

# A FRESHMAN AT FISHBONE

BY JAMES STUART

I AM not much of anybody. I may be called a nothing, or a poor white, or a game rooster, or Jim Stuart: it doesn't matter. I am one who has everything to win and nothing to lose. I have even weight to gain. I have just finished high-school and I weigh only 103 pounds. I am fourteen years old, but I have man ways. I am able to drive tacks with a pistol, and nails with a rifle. I am able to run a cutter plow in new ground with two good steady mules hitched to the beam. I can use ax, spade, hoe and scythe. I can do a man's work on the farm.

But I want to leave the soil. I want an education. I hear so much about the education of poor mountain boys. When educations are given to them they make Governors and Presidents. So I want an education to put in a basket and show it to people. Now, after this brief introduction, allow me to explain how I got all the education I have—got the black eye, I should say.

There is only one in our family who really has any such thing as an education—I mean to say, a college education. The other five read and write from poor to terrible. So I take the advice of my brother. He tells me of a school in the Eastern part of Kentucky that stands for the education of mountain students poor as I am. He tells me of the advantages I shall have at Fishbone College. He brings me a Fishbone catalogue.

I am glad to get it. I take it and read.

It says people wear plain clothes there. It says that no silks are allowed. It says that all boys and girls are entitled to the same chance in this world, and Fishbone gives them this chance. I get interested in a thing that reads like that. It is an adventure. I want to go on this adventure. I ask my brother what he thinks about it—the educated one in our family. He thinks it is fine, he tells me. So I am in a notion to go to Fishbone.

The days pass by. I plow the soil. I hoe the corn. I sow the cane for hay. I plow the potatoes. I cut weeds in the garden. I see that the cattle get fresh water. I use the ax, the plow, the rake, the hoe. I do the work of a man on our hill-side farm. I am a nothing now. But let me speak for my hill country. The hills are covered with green trees, and the wind blows through the tree tops and the leaves flutter. The white clouds float high above. I wish I were a poet now. I wish I could make rhymes like the wind that blows and then throw them to the wind.

This is a pretty rugged country. And I am rugged like my country. I want to step out and do something for it. I want an education,—that is what I want now—that is all I want now. But the water is blue that flows in the mountain streams and there are minnows in this water. There are log-houses in the mountains and old orchards. There are hills covered with blackberry briars and they are in bloom—these old fields are white now. I work and

worship the hills. They are beautiful with the starlight above the loose green-waving leaves. I am not a poet and I cannot speak what I feel.

The Summer season is going fast. I shall be in Fishbone in September. I write a letter and I am accepted. Now I must get ready and go there. I must get clothes. I pick blackberries and sell them. I buy clothes with the money. I sell peaches off our little farm after we have canned enough for the family. I sell potatoes. I sell green corn. I do all the extra days' work I can get for fifty cents a day. I want to go to college. I want to get an education and be a Governor, rail-splitter, President. I have seen too many grow up like weeds and go to seed here in the hills where I live. I want to go beyond this all. And I shall go beyond if I ever get to Fishbone.

My father has worked on the section for the C. & O. Railway for the past seventeen years. The supervisor of the Cincinnati Division favors him with a railway pass for me to ride to Fishbone. My brother borrows fifty dollars for me. My father gives me five. My mother gives me one. I have already saved ten and bought me a trunk and a suit of clothes, shirts, socks, neckties, underwear and a scarf and a hat. Dad gives me his overcoat. I have it dyed and it draws up just to fit me. What luck I do have. I am ready for the mountain college—Fishbone—dear old Fishbone.

The choo-choo arrives. A cloud of black smoke follows. I ride away. Good-bye, old hills. I belong to you, and so I say good-bye to you. Good-bye, friends, and you, the well-worked mules in our barn. Good-bye to mattocks, pitch-forks, spades and hoes. Good-bye to you all. I am going off to get an education. I shall return with a pencil behind my ear. It is great to have an education. It is great to walk with a

pencil behind your ear. I am going to Fishbone to take advantages of all they have to offer. And the choo-choo speeds through the blue light of the day.

