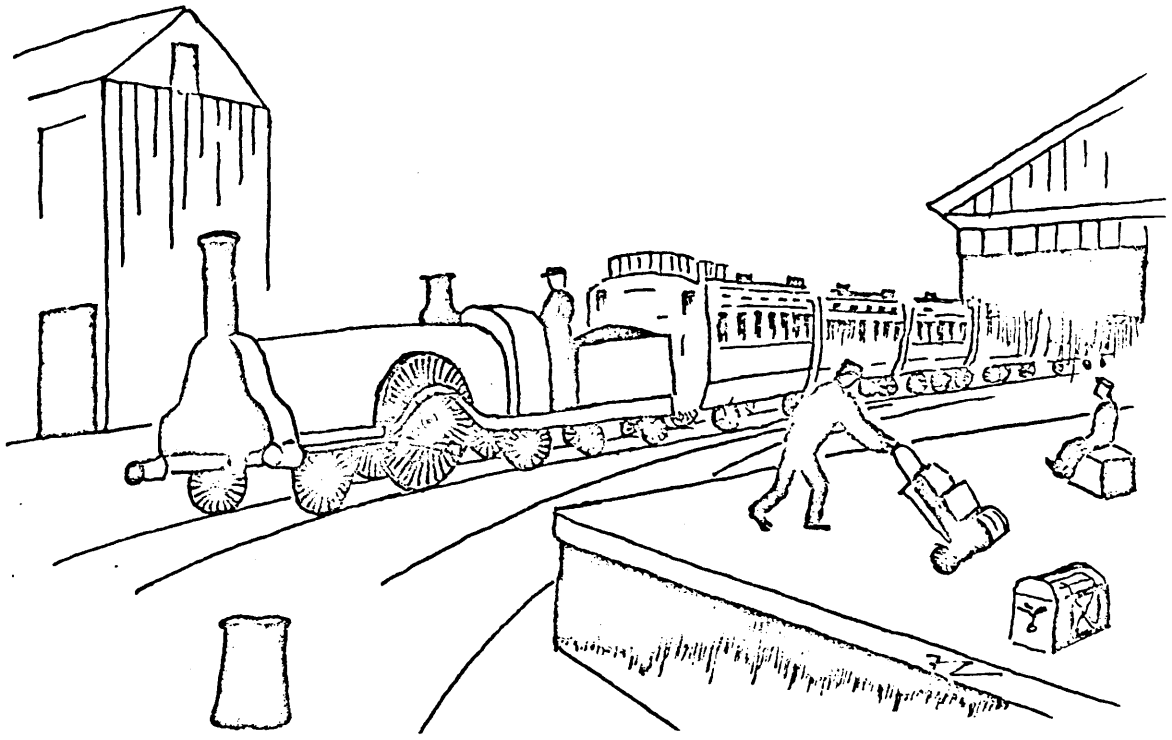

I. The Making of an Emigrant Family

"George Hardy Callcott" was the eldest son of a member of the English gentry class. In the opinion of that class, however, he was a nobody due to disinheritance under a caste system he always resented even while he secretly admired many of its principles.

"Mr. Callcott" was the salutation of respect received by the young man from his old superintendent when he was promoted from a porter to a signalman on the British Great Northern Railroad.

"Mr. George" was the mixed title of respect and affection accorded by laborers in the cotton fields of Texas.

These three terms epitomize the career of the subject of this accoun from his young manhood in Old England on the 1870's to his life in West Texas more than a third of a century later.

North of the Chiltern Hills and some thirty miles east of Oxford, England, was the old market town of Aylesbury with its twisting and narrow streets. Its 5021 inhabitants of 1831 increased

in twenty years to 6081 though the official record hastened to point out that part of the rapid growth was due to the gaol and workhouse which together held 199 unfortunates.

