

*A* Reader's Digest

REPRINT

# "STAY ON, STRANGER"

By William S. Dutton



THE READER'S DIGEST • PLEASANTVILLE, NEW YORK

## PREFACE

Since the publication of "Stay On, Stranger," many changes have taken place, not only along the banks of Caney Creek, but throughout the "hollows" of Eastern Kentucky.

The College was renamed for Mrs. Alice Lloyd following her death in 1962. Dr. June Buchanan served as president of the Caney Creek Community Center until her death in 1988. Joe Alan Stepp is currently serving as President.

Mr. Stepp faithfully adheres to, and strengthens, Mrs. Lloyd's founding ideals, especially as they relate to the work ethic, and the need to train mountain children to become responsible and sacrificial leaders.

All qualified students are given a chance to attend Alice Lloyd College regardless of income or family background. Most pay nothing. Others pay what they can. All full-time students are required to work. There are no exceptions to the work requirement, which must be met for graduation.

Courses and extracurricular activities stress self-discipline, self-reliance, strong moral and ethical character, sacrificial service and leadership development.

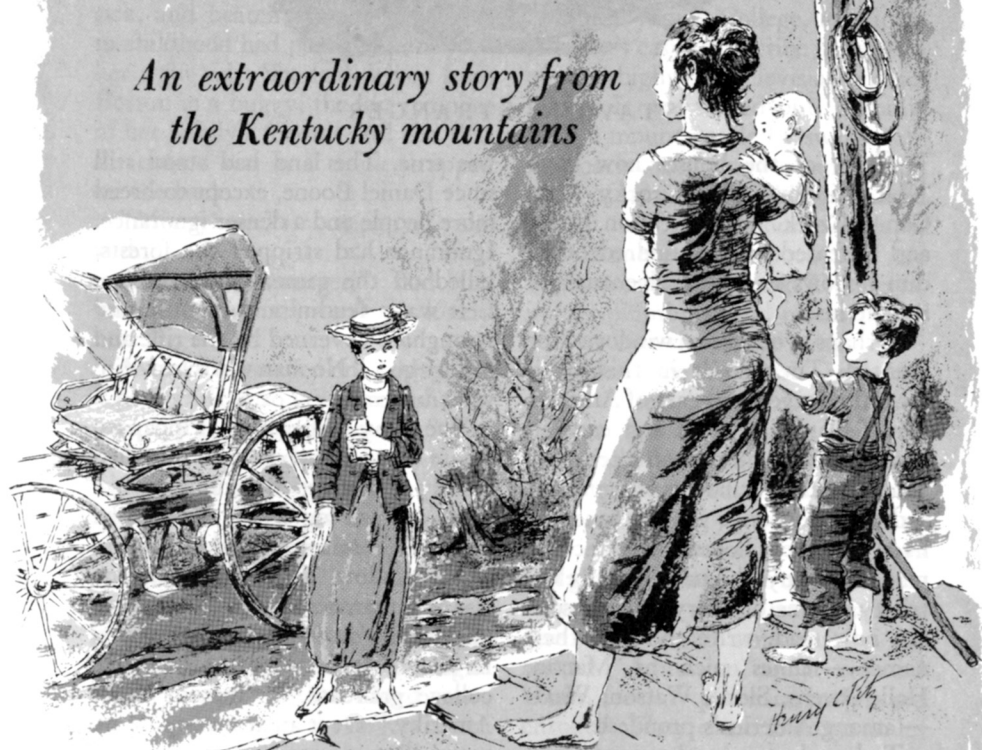
The need for leaders – of, by, and for the people of the mountains – is greater today than ever. For here among the forests, streams, and vast mineral wealth of Central Appalachia, the problems of economic, political and social development are particularly nettlesome.

Alice Lloyd graduates are an important source of the region's doctors, lawyers, ministers, engineers, school teachers, businessmen, industrialists and locally elected public officials. Without these leaders, the contemporary history of the region would be much different. They bear living witness to the founder's claim that "The leaders are here."

The miracle of Caney began with Mrs. Lloyd, who, with one hand, and one Oliver #9 typewriter, changed the destiny of an entire region. We invite you to join the College's friends throughout America who have become a part of that miracle.

# "STAY ON, STRANGER"

*An extraordinary story from  
the Kentucky mountains*



CONDENSED FROM THE BOOK

William S. Dutton

EVEN TODAY the mountainous section of eastern Kentucky which juts between the two Virginias is difficult of access. In the early decades of the century this remote and isolated land was almost completely cut off from the rest of America. Except for breeding more people, more blood feuds and a denser ignorance, it had hardly changed at all since the days of Daniel Boone. Until —

But read this uniquely heart-warming and inspirational story!