## II

Fishbone is a big school in the little town of Fishbone. I am here now and I know. I see hundreds of others here for the same purpose that I have in mind. We all want to go beyond our hills. We all seek baskets of education. I am going to get my basket full. Yes, I am going to have mine.

I meet the boys. I salute the colors. I am a freshman at Fishbone College. I am just a little upstart here. That is all I am. But I mix and I mingle. I find the Fishbone girls are rope-walkers. They have to watch each step. They cannot wear their silks. They cannot wear high-heel shoes. The authorities raid the girls' dormitories. They get the slippers with the narrow heels. They keep them.

One is fined for stepping on the grass at Fishbone. One is not allowed to smoke at Fishbone. An old man with a bald head—shiny as glass in the moonlight—crawls around our windows at night, hunting for cigarette butts. I throw water out of the window on his bald head. He cries out in anger. He runs in the hall. He knows what window it came from. He has my name and number.

I take a course in the Bible. Old Professor Walrus nods: my faith is not secure. Professor Walrus sleeps in chapel. But that is all right. We all sleep there at Fishbone. We all sleep and nod and look drowsy-eyed. But we wake in time to clap our hands after the speech is done and the song is sung and the organ played. I get tired of having to sleep when I am not obliged to sleep. I paint a handkerchief red. I say my nose is bleeding. The marks

are not put against me and I am excused from chapel. I pull this many times. It grows old. And then I have a boy to answer for me.

I never go out among the girls. I find it is very dangerous. A boy has been fined twenty-five dollars for kissing a girl. I would be fined too. My fine would probably be twice twenty-five. But I do not indulge. Social life is limited at Fishbone. I clean out the manure and haul it over the ground. And I work in the dining-room. I wait on table. I get plenty to eat and I am growing. I am getting an education, too.

The year goes slow at Fishbone. I count the days. I clean the barns of their manure and I lean on my pitch-fork and dream. I say the days go slow at Fishbone. And I count them. I find that Fishbone life is not the life for me. It is either too fast or too slow. It must be too fast. I cannot get any applejack to drink at Fishbone. It is a dry place. I cannot get any cider. I cannot get any persimmon brandy. I cannot get any home-made twist to chew.

I want my shotgun that doesn't have a sight. It has seen service for two generations. The barrel is corroded now. But I need it. I need a pack of hounds. I need to be back on the soil again. I need to drink of lonesome waters, back where I grew up. I need to see the stars shine down on the clouds of loose green leaves. I need to set the blooming hollyhocks in the chimney corner the chickens wallow under. I need to feel the wind about my face and going through my hair, and I need the sunshine on my skin.

I need my mountain mother to explain the Bible to me and I don't need to know it the way it is taught at Fishbone College. They are supposed to teach the Bible. Walrus is supposed to teach it to us. But I get to the place where I hate the Bible. There

used to be something sacred about it, but since I have been in Fishbone that sacredness is removed. I regard it as just another book. I am torn to pieces the way the Bible is taught. They just don't know about it. People away from Fishbone go on about the marvelous way the Bible is taught there. They just don't know about it. Let them send their sons and daughters. They will soon find out the things I am saying are true.

I have dreams of home now. The year is passing. It has gone so slowly. I begin to hear the pounding of the horses' hoofs and the rattle of the buggy over the dusty Spring roads, though it is all only a dream—a dream of home and green among the trees and white clouds floating over—a dream of the furrow, the fresh furrow and young green corn—a dream of the stars shining down on the green fields and the wind in the tree tops. I begin to hear the fiddle at the square dance. And I begin to swing my partner on the plank floor. In the hills of Northeast Kentucky is the place to be. It is a great land inhabited by the finest people on earth. I have dreams of that place—dreams of the trees and the fields and streams and the stars above them.

I find Fishbone is not what I expected it to be. I do not fit. I am independent and free. Fishbone doesn't want that type of student. They want one that can stand to stay in jail, for college is a jail. We are never allowed to leave. I know Fishbone does not want me. I can tell it. They do not want a student who will not handshake the professors for a grade. I just can't do that, though it would be fun to see the A's come rolling in to take the place of my weasly C's and D's.