On the banks of the water reservoir to the east of town was the Golden Perch Inn. Here Francis Hardy, the maternal grandfather of the subject of this narrative, presided over his pub with its bowling ground. A contemporary directory of Buckinghamshire lists him as "Victualer" and also as Superintendent of the Reservoir. In addition he appears to have been quite facile with his pen, for a black and white sketch of the old inn is still extant that is signed by "Francis Hardy," presumably the same person.*

The Innkeeper's only known son, George, soon left the community to become a sheep farmer in Yorkshire near the city of Richmond. A daughter, Louisa, who was to become the mother of "Mr. George," was given a good education, and about 1850 she took a position as governess with the Callcott family resident at nearby Northchurch.**

The Callcott family can be traced back to a London engineer or builder who accumulated a modest fortune (a street in the Kensington section of London was still named after him in 1964). Cultural interests were developed and a placque in the cloister of the church of St. Mary Abbots, Kensington, London, is inscribed to "three musicians residents of this parish bound together by the ties of kinship and devotion to their art." Two of these were "John Wall Callcott mus. Doc. Oxon., 1766-1821" and "William Hutchins Callcott, s

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*This sketch was, in 1964, in the possession of Mr. C. Laywood whose home was built on the site of the old Inn.

**The marriage record of Robert Dixon Callcott establishes this fact, though the property was probably originally that of his mother's family, the Dixons.

of above Dr. Callcott, 1807-1882." In 1926 George Hardy Callcott, the subject of this memoir, wrote: "My Father, Robert Dixon Callcott was a grandson of John Wall Callcott and a nephew of William Hutchins Callcott."*

When Louisa Hardy, the Golden Perch Innkeeper's daughter, became a governess in the Callcott family, presumably to care for the younger children, she was twenty-four and Robert Dixon was twenty one. In this young man prosperity or mischance had produced a misfit. The young London gallant and the innkeeper's daughter fell in love. In spite of vigorous Callcott family objections they were married in the parish of Northchurch on March 30, 1853. On his wedding record the happy-go-lucky groom laconically identified his profession as that of "auctioneer".

Disinherited for this marriage beneath his class, Robert Dixon took his bride to London to live. Disillusion followed fast on romance. The groom's London friends avoided the young couple and he had nothing in common with her people. A year and a half later a daughter Caroline was born, August 11, 1855. Even with this added incentive the young husband and father could not settle down. To such a man the other side of the street always looked smoother, and now glowing tales of America where all men were equal held promise of a way to fortune and happiness. Funds were scraped together and the young couple set forth on the arduous journey via New York City to the

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*The author has not been able to verify this statement though presumably it is correct. The will of John Wall Callcott does not mention a son by the name of Robert Callcott even though Robert Dixon Callcott so listed the name of his father when he applied for a marriage license.

semi-frontier town of Utica, New York. There George Hardy the subject of this account was born on June 9, 1857.

Unfortunately there was neither gold nor happiness at the western end of that rainbow for the inexperienced Englishman. Back to the Old Country. By that time London friends had forgotten them or were still cold; new friends were scarce and ready money unavailable. On , 1864, another son, Frank Hardy, was born. The combined social and economic pressures were too much and the tragic figure of Robert Dixon Gallcott disappeared. The family understood that he had returned to America, whence a report came that he had been killed in some kind of an altercation in a drinking house in Virginia. Given the hectic conditions in that state at the close of the Civil War the disappearance of an unknown English wanderer was not surprising. Reading between the lines of his wife's later Puritanism and of the elder son's attitude toward liquor, so contrary to that of the young workers with whom he was associated, this presumption is likely to be accurate.

Louisa had learned to fear the city and now found herself practically destitute with three small children to feed and clothe. Her elder bachelor brother, George Hardy, came to the rescue from far away Yorkshire. In the village of Skeeby, near Richmond he had a two-family house (duplex) and nearby a small farm. One-half of the house was let to a tenant but Louisa and her children moved into the other half while she became housekeeper for her brother. It was far from an enviable position for the young mother who so recently had dreamed of the joys of living in London, as those joys had been described through the dazzled eyes of an attractive and plausible young-man-

Now she was entirely dependent on a none-too-sociable brother who in Yorkshire had absorbed many of the characteristics of the proverbial Scotchman and devoted his naturally dour nature to the protection of what he had and the accumulation of more by dint of hard work. He had scant sympathy for either poetic or musical inclinations in a dependent sister's children whom he had to support because a ne'er-do-well brother in law had skipped the country.