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## “STAY ON, STRANGER”

**M**ost of the houses now have windows along rocky little Caney Creek, and in Onion Blade and Defeated and a hundred other dim hollows in eastern Kentucky's mountains.

Perhaps you take windows for granted. They don't in this, until recently, forgotten heart of America where blank log walls and earthen floors ruled for more than a century. The advent of windows has marked a dramatic change in thousands of lives. Earthen floors have become planks; many homes have electricity. Three of every four persons can now read, write and sign their names — names such as Martin, Hall, Owens, Slone, Watson, Watts — among America's proudest.

Today doctors and nurses, lawyers, engineers and above all teachers are at work in the isolated hollows. And this is the miracle: they were all born there. They constitute a growing army like no other. Each member is pledged to serve his people, not until better offers but for *life*.

It is an army of some 1500 selfless leaders.

Back in 1916, when Alice Lloyd came to Caney Creek, none of this

was true. The land had stood still since Daniel Boone, except to breed more people and a denser ignorance. Ignorance had stripped the forests, killed off the game, sowed disease. Left was a feudin' and moonshinin' stronghold governed by the rifle and "short-gun." No man worth shootin' went unarmed.

The tiny village of Pippapass, where Mrs. Lloyd settled, was then merely a few lonely cabins with a tumble-down log school astride the creek. For miles around, no cabin had a window. The average income was less than \$25 a year. Only two persons in 100 could read and write. In all Knott County there was one college graduate, a "furriner from Ameriky." Over an area peopled by more than 100,000 descendants of pioneers, embracing all of Knott and Floyd counties and adjacent parts of Letcher and Perry, there was no public high school, or hope of one. Most school trustees signed their name with an X.

Alice Lloyd came down to this lost land from Boston, Mass.

"What brung you-here, stranger?" asked a mountain woman, her least-un of 11 children on her hip, her face old at 40, her feet bare.

Alice Lloyd gazed into the woman's eyes with the sisterhood of despair. She too was 40. She was sick, and beaten. Spinal meningitis in childhood had partially paralyzed her right side. She had driven from Boston in a buggy, the last remnant of her family's fortune. All else that she owned was in a trunk strapped on the back.

"Misery seeks company," she said.

"Stay on, stranger," said the woman. "You-uns won't git lonely here."

Alice Lloyd stayed on. Today, she is past 77. It is 20 years since she has been "beyond the mountains." Her possessions have dwindled to a few white cotton dresses and a worn-out typewriter. She owns not even the bed she sleeps in. She has no income except board and keep.

But look well at that typewriter. It is a relic of gone days, an ancient Oliver No. 9. Because her right hand is helpless, Alice Lloyd must punch its keys with the fingers of her left hand. Since 1916 that old typewriter has raised \$2,000,000 in money and more in useful gifts. For others.

It has sent more than 200 boys and girls to universities, all expenses paid. It has educated more than 1200 teachers, school principals and county superintendents. It has provided the stimulus for 15 flourishing high schools in an area where Alice Lloyd found none.

Near where that crumbling log school straddled Caney Creek, the

old Oliver No. 9 has founded a college, something that couldn't happen, but did!

Caney Junior College, at Pippa-pass, isn't easy to describe in this day of superhighways, television and jet planes. It was hewed out, literally, from a mountainside by sweat, aching backs, mule-power and faith. Most of its 50-odd buildings, braced against the steep mountain slopes with stone and log buttresses, are small and made of plank. There is no indoor plumbing; and no telephone — that is at the village store.

Students do the work, cook the meals. They built half of Caney College, and their fathers built the other half. Yet Caney has a faculty of 20, graduates of the nation's best schools. It has 135 resident students. Five times that many other boys and girls, for whom the crowded dormitories lack room, would almost give their right arms to be admitted. Admission is a coveted honor, for only potential leaders are enrolled. They come from 50 miles around.

The two-year course is a testing of the fittest. About two thirds complete it. Most go forth to teach in mountain schools. About ten percent are sent on to the University of Kentucky. No Caney graduate has ever failed there.

The college is the heart of Caney Creek Community Center. This includes a 150-pupil grade school, and a public high school of about 100 students, almost half of whom are housed and fed by the college to en-

able them to attend. There is a Little Theater. Two libraries hold 60,000 books, and as many more books have been donated to other mountain schools. The Science Hall sits proudly amid tall trees.

"Here," one of the college trustees told me, spreading his arms, "is a monument to the stubbornest woman in Kentucky."

