wide interest and sympathy aroused by her Quare Women, by her Mothering on Perilous, her Sight to the Blind, The Glass Window, and other stories are universally known," declared Miss Mary E. Baker, librarian; Miss Jessie Harris, professor of home economics; and Miss Ruth Stephens, instructor in history; University of Tennessee, who were the judges. Her writings have unquestionably been potent factors in the improvement of conditions surrounding the mountain women whom they describe, and they have been doubly effective in that through them there has been opened to many other women a rich field for service.

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"The Floating Bethel," Century XLIX (1894), 297-301.

"Kate Negley's Leadings," Century XLIX (1895), 548-550.

"Special Providence," Century LII (1896), 114-118.

Sight to the Blind (New York: Macmillan, 1914).

This story had been published in Century LXXXIV (1912), 390-397.

"Doings on Perilous Series":

"Hard-hearted Barbary Allen," Century LXXXIII (1912), 739-744.

"Course of True Love," Century LXXXIV (1912), 498-504.

"Scarborough Spoons," Century LXXXV (1912), 126-135.

"Christmas Tree on Clinch," Century LXXXV (1912), 163-171.

"Most Knowingest Child," Century LXXXV (1913), 763-769.

This series was not completed and some of the material was used later in The Glass Window.

Mothering on Perilous (New York: Macmillan, 1915).

This volume is a compilation of short stories which had appeared separately:

"The Two Homesicks," Century LXXXI (1910), 296-302.

"The Pure Scholar," Century LXXXI (1910), 445-449.

"The Fightingest Boy," Century LXXXI (1910), 561-565.

"The Born Trader," Century LXXXI (1910), 767-774.

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"Why We Need Certified Charities," Christian Century XLV

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### On Meat-Eating

I was glad to see the letter from Mr. Litsey in regard to meat-eating. It is very timely. I myself have eaten no meat for 32 years—not only no red meat, but no fish or fowl, and I know of no woman in her 70s who is so active and free from all rheumatic and other troubles as I am.

I get most of my proteins where the herbivorous animals get theirs, and also their great strength, from the green leaf, chlorophyl furnishing the best possible protein. Daily I have one large helping of cooked greens, chard, kale, spinach, mustard, beet-tops, turnip-tops, with one egg. Another meal is always raw salads, in large quantity, lettuce, escarole, watercress, romaine, Chinese cabbage, also tomatoes, cucumbers, avocado, radishes, with dressing of lemon juice and oil. A third meal consists of three, four or more fresh fruits, with sometimes nuts or nut butters. Nuts furnish a perfect protein, as also does brewers' yeast. Cheese is another good protein. Once a day I have whole-wheat bread.

Because Kentucky is a livestock-raising State, Kentuckians seem to think they will starve without large amounts of meat; and by the time they are 60, if not earlier, many are irretrievably injured. People should be, and can be, as active in body and mind at 60, 70, even 80, as at 20, and would be if they ate right. Bernard Shaw is a fine illustration—mind as keen, body as alert at 92 as in his youth.

Another highly harmful food is white bread, which, in the process of milling, has been robbed of all the value of the wheat berry, nothing but the inner starch remaining, and it does nothing but put on ugly fat. It is also as acid-forming in the blood as meats. Every family should have its own mill, and grind its flour or meal and cereals from whole grains. The hand-mills can be obtained from any of the large mail-order houses for \$3.75, or, electrically run, for about \$15. They mean a great saving of health and money.

LUCY FURMAN

Frankfort, Ky.

C. J. 8/18/48



MISS LUCY FURMAN  
As she looked in 1949

## Lucy Furman, 'Steel Trap Woman' Who Fought Cruelty to Animals, Dies

### State Native Also Author

"The Steel Trap Woman," who waged a four-year campaign in the 1930's to prevent needless cruelty to fur-bearing animals, is dead.

Miss Lucy Furman, a native of Henderson, Ky., died August 23 in Cranford, N. J., where she lived with a nephew, Dillard Collins. She moved to Cranford from Frankfort five years ago.

Miss Lucy acquired her title when she began to lobby in Frankfort in 1934 against the common steel trap. Later she toured the state, urging women's groups to join the cause.

#### Heard Tales of Despair

Early in the 1900's Miss Lucy went to Hindman Settlement School in Knott County. There, while working in the fields, garden, and orchards, she heard mountain boys tell of animals knawing off their legs to escape from steel traps.

In the 1920's, she became ill and moved to Florida. In 1928 she wrote an article about the

cruelty of steel traps for the *Atlantic Monthly*.

Its publication caused her to be made a vice-president of the Anti-Steel Trap League of Washington, D. C. She returned to Kentucky in 1934 and offered the first anti-steel-trap bill to the General Assembly.

#### New Trap Devised

It wasn't until 1938 that a law was passed, to take effect in 1940. A new type of trap had been devised, a chain-loop affair that secured an animal's leg but didn't hurt or maim him.

Miss Lucy then toured the state demonstrating the new kind of trap. She would even put her own hand in it to show that it didn't hurt.

Aside from her interest in animals, Miss Furman was widely known as an author. Among her works were "The Quare Women," "The Glass Window," and "Mothering with her Experiences in the Mountains."

She won the 1922 George Fort Milton Award, offered to the Southern woman writer who accomplished the most for her sex.

Miss Furman was an inveter-

ate writer of letters to the editor of *The Courier-Journal* and *The Louisville Times*. Excerpts from some of her letters follow:

"Women who desire furs should stop and think before buying. . . Any woman willing to wear furs taken by torture has lost all the finer attributes of womanhood. . ."

#### Warned About Easter

"The sale of live chicks and ducks at Easter for children to own and to play with is a cruelty that should not be countenanced. These little creatures, taken from the warmth of the brooder, usually die promptly from chilling all night; they are almost never properly watered and fed, and small children, having no knowledge of pain, squeeze them to death or carelessly trample on them, or stick pins in their eyes. . ."

A 1935 newspaper article about Miss Furman said, in part: "Quiet and gentle in demeanor, Miss Furman's blue eyes flash and her voice trembles with indignation as she displays the cruel sawtoothed steel traps she uses to illustrate her lectures."