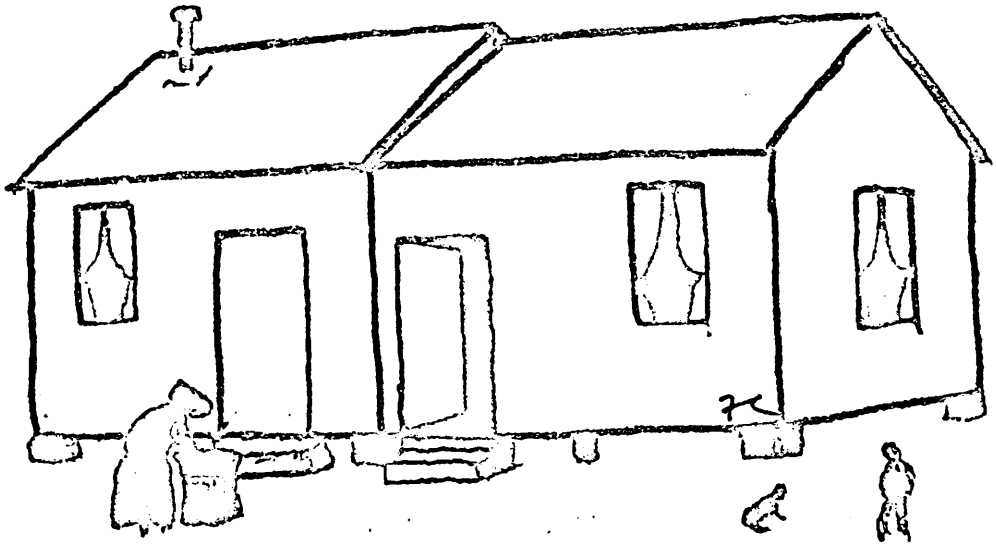

IV. Hard Times

Kyle, Texas, was five years old when George and Mary arrived in
. It had been established as a depot by the International and Great
:hern Railroad on 200 acres of land deeded by the Moore and Kyle fam-
:s (Annie May Miller, "The History of Kyle, Texas" M.A. Thesis, San
:os State College, 1950). It is now eight miles north of San Marcos
twenty-one miles south of Austin though in the 1880's the dirt road
tances were greater. Luling, where the Irelands lived, was some
nty-five miles to the southeast.

The frontier was here. The Luling Sentinel (issues of May 9, 1878
July 25, 1878) reported on the activities of the train robber-outlaw
Bass who came to his violent end at Round Rock just a few miles north
Austin. The same newspaper matter of factly reported that a Negro man
white woman had eloped from Walker County to Houston. The man was
:en into custody for carrying concealed weapons and abduction of the

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The picture is an actual drawing of the first Callcott house in

girl. Fifteen or twenty men met the constable and got his key to the house of confinement. The paper laconically finishes its story with the statement that about fifteen shot-gun shots were fired and that the Negro was found dead with "over two pounds" of buckshot in his body. (The Luling Sentinel, April 18, 1878).

The cattle drives reported by George had reached their peak in 1885 and 1886, but the next year drought caused many cattle to die of starvation. Too, the coming of barbed wire, the arrival of large numbers of farmers and the completion of railroads which provided transportation--all these combined to bring about the decline of the open range. (Rupert Norval Richardson, Texas: The Lone Star State. Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1958, pp. 250-253).

The two years spent by George and Mary in Kyle were difficult ones. John Ireland who lived in Luling still ran his live stock on the open range, but George was determined to go into the rapidly expanding cotton culture. Of course he knew nothing at all of Texas farming. His only experience was on an English farm at 54 degrees north latitude. This was scarcely comparable to farming at 30 degrees latitude in a continental climate. He rented unbroken, i.e. uncultivated, land from one Mr. H. Helman, a German merchant in Kyle and bought two yoke of oxen. By nightfall the newcomer was aching in every muscle and bone from arguing with slow and stubborn oxen while trying to break up the tough prairie land with a heavy hand-guided plow.

Day after day brought the dry, brittle, hot, hard glare of cloudless skies that by afternoon sent the mercury above the hundred degree mark. English woolen clothing suitable for Halifax or Yorkshire where eighty degree temperatures warranted the term "heat wave" was here a torture. I the immigrants longed for the soft fogs of the Old Country and for the br

bleak, cold and clammy haunts of Halifax with their curse of tuberculosis.

