



PROJECT MUSE®

Sunshine

John Cantey Knight

Appalachian Heritage, Volume 30, Number 3, Summer 2002, p. 45 (Article)

Published by The University of North Carolina Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/aph.2002.0107>

Appalachian Heritage



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/436139/summary>

Most pertinent to this discussion of *The Time of Man* is, again, Matthew's telling of Simon-Peter's recognition of Jesus as the Son of Man (16: 16-18). Here Jesus questions his disciples regarding who they think he is, and it is Peter who confesses that he believes Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answers this with "Blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to thee, but my Father in heaven. And I say to thee, thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Here we might also remember that even the name Peter comes from *Petrus* meaning rock, as does the Aramaic word Cephias.

Ellen Chesser's gospel song, her country blues for the world she lives in, is also founded on rock and stone. It seems quite obvious that Miss Roberts was aware of how she was building Ellen's character and how she was developing her novel upon the images of rocks and stones among the Kentucky hills Ellen treads upon, and where the experiences of her inner life unfold. From where Ellen stands, facing her new life with Jasper, "the land seemed to reach endlessly away, pasture and thin woodland and stone-crowned hills, until the length and breadth of it cried back at her" (275). The land has the power to "surround," to "never be measured in all its strength," and to have even the power to "obliterate." But even in the face of this enormity of power, we feel that Ellen's song will carry on across the hearth rocks and will be perhaps changed but undaunted, as she survives with her husband and children for all her "endure life." At the novel's close we are left with this unflagging sense of endurance built upon Ellen's inner personal faith and her own immeasurable strength. Built like the tower of St. Lucy's, "taken out of the rock of the ground."

Sunshine

I hold a pint
of sorghum syrup
between eye and sun,
and see this world
as God would have it:
warm golden hues,
in man's hard labor,
sweet and rich.

—John Cantey Knight