The trustee is himself a mountain man, Caney-educated. He went on: "She began with two barefoot young-uns, ten dollars and her typewriter. She asked no tuition, no charge for room or board. The gifts she received — they now average about three dollars — were often as little as a bag of potatoes or a settin' hen. I doubt if she has been without pain for ten years. Yet today our college properties alone are appraised at \$425,000."

He told a story that seemed to sum up why. It had happened after the college had been started and the big depression settled down. Science classes were being held in makeshift classrooms, with crude equipment. The trustees were warned that a science hall would have to be built and equipped before the following spring if Caney hoped to be accredited by the University of Kentucky. And there was not one extra dollar for the job.

The boys of Caney and the men of the hollows and the mules from hill farms began work. The hills supplied stone and timber. When the accrediting committee came to view the result, the up-and-down paths

of the Caney campus were icy, and snow was falling. The educators skidded and slipped to the new Science Hall.

Puzzlement spread over their faces. Walls, doors, windows were complete, but there was no roof. Yet the faces of students could be seen behind the frosty windows.

The educators went inside. Classrooms were in order, desks in place, teachers and earnest young students at work, apparently unconscious of the bizarre scene. Two inches of snow covered the plank floor and clung to clothing. Blankets set up like tents were guarding the new scientific apparatuses.

The instruments were new and well chosen. It was explained to the bewildered committee that they had been presented by Charles F. Kettering, the famous Detroit research scientist, and that he also had been the adviser on the courses of instruction.

"What brought *him* here?" asked a committee member.

The answer was simple. He was needed. He came. Perhaps a friend had told him of Caney College. "Such things aren't hard to grasp if you have faith," said a teacher. "We've never been without help when we've needed it."

"But you've no roof over you!" said a visitor.

"The sky's servin' us now, sir," ventured a senior student in his soft mountain drawl. "The roof'll be along."

The trustee telling me the inci-



dent gazed at the roof of Caney's Science Hall, a fine stout roof.

"Thanks to that spirit," he said, "we're accredited by the University of Kentucky. The entire Southern Association of Colleges welcomes our graduates. Our endowment isn't so much as a plugged dime, but to my way of thinking we're the richest school in America, bar none."

The chin lifted.

"I was born yonder in a hollow. My father couldn't write his name. But he sent me to Caney, and he helped build that roof."

ALICE LLOYD regards the first 40 years of her life as a closed book, painful to reopen. She was a Geddes, of an old New England family, and she "belonged." As a girl, she went to select Chauncey Hall and later to Radcliffe College. Then a job writing feature articles for the old Boston *Transcript* took her to the other side of the railroad tracks. Her own crippling infirmity helped her to understand the infirmities of others that too often she found there.

Gall must have been in her soul when she left Boston for Kentucky. She had been doing what she wanted to do — write — but the illness of her childhood had exacted an unending toll, which Boston's winters made worse. "The doctors told me I had to find a milder climate," she said. She lost her husband by going, for his career was in Boston, and the two quietly agreed that no need existed for a double sacrifice.

Why to the eastern Kentucky mountains?

Friends had suggested it as a haven because, it so happened, a shack was there to be had free for the taking. It had been abandoned by a Boston church mission. In that remote region, friends said, one could live for very little. So the buggy was loaded, the family driving horse hitched up. Alice's mother, Ella Geddes, then 65, accompanied her. After a journey of nearly three weeks the two women reached a speck on the Kentucky map called Ivis, on Troublesome Creek.

Ivis is about 12 miles "crost the mountain" from Caney, and both are in that wedge jutting from Kentucky between the two Virginias. The inaccessibility of the region is due to the sheer nature of its mountains, its tangle of narrow hollows, and the absence of navigable streams or other natural passages in or out. Once inside, you've drawn a curtain on the outer world.

Alice Lloyd and Ella Geddes found that the post office at Ivis was a loft in a cabin. If any mail arrived, it was put in a box under the postmistress's bed. A ladder was the way up. "If you-uns think a person might o' writ, jest go up an' take a look," the postmistress invited all inquirers. She couldn't read.

The meetinghouse abandoned by the church mission had been sold for the worth of its timber, but the shack known as Hope Cottage had found no bidders. Its roof was caving, its floor rotting, its scant fur-

nishings mildewed. Alice Lloyd needed no key, for the door sagged ajar.

Hope Cottage made good its name. It opened Troublesome Creek's first window, and it was in Alice Lloyd's soul. Through it she saw that fortune is largely the product of viewpoint. So, too, is misery. A small mountain girl made that fact clear.

