

Alabama
Susie R O'Brien.
Uniontown, Alabama

A-2-55
E.J. Alexander
Hamburg Road
Ten miles Southeast of
Marion, Alabama

THE ALEXANDERS.

too short

Ten miles Southeast of Marion, on a wind swept hill overgrown with sun-dried grass and weeds live E.J. and Ellen Alexander. Their dilapidated four-room farm house is reached by a dusty road leading from Hamburg, a village four miles away. The house rests on high log pillars which look as if they might crumble from under it at any moment. The porch has long since rotted and fallen away, leaving the front of the house bare and unsightly.

One climbs rather than steps into the front door on the ladder-like steps, many of which are missing, and those left being none too secure.

Not a shade tree protects the windows from the heat of the blazing summer sun; a rusty screen wire hangs in a crumpled mass from many of the windows. A few flowers peep up over the brown grass around the door step, but Ellen's efforts at making a flower garden have been fruitless.

Ellen was born in Texas, she, with her mother and father, who is a carpenter, and her four sisters moved about from place to place settling wherever the father could get work. Ellen does not remember ever living in one place more than a year.

The family finally settled in Birmingham where Ellen met E.J. Alexander and they were married. They rented a small farm in Perry County and here they have lived ever since, moving from farm to farm, hoping by each move to better their conditions.

This year they rented thirty acres on which they raised cotton and corn, but the boll weevil has destroyed most of the cotton and the drought has kept them from making a corn crop.

The family consists of five girls all of whom are married and have left home except two. The parents' education is limited but the girls attend school at Hamburg, a village about four miles from their home.

Ellen is a very busy woman. She rises with the sun, milks, tends the chickens and pigs, carries water from an overflowing well about a quarter of a mile from the house. Here too she does the family wash in the shade of the willows which grow near the well.

With the help of her husband and girls she works the vegetable garden and raises enough vegetables to feed the family during the summer, with a surplus for canning, she has already canned over two hundred quarts for winter use. Some of this she is offering for sale at fifteen cents a quart. "Money is awful scarce" she says "and we need a little cash sometimes. The girls like to go to town to the picture show and I let 'em go whenever I can, 'cause its mighty dull out here for young folks. It looks like somethin' turns up every year to keep us from makin' a crop. Now year before last the Gover'-ment let us have some steers. Well it took us three months to break them things so they would pull a plow."

During the winter months E.J. helps along by making figures of dogs which he displays along the roadside. These figures are made of plaster of Paris which is poured into wooden moulds and left to harden. The moulds are in several pieces so that they can be removed easily.

The soft plaster is poured through a hole in the bottom of the mould, the mould being turned continuously so that each crevice will be filled. After the plaster is hard the mould is removed and the dogs are painted. The figures bring from twenty-five cents to a dollar according to size. There has not been much sale for the figures lately and they have stopped making them, E. J. is trying

Who sells the
moulds?
Who buys?

to get work on the County Road Construction.

Ellen does not like farm life. She says" I didn't know anything about work till I married. My father was a good man and I didn't know anything about men drinkin' and gamblin'. I ain't old, just forty-two, but I fell pretty old. If I could have looked ahead I guess maybe I would have picked a different road."

Washington Copy

10/20/38

L.H.