I am going back to the soil with an empty basket. I leave education for others. I hope they get full baskets. I do not want

it. I see now what it is. I do not want it. I shall leave Fishbone soon. I send letters to radio studios where tobacco programmes are put on and ask them to play numbers for the boys in Fishbone, who love the tobacco they advertise but can't use it on account of the Fishbone officials. Then we listen over the air and everybody laughs.

It is great fun. The officials are mad at Fishbone. They offer rewards for the ones that caused studios to play for the Fishbone boys. And then I laugh.

### III

It is May 27, 1932. I am packing to leave Fishbone. The year is over. I get the monitor's wheelbarrow and wheel my trunk to the station. I express it home. I have eighty cents left and I owe Fishbone nearly forty dollars. I paste three Fishbone stickers on my suitcase. There is the word Fishbone spelled in big letters on the sticker. There is a cross on the sticker and behind the cross is a sun. Above the cross and the sun are these words: "Vincit qui patitur." And in a blue circle around the blue cross are these words in white letters: "God hath made of one blood all nations of men."

These words go away from Fishbone and people think they are representative of the place. They are not. I know they are not. I start thumbing my way across Kentucky with these words on my suitcase. I carry them with me to the hill country. I carry them on my suitcase but not in my heart, for I don't believe them. They are not true of Fishbone College. And so it is farewell to old Fishbone—farewell forever, for I shall not return. The hills grow small and dark behind. In six hours I am home. I spent ten cents for a bowl of soup. I have seventy left. I give it to my mother.

Home again. Back to the hills. I go to our shack among the pines. I am glad to see it. I am proud to see the blue smoke rise from the stone chimney. I am glad to see the young tobacco and the corn. I am glad to see the green back in the oak trees on the hill—green back in all the trees. I am proud to be home. Here we all are together—here we are at the table together, and my mother asks me about Fishbone.

I do not talk about Fishbone. People who have been there are like the veterans of the World War. They don't like to talk about France and the war, and I am an old Fishbone veteran and I don't like to talk about Fishbone. So I say as little as possible to my mother. While I am at the supper table I hear the long notes of the hunter's horn sound across the green valley, and then there is an echo. After supper I go out and walk under the stars and the trees. It is great to be home again. I am filled with life.

I try to pray. But my prayers are crude. I am close against the soil. I pray: "Creator of the Universe, make me strong enough to rise above these oaks. Give me fists big as fence-post mauls. Give me a backbone big as an oak sapling. Make my body tough-butted hickory. Make a man of me. Let me do more than my share of work. And let the branches of my tough-butted hickory body find a place beyond the stars."

I am spending the Summer at home. I am plowing the soil. I am happy to be cutting posts and making fence. It is great to live in the hills of Kentucky. I am working hard at home. My mother and father are hard-put for money. My father is caught in this great calamity of a Depression, and his section work has been cut to four days a week, with a 10% reduction in wages. They sold eggs, butter,

milk, corn and potatoes, and sent the money to me at Fishbone. I think of this now.

At the post-office I open two letters from Fishbone College, Fishbone, Kentucky. One letter reads that I have flunked Bible and composition. I did not make my standing. Therefore, I am expelled—not expelled, but I can't return. That is all right. The reason I did not make my standing was: I did not swallow the Bible as Professor Walrus fed it to me. I couldn't please old Jiggs. So I lost in composition. That is the reason this piece of truth is no better written than it is: I did not pass in Jiggs' composition course. I couldn't swallow it till it was punched down my throat with a mattock handle.

The second letter had a statement in it that stabbed me like a knife at first. And then I laughed. The statement was this: "You will not be admitted to Fishbone College next year. We think you will not profit by a college education." I'll admit I do not care for Fishbone College, but who is it there who knows that I or anyone else will not profit by a college education? The statement should have read, to have been correct, that I would not profit by a *Fishbone* college education. I know damn well I am going to profit by one from some other college. I am now fifteen and strong in body. Let us turn away from Fishbone and look to the future. That is what I am going to do.