Caroline, the eldest, was a frail child but the darling of her brother George. She had considerable musical ability which she used throughout her life in playing the organ in the local chapel. Fortunately the two boys were sturdy chaps. The lively ten-year-old namesake found his Uncle George a hard taskmaster. Work was the basis of life. Too much education had led the boy's mother beyond her class and to a disastrous end; so the boy was only allowed to go to the local school for a part of three sessions. The rest of the time he worked on the farm. Then at the age of thirteen he "took service" as a houseboy in the home of a local country gentleman. For the next nine years he continued in domestic service, going finally to Cookridge Hall, near Leeds, as a footman.

The early life on the farm left an indelible impression and years later George's letters to his sweetheart from London repeatedly referred to farm crops of corn (wheat, rye and barley) and hay. Even as an old man in Texas he loved to recall boyhood tramps across the moors as a sheep herder when at mid-day he would pause at a brook for cold water to mix his raw oatmeal into "crowdy".

Both Mother and Uncle were determined that there should be no repetition of the unhappy experiences of Robert Dixon. Six days of work preceded ultra strict Sabbath observance all accompanied by and a Puritanical abstinence from alcoholic liquors.

On Thursday, April 17, 1879, George, twenty-two years of age, 5' 8" in height and a solid 12 stone, 10 pounds (178 pounds) left Richmond, Yorkshire, by railroad for London to seek his fortune.

His mind was in a whirl. Two weeks before he had returned to Skeeby to tell the family he had left his job as a footman. The Uncle protested violently at giving up a sure thing to enter that den of iniquity, London that had led his Father to disaster. Whirling southward he was still determined but was far from happy. Should he not have given his old employer notice instead of leaving abruptly in a fit of temper. Now he had not even a character reference to show for years of work. After all, the work had not been too heavy or exacting; the food had been good and the hours had not been excessive though they had been irregular in accordance with the needs of the family. Social functions at the (Cockridge) Hall had been a glorious sight and in one wedding at which he had served the bride wore a veil which had cost three hundred guineas ($1,500).* Dinner was always a formal occasion where he helped wait on the table under the direction of a severely proper butler.

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*Specific facts and quotations from this point to the end of the chapter are extracted from a remarkable set of over a hundred letters which George wrote from London and which have been preserved.

But the mere memory of such service caused his gorge to rise once more. He recalled the life of the servant girls of such houses and resented the fact that in all too many cases they had had their spirits broken as they were subjected to the personal whims of tyrannical mistresses and masters. And his mind returned to the old rankling grievance: he resented his position as a servant. Was he not the eldest son of an eldest son of a member of the gentry class? Regardless of his Mother's pleas and of his Uncle's protests he was determined to be his own master.

Next his mind returned to an incredible thing that had happened in the last two weeks. On his first Sunday at home he had followed the family custom and gone to the local chapel for service. There he saw a pretty girl who had a clear soprano voice — and George dearly loved music of any kind and had a good bass voice of his own. Soon the two found themselves cast together as a "colonel and his lady" in a skit presented at a social hour of the young peoples' society. Romance had blossomed fast.

The girl in the case was Mary Ireland. She was living with an uncle who was a substantial farmer and the leading man of the village. Her own father, John Ireland, had been manager of a large estate in the community, but After prolonged respiratory trouble, however, his doctors advised that he migrate to the New World. In 1871 he left for Virginia with his wife, three children by an earlier marriage, and his two youngest daughters. After three years and a half in Wytheville (half way between Roanoke and Bristol) in the western tip of Virginia he moved in 1875 to the dry central Texas area and settled near

the present town of Luling where he to engage in a mixture of farming and ranching. But when the Irelands left England two of their daughters, Mary and Lily, were well started in the local school. After much discussion it was agreed to leave them behind in charge of the girls' uncle and aunt so that they could get an English education. Unfortunately, the uncle soon died and his widow felt that her husband's pensioner nieces should be useful. The farm house-maids were dismissed and the girls were left to perform the chores of feeding two farm hands, caring for the milk and butter from several cows, and doing the house work.

In spite of a happy disposition that made her a favorite throughout the village Mary found her life one of monotonous drudgery. No wonder the two semi-orphans, George and Mary, found themselves congenial — then fell in love. Their troth was plighted but any hope of marriage was delayed to some distant date when George would have established himself.

