

OUR MOTHER

How hard our mother worked during the long years of her family's young lives, having eleven pregnancies, two being miscarriages, from 1909 to 1946, when the youngest, Elaine, graduated from high school. She was indefatigable, and could do just about anything there was to do on the farm. She washed, ironed, sewed, canned, cooked, milked cows, raised chickens, geese, and ducks, planted, hoed, striped tobacco, shocked grain, about everything except drive the horses pulling the machinery, or later driving the tractor. At the same time, she was pregnant a good part of the time, bore the babies, came in from the fields to nurse them, stayed up with them at night when they were sick or restless, and never gave up despite the periods such as during the great depression when it appeared that all might be lost.

I have anguish and remorse in remembering her great strength, strength, strength in person and character, in body and mind and soul. In younger years, she seemed to be running to accomplish all of the work that she considered hers which included both children, house barn, and the farm. Seldom did she walk slowly, except in extreme fatigue, as she would return from a 12-hour day in the fields, in hot sun and wind, very often very pregnant with another child, perhaps nauseated, heavy with the extra weight of the child within her, too exhausted, often, to eat more than a "crust of bread and a little coffee". At times other than that, she walked with a purpose, seemingly, sometimes hurriedly as though on a special mission of accomplishment, or as though there was little time left for whatever mission it

was. And, as she grew older, and the farm was more secure, she still walked as though she was in a hurry, even though it was merely to visit, or to play cards. She truly enjoyed and savored life, and never was heard to talk about being old, or referring to herself as one with pains and aches. She enjoyed hearing that she didn't look to be 70, or 80, or 90 years of age, and she never did look her age. Until her death at 93, her legs were as firm as in her young, no varicosities, no flabby muscles, the envy of her daughters who showed signs of aging at a much younger age. Everyone enjoyed her, and enjoyed being with her as she was always positive, happy, and optimistic.

The only time I saw her cry was when Johnny set the barn afire when he was four years old, in 1927 (?). She was sitting in her nursing rocker, nursing Gregory when Johnny came into the house and told us he lit a match in the haybarn. She gave me the baby, and ran out to see if it was true, but by then the fire was billowing out of the barn doors, and she came back to the house sobbing, realizing she couldn't put out the fire. With the beginning of the depression years already being felt, the loss of the barn was calamitous, but gratitude was over-riding that Johnny was able to get out of the haystack in the barn before it overtook him, which would have been the real tragedy.