

THE GEOGRAPHY MATCH IN TAIL-HOLT DISTRICT

By Freeman E. Miller.

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WHILE I was visiting my old Indiana friend Bill Dodge, on upper Council creek, last winter he related a little episode that will illustrate the cosmopolitan character of the population in Oklahoma better than a whole table of statistics. I will tell the story in his language as nearly as I can. After the supper Bill started:

"I had not heard about it, and Bill accordingly continues at Tail-holt last winter wuz a jimdandy. Reckon he whuse? didn't even know that he knew half ez much ez he did—not by the dictionary name, aye, how. But he wuz sensible, en he had ideas; en when a man with ideas gets into a schoolhouse with boys en girls that ain't asleep he makes things git up en hum for keeps. We hadn't had anything new in the district sence the openin', en several of us leadin' patterns axed him to give us somepin new livelylike for the winter—somepin good for ole folks ez well ez children. He kind of thort awhile en chawed his mustash, en arter awhile, studyin' like, he says:

"'We'll have a Jogyaf match.'"
"No," says I, "that is too ole en wore out. We had Jogyaf matches in ole Iadlany when I wuz jist a leetle kid."
"But," says he, "this air a new kind of Jogyaf match. I know it air plum new 'cause I've jist made it all up myself," says he. "It couldn't be did anywhayze else than in Oklahoma, aye," says he.

"Let us have it to onet!" says I, speekin' for the crowd. En the purfesser en all on us patterns agreed.
"Wull, he announced the nex' day afore books wuz let out that thayre would be a ginyoune, original Jogyaf match, stricly pertainin' to Oklahoma, at the schoolhouse the nex' Friday evenin' at airly lamphtin', en all the scholars en patterns en frien's wuz to come. He said it wuz to be a new-fangled sort of Jogyaf match, sich ez could be got up nowhayze else in the wide world than in Oklahoma, en says he, ever-body better come en see the fun en git akwainted en larn somepin too."

"Friday night the ole schoolhouse wuz jam pack full of folks, en a good many on 'em had stan' up around the sages. But it wuz a purty warm night—Oklahoma has a good many purty warm nights in December, ye know—en they got along fast rate, en arter he'd let 'em talk awhile, along about 7 o'clock the purfesser called the meetin' to order en tolt "em the kind of a match he had thort out en his great purpus in devisin' it. He said he noticed that a good many people in Oklahoma didn't know theyre neighbors, although they wuz divin' right close up ag'in 'em, en that thayrefore some on 'em wuz't ez contented en happy ez they'd ort to be livin' in sich a glorious country en with sich a delightful climate. The purfesser could handle the lingo nice en straight, I tell ye, en I never heard a better speech in my life. He's shore got the gift of gab in great shape. He said that many a time when he wuz a-rovin' en a-roamin' around in strange parts en among strange people he allus ferget all about bein' lonesome when he run up ag'in some feller that wuz from Eellnok. The purfesser wuz from Eellnok, en he allus felt like he wuz at home when he could shake han's with a Stucker. En he says this here match air not only to let the children whayze the diffrunt states en territories en foreign countries air, but it air to teach ye all eggskagly whayze one another come from, so ye kin lunt yer neighbors up en git so akwain en frienly. "I find that in this here school district," says he, "they're air men en women from almost every state in the Union en out of it, sich as territories, en many on 'em from foreign countries, en we can larn a whole lot about them various places ez well ez git akwainted with each other by this here proceedin'," says he.

"Arter the purfesser had just mentioned the matter to me I kep' fittin' oneasy en oneasy all the time fer some feller wouldn't want to play in the game. I have seen fellers afore now who seriously objected to statin' whayze they wuz from en even whayze theyr fust saw to the light of day, but I finally made it up to myself that no sich fellers lived in the Tail-holt district, en concluded to let things proceed. I couldn't see any real danger ahead, en I thort that the purfesser had all the reaks to run anyway."