Wide-eyed, speechless in her wonder, the girl in homespun looked at the well-groomed horse from Boston, at the brass ornaments on the harness, at the varnished buggy, all worn and shabby by New England standards. She touched the threadbare sleeve of Mrs. Lloyd's oldest coat. At last she gasped, "Be you-uns a prin-cess?"

"Comparing my lot with my neighbors'," said Alice Lloyd, "what had seemed my mountain of trouble became so small that I was ashamed. To them, my least was much. It was then that I buried my past, forgot my ills. I knew humility before my Maker for the first time. He had given me untold wealth to share."

She tried to understand why the church mission had failed. It had been in the hands of devoted men and women, yet the windowless cabins had closed their doors. Proud and independent, bowing only to the stern God of their fathers, the mountaineers had grimly warned the furriners to leave.

"They-uns warn't kin," said the postmistress.

Could any outlander become kin

to these people? Alice Lloyd asked herself.

One raw winter day the answer came to Hope Cottage. It was borne on barefoot from Caney Creek by Abisha Johnson, called Bysh, clad only in the jean shirt that he had rinsed in the creek, and his soil-stiff jean trousers. No humbler Summonser, as he is called in the annals of Caney, ever moved to found a college.

Bysh was head of a family of nine. Their cabin was one-room and lean-to, earthen-floored. The only utensil was a black iron kettle in which the meals were cooked and the wash was boiled. There Bysh, his woman and child after child had sickened and shriveled. There, in the night, Bysh had had a vision.

The man was shaking with cold and exhaustion when he was admitted to Hope Cottage. He fell onto his gaunt knees. His speech was halting, but purpose was in his eyes. He had heard, he said, that the furrin women asked no alms to uplift the mountain folk from the miseries that the Lord had visited upon them. But he owned land. If the women would help his young-uns, help them to live "not liken the hog but unliken the hog," he would give the strangers 50 acres of land and a house in payment.

"Who sent you to us?" asked Mrs. Lloyd.

Bysh looked up at her. "I heered a voice, ma'am," he said.

Come spring, Alice Lloyd, her mother, the horse, the buggy and



all they owned moved to Caney Creek and the shack that Bysh and his kin had built for them.

They had a sponsor.

THEIR new home was the traditional one-room and lean-to, but there it broke from the past. For the floor was planked and it had windows.

"Winders?" Bysh's kinfolk had asked in disbelief.

"They-uns want winders," Bysh had insisted.

Why, with winders, a rifle bullet could catch a man as he sat in peace by his fire. Winders *asked* for trouble.

Trouble rose to the invitation.

One night Mrs. Lloyd was working by oil lamp at her typewriter. A rifle cracked and a pane of glass shattered just over her head. She kept on working. A second pane shattered, and a second bullet plunked into the plank wall opposite. She had glass in her lap. She merely brushed it off.

Next morning a mountain man silently replaced the broken panes without being asked. After he had finished, he drawled as if remarking on a bit of disagreeable weather, "That-un'll bother you-uns no more, ma'am. We-uns figgered he needed to move."

He was lean and straight, and his short-gun swung easily from his hip. His riding mule glistened. Mounting, he said, "We-uns are close by if you-uns want us. The name is Slone, ma'am."

*Ma'am, not stranger!*

The furrin women had a new sponsor.

THE Slone tribe was powerful. Of them, young Commodore Slone, who had gone through the sixth grade, taught at the tumbling log school. That fact signified much. Feuding families elected the school trustees, who hired the teacher, and the candidate backed by the best guns won. "In them days," an old-timer told me, "a few dead men lyin' about a pollin' place wasn't unusual in electin' trustees." He grinned. "I'm not a-sayin' Commodore got to be teacher that way, but bein' a Slone sure wasn't held against him."

Big, easygoing Commodore Slone agreed to let Mrs. Lloyd call a meeting of parents in the schoolhouse. So many came that, when the men got to one side to talk, the underpinnings on that side gave way and the log structure tilted crazily.

"Looks as if we need a new school," said Mrs. Lloyd.

That brought good-natured laughter.

"We're going to get one," she said.

The meeting sobered. A man asked, "Where we-uns going to git the money?"

"I'll get the money," she said. "But I want every man's help when it comes time to build, and I want your good will now."

Then she made three promises: not to mix in their politics, not to meddle with their moonshining and not to interfere in their religion.

"Stick to that, ma'am," said the quiet-voiced man who had mended the window, "and we-uns and you-uns will get along."

Throughout the years Alice Lloyd has kept her word. No meal is served in Caney's dining hall today until somebody rises and says grace. No Sunday evening passes without the singing of hymns, and discussions of the right or wrong in life. Nowhere have I found so unwavering a faith in the bidding, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find." But no person in Caney could tell me Alice Lloyd's religion. Or her politics.