He reached London at a "quarter to 6" in the afternoon at King's Cross station. A friendly policeman told him he could get reasonable lodgings at the Railway Hotel near the station. The following two days he tramped the streets but found no job though he did find lodgings at (A) (23) Albion Street. The rent was five shillings ($1.20) per week. Early the next week he found employment as a cigar salesman. There was no salary guaranteed though he was to receive a 5% commission on sales made. His hopes rose and on the 24th he wrote his beloved, in part:

Only one short single week is past
Since we did'st each other see;
But time does drag so slowly on:
It seems quite full a month to me.

We're parted now, but not for long,
We cannot stop it; time will fly:
Though separate now, and far apart;
Soon we'll meet again. Yes, you and I.

This began his series of weekly letters which Mary kept religiously. Unfortunately if he kept any of her letters they were destroyed in his frequent moves. In the spirit of the day they exchanged a variety of flowers, violets, pansies and forgetmenots to add the poetic language of flowers to their own expressions of affection.

By the end of the first week some of the glamor of the city was wearing off, for George was living close to the railroad tracks in a section drenched with coal smoke. "The vice, the misery, & the wickedness is appalling. I have not much news to tell you Darling. I have given up the cigar business because the cigar merchant wished me to go to the Public houses /many of them obviously bawdy houses/ to get orders for him & I refused. I am going to start Monday as Agent to a firm here who are Booksellers & my duty will be to get orders for a large & beautiful family Bible." But few Londoners were interested in buying expensive Bibles from an inexperienced Yorkshire

salesman. On the 4th of May he was whistling to keep his courage up: "Promise Darling that you will give me your confidence, love and trust for the next 3 years & by that time I hope to be able to secure a position in life of which I shall be ashamed of no man knowing." Could he hold the affections of a lonesome and attractive girl for three years?

Jobs of any kind were scarce, and genteel ones were not to be had by a country chap with extremely limited education and no letters of introduction. At his wits end and with cash reserves fast dwindling he fell back on his physical resources and applied to the railroad station at King's Cross for a job as porter to handle freight. The work was heavy and he was required to be on the job for eleven hours per day for six shifts per week. Work periods for the more than 600 porters were staggered through the twenty-four hours to keep the freight moving day and night. This meant that he had to take his turn on the night shift. Pay was meager, from fifteen to seventeen shillings a week, but at least he had an honest job that would support him for the time being.

One Sunday he dropped into services at a railroad-man's chapel near the railroad station and was at once asked to teach a Sunday school class of boys about thirteen years of age. He wrote: "At the Sunday School I certainly find plenty of acquaintances but I make no friends. In fact they are mostly gentlemen & I am too proud to thrust my companionship on those so much above me in social life. Tis true we have some jolly meetings on Friday nights (literary society evenings) & they are all free and kind, but there it ends."

In mid May he changed his lodgings because the rent of five shillings per week was too high. He had moved to 6 Bath Place where the rent was only three shillings (about seventy-two cents). A month later he confessed he was feeling "very down and dull". "I do not tell Mother all these things or she would tell Uncle and he would grumble all day long." He had begun to think of applying for a position in the railroad offices as a clerk, but found that a strict examination was required and he knew that his own education was seriously inadequate.

A letter written on the 29th of June appeared in an entirely different handwriting. One of his new acquaintances at the chapel (a Mr. Nottingham) had been attracted to the ambitious country boy. He was himself in one of the railroad offices and invited George to come to his room for special coaching in penmanship and arithmetic to enable him to try the examinations. He "put me through an exam." He abused me like a pickpocket .... I had to go through Dictation, several parts of Arithmetic &c. He told me my spelling was excellent, my Arithmetic much better than he expected but not yet good enough; but my writing, Oh. it was something shocking. Of course, said he, if you are going to be a gentleman . . . people would spare a little time to make it out, but as a clerk, the inspectors would not trouble to do so." Then George added: "... with God's help I will yet raise myself to the level from which my father fell. It seems strange that in London are most of my Father's relations, and many of my Mother's friends are only a few miles away, and yet I do not know one. After a little while, when I have got into the office,

I intend to visit my Grandfather's grave and see the house where we used to dwell, and which appears to me to be just like a dream, so indistinct and confusing is the rememberance of it."