"The purfesser explained how the match wuz to be conducted. He said that about the easiest way he knowed wuz to choose up ever-body in the house that 'ud take part, jist ez of they wuz a-goin' to choose up en spell down in the ole fashioned way, en then the fellers doin' the choosin' 'ud kep' tally on the diffrunt p'int's made en announce the result. Arter this wuz done onet it 'ud be tried ag'in, but in a diffrunt way, with two others a-choosin' up. This 'ud not only afford instruction en amusement, but in time 'ud let ever one know whayze ever one else wuz from, en he p' 'em to get akwainted."

"The plan of this Jogyaf match wuz about ez follers: He had airanged all the states in the Union on all the territories out of the Union in alphabetical order, from Alaska to Wyoming, en he said that any person borned in a state would count up ez many p'int's for his side ez the number wuz correspondent to that state on the list. So a feller from Alaska 'ud count only one p'int en the feller from Wyoming 'ud count fifty. En ever feller borned in any country in Europe 'ud count a hundred, in Asia two hundred, in Africa one hundred en fifty, in Austraila two hundred en fifty, en so on. He had it all figured out in nice shape, en the purfesser air shore a genius. I wish we

had 'im fer nex' winter's school, but we could pay him only eighteen dollars a month, en I expect he's a-makin' more'n that in real estate.
"Wull, arter all the preliminaries wuz settled, he called out Dollie Fudges en Sallie Homer to choose up; en they chose up ever one in the house. Nary feller thayre axed to be exposed, which wuz shore to the great credit of Tail-holt district. It wuz funny to watch the gals ez they wuz a-choosin' up. They both seemed to think that the older a feller looked the more p'int's he would count up, en the way they went arter the ole folks wuz a caution. It didn't take 'em long to



"Her arms wuz clear aroun' Lem Hull's neck."

sort out ever-body in the house, old en young, big en little, male en female, clean down to leetle Charley Marvin, the bumpack.

"Things got so quiet ye could hear the men a-chawin' theyre tobacco, ez the gals en the purfesser began to digger up the p'int's. They commenced at the head of each line. Sallie had the fust choice, en she took ole Ben Swale for it.
"Whayze wuz ye borned, Mr. Swale? asked the purfesser. 'In Virginy,' Ben answered; en Sallie's side got credit for forty-six p'int's, en her father, who wuz a-stan'in' on by, whispered what remarkable penetration that gal had, for one so young.
"Dollie had taken Mrs. Swale fer her fust choice; en Mrs. Swale wuz axed the same question. 'In Arkansas,' she answered, en a big laugh went up, en Dollie got credit for only four p'int's."

"En so they went on, whipsawin' down the lines, en across from one to the other, en some amusin' things a-happenin' right along all the time. The women 'ud say 'indeed,' jist ez surprised like, en 'Oh, my,' ez excitedly, en the men folks 'ud smile en keep on chawin' theyre tobacco. Some curious combinations come to the light of the community for the fust time, en I reckon theyre owners ever wuz considerably surprised themselves. Theyre wuz ole Joe Biggers, with his wife en seven children. They wuz all on Sallie's side, en the way theyre big places wuz scattered all over creation wuz a ginyoune eye opener. Bill wuz borned in South Carlinee; his wife in Michigan, the oldest gal in Eellnok, the oldest boy in loway, theyre nex' child in Mizozory, at which Ed Swank, with his hospitable face, seemed mighty tickled ole Ed wuz from Mizozory, the nex' child in Newbrasky, the nex' in Kansas, the nex' in the Iujan nation, en the nex' in Oklahoma."

"Theyre wuz several families scattered aroun' somepin like that, only not quite so bad. En thayre wuz Jim Swoboda from Bohemia en Carl Schmidt from Germany en so on so forth. A man 'ud be borned in California en his woman in Massachusetts en theyre children gathered up on all the roads between the two. I found that my neares' neighbor wuz borned in New York en his wife in Texas. The nex' on the nex' quarter wuz borned in Vermont, while his woman wuz from Florida. En of all the mixed up messes you ever seed our district shorely wuz when we got through. The whole United States en disunited territories en several foreign countries wuz represented by folks with the proper credentials, en ez the countin' of p'int's went on, I saw that the match wuz to be jist nix on tuck ez to which the gals wuz on, fer several of us wuz a-keepin' tally on the p'int's.
"Tom Liscomb wuz the last feller on Sallie's side. 'I'm from the free state of Van Zandt,' says he; en we all held our breaths, fer none of us knowed fer shore whayze that wuz. Fer a minute or so we thort he wuz a foreigner, but he didn't have any brogue to his talk. But the purfesser relieved the strain in less'n a minute, fer he knowed what it wuz. 'Free state of Van Zandt—Van Zandt county—Texas,' says he. En forty-three mighty big p'int's went down to Sallie's credit."