AFTER the meeting in the schoolhouse, Ella Geddes and Alice Lloyd drew up a list of 40 friends in Boston and elsewhere who might help make a new school possible. To each they wrote a letter. They told the needs of the people in the hollows, for clothing and shoes, even things so small as needles and pins, and forks and spoons, but doubly for books, teachers and real schools.

Schools that would bring to the fore those children who were most capable of advancing. Then, upon the capable, future effort could be centered. Leaders must be educated, selfless men and women who would come to the rescue of their people.

Leaders? In those starved hills? The vision was beyond all reason. It defied the conclusions of the authorities who had studied the plight of the Southern Highlands. Generations of stagnation, they said, had

made incompetents of all but a negligible few. The most to be hoped was that the simpler trades might be taught. Leadership must be sought from outside.

"The leaders are *here*," wrote Alice Lloyd stubbornly. "YES, LEADERS!" and she banged out the words in black capitals. "Doctors and lawyers and engineers, school principals and ministers and public officials. They're here, and they must be found and given the chance."

None of the friends to whom the letters went were rich. Most of them were women Alice Lloyd had known in college or in her newspaper work. But the railway office, 15 miles distant by the creek trail, soon reported an odd assortment of bundles and boxes coming in, obviously sent by amateur packers. Forty homes in New England had cleaned out attics and emptied old trunks. Every letter brought gifts of some kind, and one a check for \$5000.

A Vassar friend wrote: "I've no money to send, but I can teach. You have a year of my time on call, longer if you need me." From graduates of Radcliffe, Wellesley, Mt. Holyoke and Syracuse came similar offers. A hundred or more college-trained women rallied to Alice Lloyd's call during the next ten years. They took over Caney Creek's school, and Commodore Slone took a seat among his pupils. "Here's my proper place," he said. They took over other log schools, paying expenses from their own pockets, working without salaries, or at most for \$25 a month.

One of the women was June Buchanan, a graduate of Syracuse. She had just completed her third year of postgraduate work at Wellesley, preparing for a career in higher education. She never went back for it, and today is Caney's dean of women, secretary, treasurer and a trustee. "How could I go back?" she asks. June Buchanan became Alice Lloyd's right arm.

By mules and pack horses, the books from Boston went out to remote cabins. There Moonlight Schools were held, to which came folks from neighboring cabins. Parents l'arned readin' and writin' while the younguns played. With quiet dignity mountain men unloaded their guns and left them by the cabin door, as a simple courtesy to their host.

From the money raised by the 40 letters Caney got its promised new school, a thing of wonder with six classrooms. It was painted white, and the walls were mainly windows. Alice Lloyd looked ahead a generation, and Bysh Johnson's entire farm of 150 acres was purchased for \$1000, as the property of the Caney Creek Community Center.

A store was opened, using as stock the clothes and shoes, the needles and pins, from Ameriky. To it came the countryside, with vegetables, eggs, berries and whatever surpluses the starved hills might yield. The surpluses were traded for shoes or dresses: the mountain folk asked no charity. Today, the Caney Exchange Store is an institution. The food that it trades in, its main currency,

supplies the meals of half of Caney Center's 200 resident students.

The 40 friends in New England were not 40 for long. They passed the word to their friends, and those friends passed it on to others, from Maine to California. Today almost 20,000 names are on Alice Lloyd's list, and the ancient Oliver No. 9 rattles and creaks under the burden of its endless task of saying, "Thank you, Friend."

**B**UCKING the ways of the mountains brought many trials to Caney's teachers. Sometimes they were be-deviled out of sheer cussedness. Flingin' rocks is a mountain pastime, like whittlin' or banjo pickin', and the furrin teachers often made fine targets for skillful rock flingers. The idea was to near-miss, and the nearer the miss, the more the fun. Near-missin' with a rifle bullet was even better sport when a man's eye was sharpened by moonshine liquor.

The mountain people's ingrained suspicion of all outlanders was hard to overcome. During World War I, when the draft was calling up many mountain boys, the rumor got going that Alice Lloyd was a German spy. The angry story grew. It was said that Mrs. Lloyd schemed to blow up everybody once she got folks into one place. A recreation hall was built. It introduced gasoline lamps. The night of its opening about 150 mountain men and women gathered. They stood in ominous groups, the men fingering their guns. Nobody would enter the hall.

Mrs. Lloyd got a woman aside. "What's wrong?" she asked. "Why are you all waiting outside?"

