AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF LEROY TITUS WEEKS

[EDITOR'S NOTE. Dr. Weeks was one of the most unique men we have ever known. Among our mid-western bird men he was an outstanding personality. He was an individualist in his personal conduct. In production his field was poetry; but in human associations he was an ornithologist —a nature lover. His artistic nature was expressed in poetry; his scientific nature was rigorously developed in the care and accuracy of his field studies. About a year ago we asked Dr. Weeks to write a short account of his life. The following sketch was prepared under date of June 1, 1926. It is a frank and open story, without any attempt at feigned humility. It is written with what we might call the simplicity of greatness.]

I was born at Mount Vernon, Iowa, February 1, 1854, son of Lucas A. Weeks and Elizabeth Jane Rigby. Grandfather, Barak Weeks, was captain of militia in the War of 1812-14, and was ordered to the front with his company. He was an expert swordsman. As far back as we have any record no Weeks family has ever remained in one locality any longer than to rear a family that needed more room. Great-grandfather John Weeks was born in western New York; Grandfather Weeks, in western Pennsylvania; Father, in Ohio; and I, in Iowa. When I was eighteen, true to the Weeks habit Father moved with his wife and seven children to northwest Kansas.

I returned to Iowa that fall, and remained here, entering Cornell College in the second year of the Preparatory Department—one month after my twenty-first birthday. I had to earn every penny that went into my education and was compelled to remain out of school at times, once for two years, to replenish my pocket-book. Hence I was twenty-nine when I graduated in 1883. I was the only member of that class to earn his own way, and the only one to wear the Phi Beta Kappa key. To earn money I taught in the winter times, or worked on farms in the summer. It went against my stomach to canvass for subscription books or nursery stock, though one of my classmates earned three hundred dollars one summer by canvassing, while I worked for a dollar a day. But I clothed myself economically, and "batched." I started in one fall with sixty-three dollars and thirty-five cents, and went through the year. The College burned only wood in those days, and I was always sawing wood at fifty cents a cord. Some Saturdays I sawed two cords. However, the wood for the classrooms was sawed into only two pieces.

When I finished my Sophomore year I made up my mind that I needed experience in social matters, and remained out of school two whole years. When I returned I had good clothes, and money enough for boarding. The classmates who remembered the smell of cookery on my garments had graduated. Then I plunged. The first year I made it a law not to go to any public function without a girl, and

never to take the same one twice. I kept that up until I had taken out fourteen different girls. I wanted a baptism of social life.

When we went to northwest Kansas in 1872 we found buffalos, prairie dogs, rattlesnakes burrowing owls, and antelopes; and once in a while an animal which I called a pine marten, whose fur was rich lemon-yellow, except for a black-tipped tail. It had the boldness of the weasel. One of them would get into a prairie dog town and put the whole colony on the run. I ran one into a dog hole, and it came right up between my feet, and looked at me with the bold curiosity of the weasel. I got a trap, ran him into a hole, held to the end of the chain, and had him in less than ten seconds. That summer, 1872, a buffalo came right down the main street in Osborne, and a man shot him from the hotel veranda. I enjoyed a steak from the T-bone region. My two brothers and I went buffalo hunting on the Fourth of July that year, and my oldest brother killed a big bull.

After my graduation I spent two years in Kansas as School Superintendent. In October, no, September of 1885, I was elected to the Chair of Latin in Wilbur College, Lewiston, Idaho, and went out there. I was so dissatisfied with the institution, which I called a "play-school in a fence corner," that I jumped at a chance to go out to Grangeville, seventy-five miles by stage, and do missionary work. After one year I was elected Principal of the Columbia River Academy, at Grangeville, a position I held for two years; after which I returned to Osborne, Kansas, as Superintendent of Schools. From here I went to Centralia, about sixty miles west of Atchison. The next year I went to Texarkana, Arkansas, to be head of the Inter-state College. While there I was appointed to be Acting President of Little Rock University, a position I resigned to enter the Methodist ministry. In 1894 I was sent to Beebe, thirty-three miles north of Little Rock—and the following year to Texarkana, as pastor of the First M. E. Church. In June, 1895,* I entered the Graduate College of the University of Chicago, for the study of English, and remained there until the spring of 1897. At this time I became Professor of English at Southwestern College, Winfield, Kansas, where I remained until 1905, then accepting the same position in McKendree College, Lebanon, Illinois. At the end of the first year I was ". . . retired," because, as stated by a written statement signed by all five members of the "Committee on Faculty and Salaries," I was guilty of attending the theatres in St. Louis, which indicated that I "was not in harmony with the doctrine and rules of the M. E. Church, which precluded his holding a position in said

*There is apparently an error in dates here.—Ed.

