

**JOHN THORN'S
FOLKS; A STUDY
OF WESTERN LIFE**

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John Thorn's folks; a study of western life by Angeline Teal

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LEE & SHEPARD, Publishers, Boston.

JOHN THORN'S FOLKS

A

Study of *Western Life*

BY

ANGELINE TEAL

BOSTON

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JOHN THORN'S FOLKS.

CHAPTER I.

THE Kitzmillers were new-comers in the Wycoff settlement. They had left a pleasant home in a State farther east, and taken up their abode in this comparatively new region, for the simple mathematical reason that the price of a small farm of rather thin land there would purchase a large one of very rich land here.

The family consisted of the united head, and two children: Leander, aged twenty-one, just the commonplace rural young man, and Olive, not commonplace at all, but a lovely, dark-skinned child of eighteen, with feelings as ardent as August sunshine, and pure as dew.

The house before which the canvas-covered flitting-wagons stopped, one day in the early spring, was a long, low frame structure, with

verandahs running the entire length, both in front and rear. It was one of the ten or dozen frame houses which the township, exclusive of the village of New Madrid, could boast. The house was quite new. There were capacious log stables and out-buildings, and an orchard of thrifty young fruit-trees, not yet come into bearing. The original owner of the place had been constrained to sell it, under pressure of sorrow and discouragement. His wife had died, leaving him with a brood of little ones on his hands. Friends at the east offered help with the children if he would return there, and Mr. Kitzmiller appearing at this juncture and offering an honest price, the farm became his.

It was called an improved farm, though on half the land the heavy timber stood untouched, and the remainder was thickly studded with stumps, too green for lifting. Kitzmiller and his wife were well pleased with the change they had made. It would prove a wise one in the long run, and the "long run" was what these people always considered. They were essentially industrious and patient, and their son, inheriting largely these qualities of his parents, was also well satisfied with the new

home. To own a goodly number of these inexhaustible acres ; to build a house and people it with a family of his own ; to raise stock and watch the growth of such lush crops as the inky soil produced, such were the calm and reasonable ambitions of his heart. A school-section cornered upon his father's land, which could be bought cheaply. It was covered with virgin forest, the great tree-boles of walnut and poplar standing so thick that a deer could only traverse it with antlers held oblique. Young Kitzmiller scarcely thought of the millions of axe-strokes it would require to bring that land under cultivation, but he did think of the time, not far distant, when the coming of the portable sawmill and the railroad would turn that forest into a gold-mine.

It was a land of promise, if not of present beauty. Little Olive cared not for the promise, while the newness and wildness filled her, at first, with a pitiful homesick longing. She had been reared on the spot where she was born, and her life had been very bright and simple. Her feelings after the removal may have been something like those of a household pet suddenly engaged in a bosky wilderness.