The woman pointed to two gasoline tanks under the building, the supply for the lights. "It's them tanks," she said. "Folks say yew air goin' to blow up we-uns soon's we go in."

Not until the tanks were removed to the creek did a person enter the hall.

Two schoolgirls died, perhaps of influenza. The whisper started that Mrs. Lloyd had poisoned them. Nobody spoke openly, but like a fog suspicion settled everywhere. Some said later that it was started by politicians who wanted no l'arnin' in those parts.

How do you fight a fog? A thing you can neither pin down nor strike back at.

"You don't fight," Mrs. Lloyd told me. "You wait. These people settle such matters in their own way. They had no trust in law courts. Whether or not I had murdered those girls had to be tried before their own hearths. I must have had friends, for in time the verdict was not guilty."

The Caney High School was started in 1919, the first in a radius of 30 miles. It had two pupils, which was a major victory. The skeptics had said that not two persons in the mountains could be raised to high school level.

"We hadn't changed the people," said Mrs. Lloyd. "We had merely given them new teachers."

Within the next five years seven other high schools were opened in the surrounding countryside. Each was made possible by donated funds and the efforts of volunteers from the women's colleges. The state has since merged all the schools into the public school system, which now encompasses 15 high schools in the same area. Caney College supplies most of the teachers for both high schools and grade schools.

The college was begun in 1923, also with two pupils. But, by then, 100 pupils were in training in the new high schools. The college was free. Ability to learn, not ability to pay, was made the iron rule for admission. Parents may make a goodwill offering if they wish, and most of them do. What is given is known only to a few and to the giver; no distinctions are made among the students because of it.

However, a lifetime fee is exacted of every boy or girl who enters the college. It is the unwritten pledge "to settle in the Southern Mountains and take a decided stand for capable and consecrated citizenship."

Is the pledge kept?

"A week ago I would have answered, 'Not always,'" Mrs. Lloyd said. "One boy seemed to have been lost. He had been away seven years. All that we knew was that he was with a military mission in Asia. I took his picture from the wall — the first. Then, next day, he walked in. He was back home to stay."

The pull that brings Caney's chosen leaders back is terrific. Their training

in the Caney ideal of service begins at the age of six. It continues uninterruptedly through high school and two years of college. The schools operate the year round, and they are as secluded as a convent. The one place to go is home, even deeper into this mountain world. Perhaps, to you, the outlander, the comforts of Caney may be few, the buildings crude, but, to students, merely being there means a long step upward. In their gratitude, the inspiration of Mrs. Lloyd's "slit of infinite sky" goes deep.

I talked with a Caney boy who was leaving for the University of Kentucky, and later, he hoped, for the Medical School of the University of Louisville. I asked him why he planned to return. He looked at me wonderingly. The question had been settled when he gave his word. Where the art of writing is still new, and the written contract is unknown, a man's word is his bond. And you accept it if you would "stay on, stranger."

The college rules are austere. A story is told about two Caney boys at the University of Kentucky. It was a scorching day. They were the only two men in the mixed class wearing coats and ties.

"You may remove your coats," invited the professor.

The boys thanked him, but their coats stayed on. "We're from Caney," one of them explained after class. "We were taught to wear coats when ladies are present. We hope you don't mind, sir."

However, the "no guns" rule was once broken by a student leader. A gang of young die-hards boasted they were going to shoot up the boys' dormitory. They named the night. Such a boast couldn't be ignored. A council of war was held in the dormitory. Every boy wanted to rush home for his gun. The student leader ruled that there would be no gun except his own. That night he slipped home, fetched his short-gun and hid it under his mattress.

Next night, as promised, the gang appeared. Its six members were well moonshined. The student leader took his stand in the open doorway, gun in hand. He was known to be a dead shot. As soon as the marauders were in range, he proved his skill by sending a hat spinning from the head of its wearer.

"That's just a warning," he called. "The next-un is goin' to be where it hurts somebody."

The gang melted into the night. It never came back.

But a rule is a rule at Caney. The leader was not graduated. He was relieved of his post by Mrs. Lloyd, reprimanded, and sent home — to go on to law school with a Caney scholarship that paid all expenses. Today, he is a leading lawyer.

THE Eagle's Nest, as the students call Mrs. Lloyd's office, is perched well up on the campus's steep hillside. Its bleak plank walls are hidden behind pictures of Caney graduates. Homemade tables of unfinished wood are a foot deep with books, records



and letters. A bare electric-light bulb illuminates the old Oliver and its mistress, whom you will find at that post 12 hours daily, seven days a week. The office is barrackslke and comfortless, but look closely: you might mistake the small gray woman in white for a figure of the Madonna. Her dedication affects all around her.