Letter after letter in the next six months reported the weekly sessions with the ever patient Mr. Nottingham who evidently developed a real affection for this hard-working and ambitious Yorkshire chap. Another man who took a direct interest in him was a Mr. Poynter who was superintendent of the railroad porters, and also served as superintendent of the Sunday school which George now attended regularly. Mr. Poynter's salary was an incredible £500 pounds (about $2,400) or more per year. Of these two men George wrote they were the only gentlemen "who I might say cared to shake hands with me".

At the end of July he reported that he had received a letter from his Mother expressing concern lest he desecrate the Sabbath by using so much time on the holy day to write to his girl. In spite of his devotion to his Mother he retorted: "Suppose I was down home would it be wrong, would it be wicked, if I were, on a Sunday evening to go for a walk, or have a conversation with you? I say no. Then, if it is right to speak to each other when we are near, ~~can it be wrong to speak to each other when we are near~~, can it be wrong to speak to each other when we are separated?" He added that he especially wanted to write on Sunday for on that day he had some spare time. On week day nights he reached his room "tired and weary for ours is heavy, hard work."

In spite of constantly recurring expressions of his driving pride the letters were not self-pitying. He took the strict social caste system for granted: it was his position in that system that he resented. Jolly sketches of Sunday school picnics appear repeatedly. Also he reported the May Day mummery in Hyde Park where "impertinent" clowns leaped into gentlemen's carriages to sport with the staid occupants, while others who were clad solely in evergreens and flowers cavorted for their own pleasure and to entertain the on-lookers.

Soon after this George was caught up in the grinding pressure of hard times. "I long once more to be in the green fields and to see the clear water in the river Swale again instead of the black mud which runs down the Thames....a large sickly tree [nearby]...looks out of its place poor thing. The leaves are black and drooping & the town sparrows are there with an everlasting chirrup instead of the blackbird and thrush". Thousands of men were out of work but he doggedly continued to prepare for his clerkship examinations.

He sent his "Darling Sis" a temperance book for a birthday present. He explained this rather odd gift by saying: "if you had seen the sights which are to be seen every night in our streets. Men, women, boys and girls. My Pollie [his pet name for Mary], hundreds of <u>beautiful</u> girls which makes one's heart bleed to see. Creatures who were once as pure, as good as yourself, throng our public houses and corners & would sell their soul to Satan for a drop of gin."

He began to study shorthand for his examinations but warned Pollie that there was little chance for him to get any Christmas leave. As a porter he was only entitled to three days vacation during the year. The clerks got up to fourteen days, but even if he was able to pass the examination for a clerkship he could not hope to accumulate any leave time before Christmas. Also he was increasingly worried: "trade is fearfully dull and I am afraid there are no vacancies in the offices." To add to his unrest Mary wrote that her Mother had come over from America and was talking of taking the girls back with her to the New World. "You had better not." Ah, Pollie, don't go! Within a week rumors became fact; due to depressed conditions all clerks' examinations were discontinued indefinitely. George commented, "I am yet a porter" getting up at 2:40 A.M. to go on duty at 3:00 and to stay on the job until 2:00 P.M. at seventeen shillings ($4.08) per week.

In this period of despondency the weekly programs of the Caledonian Road Literary Society (a young people's social organization at the chapel) took more and more of his time. He appeared repeatedly on the programs which were carefully planned and announced in a printed folder distributed in advance every three months. Essays, dramatic skits, orations and debates were presented. After each part of a program was delivered the members engaged in active and spirited criticism of the performance: as to posture, he kept his eyes down; delivery, his voice was good but he spoke too fast; essay content, material was good or poor, as the case might be; pronunciation,

an "h"; etc., etc. George himself worked for three full months on an essay on the minerals of Great Britain that received substantial praise. After one of his efforts the Minister complimented him saying that he had a "musical voice". George reported the compliment to Mary saying that the good man evidently credited to musical quality that which actually arose from nervous excitement. But in any case here was the training that stood him in good stead later when he became a speaker in wide demand in his Texas community.