"Dollie's last choice wuz Mrs. Dugan, the widdler woman livin' down on the school section. En whayze wuz ye borned, Mrs. Dugan? said the purfesser. 'Sure, an' I wuz borned in ould Ireland,' said she, imittin' the Irish brogue, although she could speak English. En a hundred p'int's went down on Dollie's side, en when they figured 'em all up Dollie had won by three p'int's!
"Arter the cheerin' en congratulatin' had gone down the purfesser said they'd try it on a more complicated system. They'd not try on the state whayze one wuz borned, but on the states whayze he had lived. En any one could count any state in which he had lived or had been at any time, en, of course, it would be the right thing for him to count the one that 'ud make the most p'int's. So they chose up ag'in en tried it that way, en the surprise wuz wuz wuz wuz wuz, ez they wuz possible. Many a feller borned in Arkansas who 'ud move into Texas in the spring en then back ag'in to Arkansas fer the winter, dividin' up his

time about half en half between them states, claimed Texas for his big numbers in this deal. It wuz rally bewilderin' whayze some of the fellers wuz. Some funny things happened too. One feller made a mistake en said, 'Cowley,' meanin' fer Cowley county, Kan., whayze so many of the folks come from. Fellers 'ud make a line strike with Pennsylvania or South Carlinee, or Wyoming or Texas, or any place they'd been the'd count up big p'int's, en when they had it all figured up Sallie won out on this deal by seventeen whole p'int's. But it wuz rally interestin' en educatin' en entertainin' on a mighty good scheme all aroun'."

"En about this time in the evenin' a leetle episode began to be noticed en made things look kind of tragic fer a spell. When Lem Hull on the fust deal said he wuz borned in Newbrasky, I didn't think he was a-lookin' right square at Lem Mullicks' wife, she air a real purty woman, en I noticed that she took to lookin' at 'im en a-watchin' 'im like ever'thing. Seemed to me that she never took her eyes offen 'im the rest of the evenin'. I thort it rather pleged Lem a leetle, seein' how she wuz a-lookin' at 'im en a-starin' at 'im so. En when he said 'Ohio' in the nex' round she eyed 'im whis's ever. I noticed they favored some aroun' the eyes, but I never dremp about 'em a-bein' any relation, fer Lem is a great big, awkward, overgrown naverless, what I call a 'curry' shoun't, while she is a first class here slin' white, white woman, ye know—good on all that, but made frail en clingin' like by Mother Naylor."

"Then the purfesser got up en made the crowd another leetle speech en said jist ez we'd be patient he'd like to try jist one more deal on us, en then he'd turn us loose fer keeps. He proposed givin' a nice, new briar root pipe to the man en a purty new workbox to the woman that had lived in the states whose p'int's 'ud count up the most. En he axed all the men en women that wanted to enter the contest that way to stan' up; the men on one side en the women on the other.
"Wull, sir, thayre wuz jist fourteen men en six women went into that thryre-thing en the contest wuz mighty spircited, I tell ye. Some of the men had lived in ez many ez twenty diffrunt states, en two or three of the women had lived in fifteen. Lem Hull tried it, en Lem Mullicks' wife jist thryre with her eyes glued on to his features. En Lem himself wuz no slouch at playin' in this deal. Beginnin' with Newbrasky, whayze he wuz borned, he went east through loway en Eellnok en Iadlany to Ohio, en then he come back through Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Missouri, Kansas, en the Iujan nation to Oklahoma—all on 'em good countin' states. He made two hundred en fifty-four p'int's, en about that time Mary Mullicks looked ez she thort he wuz a ten spot here en 'ud win out shore. Then they went along, no feller a-score in up with Lem until they come to Prairie Dog Smith. He's been all over the world mighty whayze. 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