One of these is Carew Slone, 45, Caney's mountaineer printer, a lean, wiry man with a touch of rheumatism. He has a wife and 11 children, and his wages are a third of what he might make in a town job. His day begins before dawn, and ends whenever it may. He takes no pay for the use of his truck (which is the college transport corps), though it cost him more than a year's wages. Why should he? he asked when I raised the question.

"Caney's teaching my children," he said. "I'm doing what I can for it."

His faith is simple: what Mrs. Lloyd says can be done, can be done. He doesn't doubt.

Some years ago, he told me, Alice Lloyd was approached by a national manufacturer. He offered her a salary of \$30,000 a year to quit Caney and become his advertising manager.

"She's still here, drawin' nothin' a year," said Carew. "And you ask me why I don't ask hire for my truck!"

William S. Hayes, Caney's vice-president and dean of men, is a graduate of the University of Missouri. He studied at the Graduate School of the University of Wisconsin, and knows the world. Yet Carew's faith is equally his.

"The usual rules of business don't mean much here," he said. "We start each year with nothing, often end it with less, and yet we grow. That's been true for almost 40 years. Caney keeps going, with free students, no assured income, no endowment, no governmental grants. To us, ten dollars is a substantial gift, yet—I'd like to show you something."

He showed me the stone foundation of a new building among the trees bordering Caney Creek. Weeds grew in what was intended to be the basement someday. Plainly no work had been done in a year.

"That's our new girls' dormitory," he said. "We need \$30,000 to complete it. How we'll get the money, or when, we don't know, but we *do* know this: the money will come! Against that certainty, we've begun our building."

I asked him what had been Caney's largest gift, and how it had come.

It came, he said, from a widow living alone. The time was Christmas 1951. Caney's deficit stood at \$11,000. Much of it was being borne by the faculty in unpaid salaries, a service to the college that is usual, like Carew Slone's truck. A letter came in, one of scores in the day's mail. It was from a midwest lawyer, and in the opening line the widow's name was mentioned.

"I recognized it at once," Hayes said. "Each year she had sent us a Christmas gift, rarely more than a dollar. And, as is true for all gifts, Mrs. Lloyd had always written her a



letter of thanks. Some of us, hoping to relieve Mrs. Lloyd, had asked her to let somebody else acknowledge such small gifts."

He smiled. "Her answer to us was to write a longer letter to the widow than usual. That began a correspondence. Well, the lawyer wrote that the woman had died, and her last gift to Caney was all that she owned, her furniture, her clothes, her keepsakes, and some bonds that had supported her. Her gift came to \$24,000, and we've had few happier Christmases."

CANEY's alumni include more than 1200 teachers, 15 college-trained engineers, four ministers, five farm agents, seven nurses, ten lawyers and ten physicians.

"If the only result of Caney were Denzil Barker," Alice Lloyd told me, "we could still hold up our heads."

Dr. Denzil Barker accepts all calls regardless of how remote or poor may be the cabins from which they come. Or the hour of the night, or the season.

He was born in a mountain shack, and first walked to Caney without shoes. In due course, Caney sent him on, an honor student, to the University of Kentucky. Again an honor man, he went on to Tulane Medical School in New Orleans, Caney paying his way even to the clothes on his back. He wears a Phi Beta Kappa key and was Kentucky's candidate for Rhodes Scholar. A dozen famous institutions would have welcomed

him, but Dr. Denzil Barker's shingle hangs from a modest second-floor office opposite the county courthouse.

His most valued property is an ex-army jeep, the one vehicle that can negotiate the "roads" of the hollows. Where the hollows are dead ends and roadless like Onion Blade, he plods in afoot, or mounts the mule sent to meet him.

His office is crowded with patients by day, and night calls leave him little time for sleep. But he isn't awed by the magnitude of his task. "My value here is that I'm one of these people," he said. "So they listen to me.

"Right now," he added, "I'm barely holding the line. But others are coming on, both doctors and nurses. Caney is seeing to that."

His fees?

"Mountain people pay what they can, and that's all anybody could ask. They pay as certainly as the sun rises. You don't need to send out bills. And they don't forget a service."

Another Caney alumnus, Russel Hall, M.D., is practicing in Floyd County. He is a graduate of Louisville's Medical School. Some time ago, Dr. Hall published a modest pamphlet for other young men in the hills. "Before I ever saw a high school, much less thought of entering one," he wrote, "five of my friends and I were companions in illiteracy, partners in crime, victims of ignorance. We disregarded law, we moonshined, we sported guns by day and by night, and we boasted of our contempt for decency."