College." I then withdrew from both the ministry and membership in the M. E. Church, in which I was a "minister in good standing." I set myself at once to reading up on the various Protestant communions, and, after a year, I entered the Episcopal Church, being confirmed with my first wife by Bishop Osborne, in East St. Louis.

In February, 1911, I began training in Trinity Cathedral, Davenport, for Holy Orders, and was later sent to Newton, Iowa, to take charge of an Episcopal Mission, of sixteen communicants. After two years here I was married to Miss Ada Pauline Kuhn, at Evanston, Illinois. I hoped to get a parish in the Diocese of Chicago; but, after vain efforts, I accepted the Trinity parish at Emmettsburg, Iowa, in October, 1915, and remained here for the next ten years, until going to Tabor College.

While the conditions were not strongly frontier when I was born, yet I was brought up under pioneer conditions, because my parents were pioneers, who were born of pioneers, who were in turn born of pioneers, until it was bred in the bone. It thus happened that the pioneer characteristics, the habit of relying on one's self for everything, was bred into me. My Grandfather Weeks had his own tools for blacksmithing, his own tools for building, i. e., the shaving horse, broad axe, adz, etc. My own Father could do more things in wood with his axe alone than men now do with a chest of tools—I mean men who are not professional wood-workers. Father had his own shoemaker's bench, and his own sadler clamps for mending harness. Grandmother Weeks had her own spinning-wheel and loom. I am putting down these facts in order to say that I grew up unconsciously with the habit of making whatever I wanted, without asking help of anybody. If I wanted a yoke for breaking steers I made it without so much as a thought of saying anything about it to anybody. If I wanted a sled I made it, if I wanted a bow and arrow I made them. I even tried to make a pair of skates.

My Grandmother laughed till tears came to her eyes when she found me putting a side pocket in my wamus, when I was eight years old.

Mother died on April 14, 1861, the day the flag was hauled down on Fort Sumter; and for the next two years and a half I lived with Grandmother. Father was in business in Mount Vernon, Iowa, and was broken up during the financial crash of 1857. He trusted everybody, and was a poor collector. We then moved down onto the farm with Grandfather and Grandmother Weeks. Grandmother took a fancy to me right off, and began teaching me to read; so that when I entered

the country school at six I began with the class in McGuffey's old Third Reader. While I was reading in this reader McGuffey brought out his "new" series, putting many lessons of the old Third into the new Fourth, so that when I was sent on I went into the new Fifth, where I was reading in a class of pupils of eighteen while I was but eight.

Grandmother Weeks was one of the tenderest, gentlest souls I ever knew; while Grandfather was cruel, brutal. You must know that in those days nearly all roads ran catawampus across the prairies, where everybody's cattle, horses, and sheep grazed together. Grandfather never came near enough with his wagon to be able to hit an animal with his whip that he did not give it a welt, and then laugh when the thing jumped. He always carried a "blacksnake" whip. The only way he knew of to play with me was to get me across his knee and spank me, laughing to see me squirm. I always tried to take it in fun, but it was a hard job. Wherever he be now, he may take it from me that I don't like him.

I ought to have said back there that, when I intimated to the head professor of English at the University of Chicago that I was about ready to be examined for my doctor's degree, he told me flatly that the University did not wish to give the degree to men of my age, forty-three. So I accepted the chair of English at Southwestern College and set about looking for an institution that would grant the degree to men of my age. The University of Denver took me on, and I received my degree there in 1903. I had to do, besides the two and a half years of residence at Chicago, two more years *in absentia*. I had to be in Denver for my examinations in my two minors—German and ornithology. They required me to read over six thousand pages of German, and the examination in that minor covered six solid days. Ornithology was, of course, play. At the University of Chicago I had to my credit twenty-two majors; besides I had taken a course in the History of Painting at the Chicago Art Institute, thinking that a professor of English should know something about Art. Among my majors was one course in philosophy, under Dean Tufts, because I believed that I must be able to include in my teaching something of the philosophy of literature. To be able to say something to my students on the parallel tendencies in both literature and art, I bought a hundred dollars worth of reproductions of famous paintings. With these I illustrate to my students the fact that Classicism and Romanticism always affected all lines of artistic production, whether in literature or art.