The weather itself was something they couldn not get used to. They were accustomed to a climate where the daily range was seldom more than ten degrees but not the Texas daily range of thirty degrees. In addition there was the periodic spasm of nature locally referred to as a Norther. These blasts from the uninhibited North Pole swept down across the plains with frightening rapidity. A balmy mid-day in a matter of hours turned into an alarming and dangerous nightmare of sleet mixed with a little driving snow. A midday temperature of 66 degrees could turn to a mere 6 degrees twelve hours later. A whimsical local interpretation, with a mixture of the Old South and the Mexican west, is seen in this description from The People's Era of San Marcos (February 16, 1899):

The Nawther

O the wind is blowin' troo de air,
The 'possum shivers in his lair,
The jassax backs up anywhere
To keep the blast ofn his hair.

O for a woody pile of wood!
O for a massy mass of brush!
O for a nigger with an ax!
O that the blasted blast
would hush!! Caramba!

----Woodyard Kihplun.

During the first summer or so George suffered seriously with common prickly heat. It covered his body but he refused to stop or to cater to it. Next the plague formed huge welts which itched intolerably. When infected and rubbed by sweaty clothing the welts became crusted sores that would break open with a deep breath or unusual movement. Another new pest was the millions of redbugs, or chiggers, that infested pastures and thrived on farm weeds. These almost microscopic pests clung to a worker's clothing by the scores. Next they found their way up the unwilling hosts' legs to imbed themselves in soft human skin. As they dug their way in, a round inflamed welt half an inch in diameter formed. After about a week they died in situ but by that time others had likely been accumulated by the hapless victim.

As the second year came on and drought parched the fields, it became evident that there would be little cotton to sell to bring in cash at the end of the year's work.* The amazing variation in rainfall in Central Texas was something that had not been counted on. Exact figures for 1887 are not available but the drought was so severe that cattle died by the thousands for lack of food and water on the ranges. The variation is illustrated by the reports (The Seguin Enterprise, January 10, 1902) for Guadalupe County. In 1889 and 1890 the rainfall was 41.35 and 37.60 inches respectively, but in 1892 and 1893 it dropped to 15.00 and 16.30 inches. The Callcott's cash reserves were dwindling fast. Mary finally took matters into her own hands. She went to see Mr. Hellman, the German owner of the store in Kyle where the family

* The diary mentions 1886-87 see Robert L. Ferris, ed

had been making essential purchases and from whom they were renting their land. She asked him for some wheat flour and some extra sugar. How these English folk did dislike the everpresent cornbread.

"What for such expensive nothings?" was the suspicious inquiry.

Mary unfolded her plan. She wanted the makings for a cake for George's birthday, but did not want the items to be added to the family's account at the store. The agreement previously made was that the regular account would be settled when the cotton was sold. In the first place the prices charged for goods sold on credit were excessively high. In addition, there was customarily a flat 10% interest added to the price even though the period between purchase and payment was in no case more than eleven months and might be as little as two weeks, depending on the date the purchase was made.

Mary pointed out that many men in the community wanted to buy work clothes because they had no women to sew for them. She proposed that Mr. Hellman provide her with cloth and let her make work pants. Haltingly she said that he could pay her whatever he felt they were worth. Somewhat reluctantly the merchant measured off enough heavy cloth to make two pairs of pants.

Of course Mary had no machine so the work had to be done by hand. Then began four long agonizing days as she double stitched all the seams and maneuvered to get pockets, the crotch and other difficult spots stitched together. In the process a pair of her husband's English trousers had

to be ripped apart so that she could decide what to do next and how to get at it. Then in fear and trembling she went back to the store after an estimated twenty-six hours of labor.

The German took the garments, looked at the double stitched seams, pulled and tugged at possible points of strain, then grunted: "Ach! You work too hard. Stitch 'em up! Stitch 'em up so I can sell 'em. Then if they come to pieces, let somebody else sew 'em back together." Saying no more, he took fifty cents from the cash drawer, subtracted twenty-five cents for the cake makings and handed her the remaining two-bit piece. Next, he cut off enough material for six more pairs of work pants. Soon he wanted her to make work shirts too. A little trickle of cash began to come into the family coffers. Mr. Hellman had the reputation of being a shrewd trader but Mary appreciated the fact that she always seemed to get good measure for all she bought, and even a piece of candy would at times be quietly added to the package for each of the little tots.

