

**LIFE AT LAUREL
TOWN IN ANGLO-
SAXON KANSAS**

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Life at Laurel Town in Anglo-Saxon Kansas by Kate Stephens

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KATE STEPHENS

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TOWN IN ANGLO-
SAXON KANSAS**

LIFE AT
LAUREL TOWN
IN
ANGLO-SAXON KANSAS

BY
KATE STEPHENS

Sometime Professor of Greek in the University of Kansas

Our leading men are not of much account, and never have been, but the average of the people is immense.

Walt Whitman.

Be folks (people). Your only, your real duty, is to keep democratic in your heart.

George Sand.

Lawrence, Kansas
ALUMNI ASSOCIATION
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS
1920

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LIFE ON A FARM NEAR
LAUREL TOWN

DIONYSUS IN KANSAS

Make glad!

*The Lord of Growth has come;
The sun has half his northward journey done,
And in deep-buried roots moves the Spirit!*

*On the dark-earthed fields
Fires of last year's husks the farmer kindles—
Sacrifices to the Lord of Growth;
Smoke rises to the bluer heavens;
While hawk and solemn crow cut with long wing the sparkling air.*

*And little birds do sing, "Rejoice!
Rejoice! the Springing Life is here!"*

*Mounting sap now brightens trunk of tree and vine;
And every tip-most twig swells out its leaf-buds.*

*The peach puts forth her bitter-tinted pink;
Redbud empurples far each wooded stretch;
And, by the magic of the Lord of Spring,
Stand orchards, very ghosts of winter snows, white-cloaked
in blossom.*

*Wheat, O sisters, greens in our rolling glebe!
And corn, O brothers, springs from its golden seed!*

*For Sun-Warmth, and Wind-Strength, and Praise-God-Rain
Are abroad in our land;
Three builders of worlds, with the Spirit,
Go forth hand in hand.*

Make glad!

*The Lord of Growth has come;
The sun has near his northward journey run,
And in deep-buried roots moves Life-Ever-Living!*

LIFE ON A FARM NEAR LAUREL TOWN

I

From heights of Kansas City the lands rolling westward gleamed like a Land of Beulah that spring my Father first saw Kansas. Civil War had ended. Peace had come.

And a Kansas spring was burgeoning—the verdure of April, indescribably luscious May days, June air fragrant with wild grape blossoms and musical with stir of leaves. As the traveler watched and waited on Kansas City bluffs, and later turned his horse's head towards Paola and Laurel Town, the soil's promise of overmastering harvests delighted him.

A certain melancholy which broods over the state, greater in the western than eastern part, a *genius loci*, induced, perhaps, by the seemingly unending stretch of fertile earth, a broad sky shutting down like an inverted bowl and suggesting the impenetrability of heaven—sometimes conveying by massing of clouds, fierce winds and rains, vaultings of lightning and

voices of thunder, the impression that demiurgic forces are about to unite and grind to nothing the puny works of man—this reverse of the loving exuberance of Kansas nature affected the traveler slightly.

Then, too, the people at the time of his coming settled, and settling, in this rich environment—a people for the most part of the blood of Anglo-Saxon state-makers, a democracy saving to the world the traditions and courage of their forefathers; ranchers and lovers of live stock, farmers and such fosterers of growing grain that, like the Hebrew Job of old, they never “let thistles grow instead of wheat, and cockle instead of barley”; farmers as farms were in those days; not seeking to specialize, as in this of ours, but growing a little of every farm thing for their families’ needs and comforts; having their own orchards, their own berry bushes, their own vegetable gardens, their own chickens, pigs, cows and even sheep.

Sometimes these people were children of frontier dwellers for generations, cradled in supplies so slender that they had developed a godlike energy, an amazing adaptability, and what it might be unjust to call insensibility to finer shadings and yet was not wholly stoicism of feeling.

Also there were the citizens—craft folks, professional folk, gathered in the community of tiny towns where no man owned material advantage over his neighbor, and therefore was not apt to assume to himself airs of superiority.

This people, identical in ethics and language, identical in political ends, my Father thought as free a democracy as the world had ever seen, alert of intellect, restless in experiment, inebriate of optimism, self-confident to an astonishing degree, earnest in our American faith in education and local self-government; and loyal to the ideas of our foreparents who looked upon government as a form to which they, exercising their right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, contributed support and delegated their authority, not a system from which they might draw maintenance and patronage.

Parasitic peoples, those not led by spiritual vigor and spiritual truth—people who go where wealth is merely because wealth is there, fervent solely for themselves, ignorant of the institutions of our country, or disregarding of their meaning in any other significance than affording them a protected dwelling place and opportunity to make money; and also parasitic institutions which establish themselves and fatten on present human labor and accumulations of past labors