I am just plain Jim Stuart now. I am rabbit hunting. It is Autumn. The leaves have turned to yellow and light yellow and to scarlet and silver and gold. The season is great. I love it. The trees are beautiful here in Northeast Kentucky. And I am proud to be back close to the Kentucky soil. I shall be a writer some day. I think I shall be a writer. If I do, I shall say many

more things about Fishbone. I shall make it the background for a novel. It would make a good background. There is plenty of material in Kentucky for a writer. I am going after it. Fishbone can go to the dumps, for my part. I am glad to get away from that place. All I want is never to be classed as even a once-student from that school, studying Bible and composition. The price is too great.

Now I want to say something to Fishbone and all concerned with Fishbone. Fishbone, you have dealt with me. Now I shall deal with you. As I look at the sticker still on my suitcase and the cross with the sun on it and the words, "Vincit Qui Patitur," I think of the silent prayer I uttered about the branches on my tough-butted hickory body finding a place beyond the stars. Yes, those stars that I am trying to find a place beyond, old Fishbone, are as great as the sun behind your cross. And remember, Fishbone, I'll beat you yet. Hell yes, I shall beat you. I am able to use a pen and a typewriter, and I shall speak against you. I shall speak against you because I know you.

I shall fight you because you are insincere. You are a thin monument in the air. You are a wind-structure. You are nothing. "The dead take to their graves, in their clutched fingers, only that which they have given away." Fishbone, what have you given to me? You gave me scorn. You told me I could do nothing in life—I should not go to college. Are you going to take this to the grave with you? You must lie in a grave, you know. You are bound to go to the grave. You cannot miss it. We all go to the grave. Institutions go as well as human flesh.

I shall see you twenty years later, Fishbone, if we are both out of the grave I have been speaking of.

# GOLF IS A POOR MAN'S GAME

BY KENNETH PAYSON KEMPTON

THE White Brook, our country club, faces a curious situation. We have a \$50,000 house equipped with every known convenience and luxury; we have a championship course offering fresh beauties, fresh challenges to skill, on every tee; we have a practise green, tennis courts, a skating rink, a swimming pool, a toboggan run—all the trimmings. But at this moment we have less than half the income necessary to save the club from collapse and dissolution.

Tactful inquiry reveals that our predicament is pretty general. The neighboring clubs, numbering fifteen in this metropolitan area, range from mere straitened circumstances to a condition only two jumps ahead of the sheriff. Bonny Brae and the Hill have actually closed their doors and placed their acres in the hands of real estate men, who go out in the late afternoon and stare hopelessly at the fluffy traps, the intricate water hazards, the rolling fairways and perfectly graded greens. Westfield has reduced its greens fee and hung out a sign on the highway soliciting public favor. The others are muddling along, assessing, borrowing, sinking deeper every minute.

Almost everybody agrees on the cause: the Depression. If a club shows a \$40,000 annual budget (and this is conservative), its dues being \$100, ease in Zion rests on its retention of four hundred paying members. If even one hundred resign, and if no substitutes can be rushed into the

breach, and if the corporation lacks—as most golf clubs do lack—reserves, surplus or sinking fund—bang! No club.

Yet somebody once undertook to prove that *post hoc ergo propter hoc* has a flaw in it. A few of us, still dubs at golf but members here of long standing, will concede only that the Depression is an immediate contributing factor to our decline, in the sense that when one thing goes wrong others follow. We believe that the actual cause antedates November, 1929, by thirty years.

For that is when our fathers incorporated White Brook, in 1899. A dozen residents of this suburban township took leasehold on a few acres of pasture, knocked up a shack in the center, and began slicing gutta percha balls about the terrain, to the vast amusement of everybody else. The dues were ten dollars.

It is hard to realize how recently golf in this country began, so firm and extensive is its hold upon us now. Fifty years ago a man traveling with a bag of clubs was an object of wonder and derision. Many confused the game with polo. The first club on this side, the St. Andrews of Yonkers, was founded so late as 1888. Two years later golf was still virtually unknown, and the U.S.G.A. was not formed until '94. Thus White Brook was almost a pioneer.

I remember well the main room of our primitive clubhouse. Windsor chairs girt the hearth; English sporting prints and score cards were tacked around the stained