On another occasion the German merchant was driving along the road that passed the end of the field where George was working. Spring rains had come just as the cotton was planted. Grass and weeds sprang up and threatened to choke out the young cotton. George was desperately at work when he noticed that Mr. Hellman had stopped his buggy and was waiting for him to reach the end of his row. When he got there the conversation ran:

"You 'ave got weeds. Why you not buy help?"

"I have already borrowed too much money from you and did not want to ask for more," was the reply.

"Vell. You not get help; you lose your crop and I lose my money. you already owe at store. Come see me and get money for help. That way you save crop and I get my money."

Under such conditions there was little time or interest to be spent on local or national politics. What mattered to them whether the new state capitol building of which Texas was to be so proud was built of limestone or of granite? Actually it was to be finished in 1888 but there is no record that either George or Mary even thought of making the twenty-five mile trip to see the handsome granite structure. What mattered it to them that in 1882 the cornerstone of the west wing of the Main Building of the University of Texas had been laid and that the enrollment was creeping up to about 300 students? Indeed, what mattered it to them that a hair cut could be had for twenty cents and a hair trim for ten cents? They did not have such money and Mary learned to cut her husband's hair as well as little Herbert's shaggy locks.

Little dreaming of the economic disasters facing the country, and indeed facing the world at the time, after two years at Kyle George and Mary decided they were anxious to proceed on their own. John Ireland* had done rather well at Luling. Now he and George decided to buy land on the prairie ten miles by dirt road south of San Marcos and about twenty-four miles from

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*This John Ireland is not to be confused with the resident of Guadalupe County who had the same name and became Governor of Texas.

Luling. This brought them within sixteen miles of Seguin and a little further from New Braunfels. George was to do the work, for his Father-in-law was showing his age and none too strong. Here on Rattlesnake Hill John Ireland bought something over two hundred acres of rich black land whose chief handicap was a very large quantity of "rocks" (nobody ever called them "stones") that made cultivation difficult.

The County seat was Seguin. Of this town the City Directory of 1938 reported: "In the seventies Seguin was considered a rather tough town, the gay and festive cowboys were plentiful and ran horse races in the streets and amused themselves also by shooting holes through the merchants' signs." With the coming of the railroad in 1876 came "the usual crowd of gamblers and other bad characters." And now ten years later George and Mary had this as their county seat just as the old-days-of-the-cowboys were being-ruined-by-the-invasion-of-the-farmers. new invasion of farmers forever ruined the world of the cowboys.

Two houses were on the new farm. The one occupied by the Irelands was reasonably adequate for the two of them now that all of their children were married or had left home. Like all houses in the community it stood about two feet above the ground, supported by cedar posts at intervals of about eight feet as a foundation. Such an open space under the floor gave cruel access to cold air which swept beneath the single layer of floor boards and penetrated freely through the cracks. Bricks were entirely too scarce for a continuous underpenning all around the house, and to build closer to the ground was to provide skunks, possums, snakes and other "varmints" (to say

nothing of wood-ants or termites) a good hiding place. The house boasted a fireplace made of bricks that had been brought from New Braunfels, and of lime, mortar and cement that was reasonably available from the limestone hill country above San Marcos. Cooking was done over an open fireplace, and later over a wood-burning stove whose 5 1/2 inch stove-pipe projected through the side wall of the kitchen.