Then he asked, "Where are these friends now?" And name by name he answered. One is serving a life sentence in the penitentiary. Four are dead, killed in gun fights.

Said Dr. Hall: "Until education becomes every man's privilege instead of one man's luck, we shouldn't blame the mountaineer."

*AT* CORDIA, on Lotts Creek, in Knott County, a smaller version of Caney itself has blossomed. Its founder is another Alice.

When Alice Slone was 13, Mrs. Lloyd assigned her a mission. She gave her \$15 and told her to go to Cleveland, Ohio. There a friend would take her into her home and treat her as a daughter. A single promise was asked: "Someday, child, I may ask you to return. Then, without question, you must come."

"I promise," said Alice Slone.

She went to a Cleveland high school, on to business school, and then to the University of Ohio. Her summers were spent in a girls' camp in Canada. Her knowledge of nature — she had grown up next to it, barefooted — helped her become a camp counselor. She was pretty and popular. She made friends. Upon graduating from the university, she was thinking of getting married. She was 23. Then Cinderella's clock struck 12.

"I cried bitterly when the word came to go back to Kentucky," Alice Slone told me. She smiled. "But here I am, and I'm glad."

Her youngest sister, now Bertha Whitaker, was trying vainly to start

a high school on Lotts Creek, in addition to the grade school she was teaching. A feud was being waged between the up-creek and down-creek folks over which would control things.

"Mrs. Lloyd told me to get that high school going somehow," Miss Slone said. "How I did it was up to me. I knew less about the Lotts Creek feud than I knew about Bagdad, so of course I barged right into the middle of it."

Alice Slone decided to begin with a library, and have the children build it. The boys were not big enough to handle logs, so light trees were substituted. The library became known as "teacher's pole pen." The boys got the walls up, then ran into difficulty. Putting on the roof was men's work.

"I asked the down-crickers to help, and they promised," Miss Slone recalled, her eyes twinkling. "The up-crickers promised, too, not knowing that I had asked the down-crickers. On the appointed day, both sides sent men. Of course, every man had his gun, for that was usual. On sight, the two factions squared off. I suppose each thought that the other had come uninvited and ready to fight.

"I was in the middle. The children stood by wide-eyed. I pretended that everything was lovely, and made a little speech. I said it was simply wonderful how mountain men always kept their word, even forgetting their own differences to do so.

"The opposing leaders edged off to one side. The decision on which they agreed, I learned afterward, was that there was no point in arguing with a woman. They asked me who was to boss the job.

"I will," I said, and meant it.

"You-uns heerd her, boys," said one of the men, grinning. "We-uns better git to work."

In 1933 the library of Lotts Creek Community Center was opened with a dozen books on its shelves. They were Alice Slone's old college textbooks, a Sears, Roebuck catalogue and a Bible. Today, its shelves are full. Nearby are girls' and boys' dormitories, a recreation hall, three service buildings, and a white schoolhouse surrounded by its own gardens.

"The schoolhouse belongs to the state, but all else is the property of the Center," said Miss Slone. "The same methods that built Caney Center built ours, though the two are independent. Many times I doubted the wisdom of Mrs. Lloyd's ways. I had brash ideas of my own, which I tried. Hard experience, the test of time, proved me wrong. Credit for Cordia High and all else here belongs to Alice Lloyd."

"It belongs to Alice Slone," said Alice Lloyd. "My one credit is that I discovered her."

**B**EFORE leaving Caney Creek, I went back to the Eagle's Nest for a final word with Mrs. Lloyd. She was

wearing, as always, the nurselike white cotton uniform that all Caney girls wear regardless of season. In winter a sweater is added. Alice Lloyd is now rounding out her eighth decade. Her helpless right arm rested beside her ancient typewriter. I had learned that she walks only with pain, because of a leg fracture suffered ten years ago on that grim hillside. Of these things she says nothing.

"What next do you plan for Caney?" I asked.

"Plenty," she said firmly. "In a way, we're just starting. We sorely need an endowment. With five million dollars we could enroll twice as many students from our long waiting list."

"Do you mean," I asked in wonder, "that at 77 you are looking ahead to raising five million dollars?"

"My age has nothing to do with it," she said. "I know we can get what we believe in." She smiled. "And you can help."

"How?" I asked.

"The small 'e' on my old typewriter is broken. I've tried everywhere, but nobody seems to have that key. Find that for me, and I'll have everything I want for myself."

Do you happen to have an extra "e" key for an Oliver No. 9? If you can spare it, send it to the Eagle's Nest, Pippapass, Kentucky. It could be worth \$5,000,000.



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