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HOW DEEP IS DUPLIN'S BOTTOMLESS NATURAL WELL?

Either traditional conjecture outlives demonstrated facts or there has never been any scientific measurement of the depth of Duplin County's principal "Natural Well."

I have at hand a recent picture taken of the well by that excellent photographer, Mr. B. Potter, of Magnolia. Here I give you his words about the phenomenon:

"This is a hole about one hundred feet across. It is about 35 feet from the top of the ground to the water. It has no visible inlet or outlet. THE WATER HAS BEEN INVESTIGATED TO A DEPTH OF SIX HUNDRED FEET BUT NO BOTTOM HAS EVER BEEN FOUND. The "well" is right out on a sand hill and is said to have no bottom."

Now I quote the most pertinent paragraph in a volume on the "Geology of Eastern North Carolina," as follows:

"About one-half mile west of Magnolia there are several sinks. One is about 100 feet in diameter. Water comes to within a few feet of the surface in the form of a pond without outlet. Its depth is UNCERTAIN (caps ours) but now not very deep."

There you are! The former statement is from a man who lives in Magnolia—within one to five miles of all the "natural wells" of Duplin. The latter is from the most authoritative volume I could readily lay hands on in Raleigh, and apparently the latest quasi-authoritative or scientific report upon Duplin's long noted natural phenomena.

"The Depth Uncertain But Not Now Very Deep."

If there has ever been a more indefinite or unsatisfactory statement palmed off in any scientific work than the foregoing from what purports to be a scientific discussion of the Duplin phenomena, I have not discovered it. "The depth is uncertain but not now very deep." If the author didn't measure it, how does he know whether it is "Very deep or not." If he did measure it, why does he say that "the depth is uncertain?"

The "bottomless" dept of this well has been traditional since the early days of the settlement of western Duplin, 175 years ago. As an aunt of the writer's lived within a few miles of the well, he heard of them in very childhood. In fact, the aunt's postoffice was named "Natural Wells."

Col. C. M. Faircloth Visits Well.

A few weeks ago I had a letter from Col. C. M. Faircloth of Clinton, who had recently visited the "wells" and thought I should write an article about them. Col. Faircloth considered them worth a visit. Ten days ago, when I was at Magnolia, I took occasion to ask several questions about them, but did not become aware that one of them is only a half-mile from Magnolia and the most historic one, historic because of the record of its hundreds of various kinds of fossils, is only two miles away, according to the book consulted. I was under the impression that they were several miles from Magnolia, as they were said to be several miles from my aunt's and were indicated in a direction of at least 45 degrees from the direction I had gone to Magnolia. I should at least have seen the nearer one, seemingly the one referred to by both Mr. Potter and the author of the volume of the Geology of Eastern North Carolina, if I had known it was so near. If the two writers did not refer to the same well, it would seem that the scientists have missed the real "bottomless" well. It is too late to get further information from Mr. Potter if this article is to accompany the Duplin sketches.

But the contradictory reports of the depth of the well justifies the inquiry, How Deep is Duplin's "Bottomless" Natural Well?

There are numerous "wells" or sink holes, in this section of Duplin. Only one seems to retain the reputation of being "bottomless." The book is definite about the depths of the others. The one "two miles from Magnolia" is that which has received more study, and that means much study, so far as the structure of the walls and the varieties of fossils are concerned. The volume contains a list of hundreds of varieties of shells and other fossil forms found at this well.

The "Duplin Limestone Ledge."

The area of eastern North Carolina containing the shell marl beds is known to the geologists as the "Duplin Limestone" area—"area" is not the word

used, but it escapes me just now. A marl area about Waccamaw Lake is said to belong to the "Duplin Limestone"—I believe it is "ledge," and Lake Waccamaw is away over in Columbus county, near the South Carolina line. Sampson county has its scattered shell marl beds—one within two miles of my boyhood home showed even sharks' teeth among its fossils. A few miles above the highway 60 bridge on Six Runs, 15 miles below Clinton, are lime pits from which the lime rock was wont to be burned for quick lime.

While I was in the Museum building consulting those volumes which Mr. Davis, assistant to Curator Brimley, had provided me, a Mr. Foscoe, of High Point, but of Jones county extraction, came, as I had done, inquiring for State Geologist Bryson, and was answered as I had been, that Mr. Bryson now has his office in Chapel Hill. It developed that Mr. Foscoe was seeking information about shell marl, too, and the possibility of selling "possibly the largest deposit in the state"—down on Trent River in Jones county.

Unquestionably, the first shell marl beds found in the state, or colony, were in Duplin, and that of the walls of the well two miles from Magnolia was probably the discovery that caused the ledge to be given the name of "Duplin"—which in those old days included Sampson, or most of its present area.

Accounting for the Wells.

Whatever the depth of the wells, their origin is definitely accounted for. The theory is that the lime in the marl has been dissolved out by water and the hole left. That is good so far as it goes. The trouble is, all the "rock" is not lime, and it is hard to see what has become of the remnants—the sands increased in the marl rock. If there is no lime water, as the book suggests, it is more difficult to see how what there is could have absorbed all the lime, unless there is an underground stream carrying the charged water away, and if there is such a stream, then there must be a supply source.