George and Mary were to live in a simple two-room house, later known as the "Old House". It had nothing so ambitious as a fireplace but used a wood-burning stove in the kitchen-living room. Later, another room was added and a pot-bellied heating stove acquired. There was no attempt to install a flue so again the stove-pipes simply projected through the wall or roof. The kitchen was about ten feet by ten feet, while the family room was about eleven by fourteen feet and a new room added a few years later was some ten feet by twelve feet. Only the new room had double walls since all lumber had to be brought from East Texas and then had to be hauled out into the country. The two rooms of the original building had a simple frame of 2" x 4"s, undressed, with boards nailed on the outside. The roof was covered with cedar shingles nailed to undressed 1" boards which varied in width from about four to eight inches, depending on the thickness of the tree from which they were cut. The untrimmed edges of the boards, often with bits of bark adhering to them, were crooked and provided interesting patterns or scallops for an ailing person lying on his back and gazing up at them. After a few years the shingles dried out and some of them

cracked or were blown off so that the rain could trickle through to the rooms below. Whenever the youngsters heard a few drops fall they would gleefully scramble to the kitchen to get pots and pans to place on the floor under the leaks.

Here on the prairie George and Mary joined the vanguard of farmers as they invaded the old cowmen's territory. The ranchers bitterly resented these newcomers who fenced their lands to protect growing crops from cattle that had once roamed freely. Not only were grazing rights involved but the fences frequently separated a rancher's cattle from their accustomed waterholes. Fence cutting had been rampant for some years.*

A few miles from the new farm was the home of a blunt ranchman who sent word by one of his cowboys that if that damn farmer Callcott did not get out of the country his widow would have to take his children back to England. The messenger added that the rancher said he would be around in two days and expected to find the house empty, or at least that the wagon would be loaded and the family ready to leave.

On the morning of the second day George was in his new field turning over some sorghum hay that he had recently cut and left on the ground to dry. Soon the rancher and his man rode up.

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*Henry D. McCallum ("Barbed Wire in Texas", Southwestern Historical Quarterly, vol. LXI, No. 2 (Oct., 1957), p. 217) states that the damage between 1880 and 1885 done by the cutters amounted to an estimated $18,000,000. The same writer reports advertisements of rewards for apprehension of fence cutters from Boerne in 1889, and reports of trouble in Uvalde County in 1893 and in Brown County in 1898 where threats of death, stock poisoning and dynamiting of homes were exchanged. In 1884 the Texas State legislature had made fence cutting a felony but the abuse continued, and The Seguin Enterprise was still publishing offers of rewards from the Governor of the State for apprehension of fence cutters as late as 1902 (The Seguin

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"Is your name George Callcott?"

"Yes."

"Didn't you get the message I sent you day before yesterday?"

"Yes."

"Well, why ain't you loading that wagon?"

"Mr. _____, I have bought this land and I expect to stay here."

"Do you mean to say that after I sent you word that I would shoot you if you did not leave, you came out to this field without a gun?"

"Yes," was the surprising answer. "I knew that you would have your gun and I knew that I am hot tempered. I decided that two armed fools out here would be sure to get into trouble. But I have heard that you are not a coward and will not shoot an unarmed man. So I thought maybe we could talk like reasonable men instead of trying to kill each other."

The answer was a pause. Then: "By God, this country needs men like you even if you are a damned farmer."

The ranchman rode off and the two families remained respectful, if cool, acquaintances until the ranch was broken up and sold to more farmers.

To protect his animals in the early days George had recorded his own brand in Hays County in 1886. This was a heart with a horizontal bar through it  . The symbol was burned on the left shoulder of horses and the right side of cattle. (See copy of registration certificate on p.). Later, when fencing became general the further branding of animals was unnecessary.

Fences were essential for the farmers. Wandering cattle would seriously damage cotton and a herd of cattle would wholly destroy growing corn

or sorghum (cane). To reproduce the rail fences of the old East was out of the question for there was no timber for rails. Stone fences were equally impossible because of lack of adequate building stones on the prairie. Anyway, who could build a stone fence around a hundred and fifty acres of land adequate to provide protection against a long-horn steer?

The answer was found in the invention of barbed wire that had first been placed on the market by J. F. Glidden in 1874. By 1890 its price had dropped until it could be had at $3.50 per hundred pounds. Depending on the number of points or barbs, and the distance between the barbs, the average roll at that time weighed from 90 to 110 pounds and contained eighty rods*, or one quarter of a mile of wire. This meant sixteen rolls of wire for a four-wire fence at a cost of $55.00 were needed for a quarter of a section of land even if the land were in the shape of a perfect square. By extensive foraging mesquite posts might be found but these were usually crooked and hard to use. Cedar posts could be had in the hill country at a distance of ten to twenty miles. A trip by oxen for that distance, however, over the ill-defined roads of the time was a chore indeed. Even so, the posts cost $8.00 to $10.00 per hundred at the cedar brakes. To fence his land George needed about 550 posts if they were placed ten feet apart or nearly 650 if they were eight feet apart for an effective fence. Then that number of post-holes had to be hacked out of the stubborn soil that had a layer of gravel about twelve inches below the surface. Rough, hard and expensive work indeed for a man and an eight to ten year old boy.

