

## PRANKS

The streets of Vermontville were and still are lined with enormous trees, elms and maples. I remember as a little girl hearing Uncle Will say, as he pointed to a magnificent elm in front of the Benedict home: "Would you ever believe that tree was once just a thin sapling? I started to cut it down for a switch, when I was driving the cattle to pasture. 'I wouldn't do that, William,' my father said. 'Some day that will be a beautiful tree.' It is, isn't it?"

We would stand, the elderly man and the little girl, for a moment, looking up into the high green crown against the blue sky and be glad that the little boy, so long ago, had put his knife back in his pocket as he heeded his father's admonition.

The maples were huge too, their thick lower limbs growing straight out across the wooden sidewalks, limbs often scarcely higher than a tall man's head.

One of the great pastimes of children living in the country or small villages is climbing trees. I never saw a tree yet I wouldn't tackle (well--until a few years ago), if the first limbs could be reached at all---by jumping, or with the help of a box or ladder. After that it was a game of skill to find the most successful hand and foot holds from limb to limb, and to be able to calculate at just what point the branches were becoming too fragile to bear a child's weight. I have known climbers to fall occasionally, but I do not remember any serious injuries. A mental record was kept of the highest point reached on any tree. Each record stood until another child had topped it.