Analysis shows that water of the well two miles from Magnolia bears a trace of iron, about 1-2 parts to the thousand in weight. The analysis does not indicate the quantity of lime carried by the water.

Evidently, while these great holes were being eaten out there was both a source of water supply and an underground outlet, else the deeper "wells" could not have been formed.

Mr. Potter's Picture.

As evidenced by the photograph of the well made by Mr. Potter, the marl about the "well" has caused a magnificent growth of shrubbery. A log of considerable size is shown athwart the well, apparently lying on the water, for the picture seems to have been taken from an elevation. The tree was probably uprooted by the crumbling of the walls of the well, recently, or possibly many decades ago, for the heart of a long-strawed pine does not soon rot—in or out of water.

The shrubbery, much of its apparently in flower, shows up beautifully in the picture. The water appears as a large dark area. I was tempted to print the picture, but it would have been chiefly for the sake of the shrubbery, for a hole in the ground in itself has few attractions. But, as Curator Brimley remarked, one there can find the real wilderness, almost a jungle of coastal plains shrubbery.

Col. Faircloth seems to have thought his visit well repaid. It is easy to reach the "wells" from either highway 60, from Delway, or from Warsaw of Kanasville. It is only eight miles right down the railroad from Warsaw to Magnolia, and the road is fairly good. It is probably a mile from the well to the railroad, and part of the way is paved—a mile or so.

The writer should like to know that a real measurement of the depth of the deepest well has been made, so that the question will be definitely, and for all time, answered—How Deep is Duplin's Bottomless Natural Well?

DEMOCRACY A PRINCIPLE, NOT A METHOD.

Arthur E. Morgan's article on "Democracy" in the October American is, I believe, the most succinct and discriminating article on the subject I have ever read. It is very brief, but makes a radical distinction between the "principle" of democracy and the "practice" of it.

The principle of democracy never changes; the method, or practice, of democracy must never become ossified or immutable. True democracy must constantly adapt its methods or practice to the changing circumstances.

The meaning of the word is "rule by the people." In tyrannies, autocracies, monarchies, and aristocracies, government has too invariably been dominated by the interest of the monarch or the ruling group. The "demos," or people, as a whole has been very little considered. But so long as human nature endures the ruling group may be expected to rule, in great measure, in its own interest. That has been too constantly the practice, except in so-called democracies and republics, in which the majority of the people is supposed to be the ruler, the dictator of policies, and in which the ruling class, the people, has an irrefutable right, with injustice to no individual or group, to rule in their own interest.

But I repeat: The people have too frequently resigned their rule and their interests to selfish groups who have dominated affairs in their own interest.

The Forms of Democracy Have Not Had Its Essence.

Thus the theory of the people's rule has existed, and its forms have, without any corresponding essence. There has never been a real democracy—a government of, by, and for the whole people—no real republic, which means the control of the public's affairs in the public interest—a system in which the common weal is supposed to be the main concern of government. The meek, the humble, the poor, the weak, the unfortunates, have composed the majority in any government you may name. In our own, when the shibboleths of democracy were being molded, a whole race was enslaved, the "poor white trash" had no voice in the government. And in these latter days of our own memories, not only have the

laws been made to conserve and prosper the interests of the strong, but the very economic practices permitted and protected under the ages of a republic, professedly concerned with the common weal, in a government alleged to be "of the people, by the people, and for the people," have permitted the impoverishment of the alleged rulers, the majority of the people.

The Method of Democracy Never Adapted to Its Principle.

It is evident that the method of democracy has never been adapted to the principle of democracy. The attempt is being made. But as the adaptation, necessarily, must be wrought from the ground up, it is not surprising that it is a slow process, particularly when the former masters of the destinies of America's millions are not yet prepared to surrender the forms of democracy for its essence, shivery in fear lest the shibboleths be destroyed while utterly unaware of the real essence.

Mr. Morgan illustrates his distinction between the immutability of the democratic principle and the necessary changeableness of the practice of democracy (for I believe he does not use the term "method" at all) by the principle of the automobile and the adaptation of that principle. The 1934 model, Mr. Morgan suggests, is based upon the identical principle that the first crude horseless carriage was, but year after year has seen a greater and greater perfection of the adaptation of the principle in practice. We amend Mr. Morgan's illustration by suggesting the impossibility of a leap in one or two years from the "horseless carriage" stage to the 1934 stage of automobile perfection. That suggests Mr. Roosevelt's task. Indeed, it is very doubtful if he himself has ever fully accepted the principle of a government in the interest of all the people, a government in which the performer of any essential task in as perfect a manner as that task can be performed, however mental it may be, should be denied no necessity or essential comfort so long as anybody else, whatever his job or his status, has gobbled up or is accumulating more than he could possibly use to the betterment of himself and family.

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