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*Five and one-half yards = 1 rod.

Food was monotonous. In spite of coming from Old England neither George nor Mary had ever learned to like cabbage even when at its best; and cabbage planted in Central Texas with its early summer heat soon developed a particularly strong flavor. The same was true of turnips. All efforts to raise Brussels Sprouts and cauliflower brought poor results in that hot and dry climate. Fortunately beef was generally plentiful and each year the young family tried to secure a pig or two that could be fed on table scraps and field corn to ~~be ready for use in~~ provide meat for the winter. Corn meal used as mush for breakfast and as bread at other meals was a staple of diet but these English folk never learned to like either hoe cake, corn bread, or any other variety of corn food. "Wheat was made for man, corn for barn yard animals," George was wont to say. Yet, like it or not, it had to be used. Tomatoes, squash, string beans and other vegetables were planted each spring with varying but fair results.

San Marcos, the shopping center, was a long ten miles away and over roads that were little more than trails.* To make the trip took about two hours in a buggy drawn by a team. In the early days George had no buggy so the trip took double that amount of time by wagon and mules. If it was undertaken by oxen the trip became a two-day enterprise, one to go to town and another to return. For Mary with her migraine headaches and small children, such an undertaking was too much to contemplate more than once or twice a year.

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*San Marcos was a town of 1,232 in 1880 that grew rapidly in the next ten years but then remained stationary and only reported 2,292 inhabitants in 1900. By 1910 it had reached the 4,000 mark.

Mary's efforts to gain a few extra cents by sewing, as at Kyle, were now wholly fruitless. About once a month George made the trip for salt, oatmeal, coffee, sugar, flour, an occasional quart of vinegar or a gallon of molasses, and a yearly purchase of pepper corns that could be ground as needed in the coffee mill. In spite of vigorous washing after such use the old mill provided coffee with a strangely piquant flavor for a number of days.

Also this English family made a special effort to get tea. Finally they found a grocery store in San Marcos whose proprietor would order a three-pound canister for them. To their delight when it arrived it carried the beloved English name of Lipton's. Such a frivolous purchase was unheard of in central Texas at the time but if a customer wanted it the grocer was willing to accommodate. Here by careful hoarding was creature comfort for a few months.

On one of his trips to town George came back proudly bringing along a box in the back of the wagon. It was dark when he got home and the children were in bed. The next morning they were told to go out on the gallery (porch) and look in the box they would find there. Soon two excited youngsters raced into the kitchen to know if they could feed the two hens and a rooster that their father had brought home.

Some weeks later came the proud day when one of the hens did not want to leave the nest where she had been leaving an occasional egg which had been so carefully collected and carried into the house. In the hot

summer weather the eggs would spoil in a very few days. As a result only three were on hand for the lady hen to "set" on. A trip to Grandmother's house a hundred and fifty yards away brought four more. Mary then took a hand and walked a mile to visit a German neighbor who had recently moved into the community. Here three more eggs were borrowed and the ten were eagerly given to the would-be mother. Unfortunately, she was of the temperamental semi-Leghorn variety. She broke one of the eggs, then got tired of her self-imposed task and left her nest after two weeks of effort. All the eggs were ruined.

Meanwhile her companions were roosting by night in a small and scrubby hackberry tree that was about thirty feet from the house. One night the hen disappeared, though in the morning a few feathers were found on the ground under the tree. The next night was bright moonlight so George quietly waited. As suspected, a short time after the kerosene lamp had been put out a coyote slunk through the bushes. He approached the tree where the rooster was restlessly sleeping alone. The animal began to circle the tree silently. The fearful rooster kept turning his head to follow the animal around the tree. After two or three circles of the coyote the bird was dizzy and staggering as he turned. Meanwhile the animal quietly moved closer to the tree to catch the fowl when he fell. Just before this happened, however, a pistol shot ended the matter and the next morning a coyote carcass was buried. Later another hen was acquired that paid more attention to her maternal duties.

Bird life in the area was plentiful.* There were the very obvious,

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*For a scientific account of Texas bird life see:

big and ugly turkey buzzards. Periodically a pair established a nest, merely a few sticks rudely gathered in a small pile and located in a clump of thorny chaparral, there to hatch out two tawny colored young. Attractive at first, their baby down soon gave way to dirty brownish-black feathers. Meanwhile partly cleaned bones of dead carcasses brought in by the parent birds accumulated. As days passed the stench of decaying flesh became overpowering until at last the young birds could fly.

Then there were the owls. The screech owl was a "cute" little fellow, generally popular for he fed chiefly on field mice, small vermin and other birds. The regular barnyard owl was a mortal enemy of chickens and was to be shot on sight. Hawks fell into similar categories, with the little sparrow hawk considered a slight nuisance only, but the chicken hawk, with his characteristic white band across his tail, could expect no quarter.

The careless dove frequently made her nest in the cotton rows. As the laborer advanced across a field behind his plow suddenly in front of him would scramble out a sorely crippled, fluttering bird. Giving chase caused the panic stricken creature to move a bit faster but only a few feet in front of her pursuer as she sought to toll the enemy from her cherished nest. The experienced workman merely glanced at the faithful creature as he guided his plow to miss the nest. No one wanted to break up a dove's nest. They ate hated insects and provided good food and good sport when grown. Toward the end of the cotton field might be seen a mother partridge with her brood varying from half a dozen to a dozen downy balls of yellow and brown striped

fluff. She too was given every chance to escape with her family. When she felt her chicks were in danger she was completely reckless of consequences, even daring to attack a moving vehicle if she thought that would give her babies a chance to escape.

In the cool of a summer's morning the mocking bird would sing as though he was bursting with the joy of life, periodically interrupting his song with squeals or raucous squawks as he imitated other animals or birds, whence his name. After his early morning serenade the mocker would drop to some level spot, frequently the front yard of a house, looking for his breakfast. Rising on tiptoe he would flap his wings hoping to frighten some cowering bug into self-betraying motion. Then the bird would pounce, gulp his prey and again rise to flap his wings and look for another victim or two. Later in the day might be seen the scissor-tail (so named from its ten to twelve inch tail that is used as a rudder in the sharp flying maneuvers of which it is so fond). Two of them flying, twisting and turning in mock combat were a sight to give a lift to the most prosaic nature.

These last two, the mocking bird and the scissor-tail, had an inveterate hatred of the hawks that preyed on both of them. Against this enemy the custom of both kinds of smaller birds worked to work in pairs. They would carefully remain separate from each other and would fly above but on different sides of the enemy. One would suddenly swoop down and pounce with sharp beak driven with the full force of wings and weight to strike the hawk's back. As the harassed bird turned to pursue the attacker, bird number two would zoom down from the opposite side and administer

another driving blow. Meanwhile bird number one had resumed a position of attack.

Wrens, humming birds and an occasional blue bird were almost pets around the farm house. These delicate and beautiful little creatures were common at the turn of the century but became scarcer at later dates.

Always spectacular was the red bird or cardinal. A vigorous fighter in his own right, his proud bearing, strident voice and at times attractive whistle, were coupled with a powerful beak with which to damage an adversary. His demure little wife and relatively sparse numbers, and his own color and beauty insured that he would remain a favorite.

Each spring just as the young corn was coming out of the ground the farmer could expect a migration of the yellow-breasted field larks. Unattractive to begin with, they had a vicious habit of pulling up just sprouted corn to eat the soft grain of corn that was still attached to the tender stalk. A single bird would pull up several dozen young stalks in rapid succession and a flock of them could do real damage. Their flesh was poor and even when diet was monotonous the bodies were seldom used.

All through Central and West Texas were the chaparral birds (commonly called road runners). These long legged, rangy birds stood about ten to twelve inches in height though about six inches of the height was legs and another three inches was neck. The body was slight and seldom weighed more than half or three-quarters of a pound. The wings were little used for this fellow was a ground bird. He was a sporting chap and would run for the sheer fun of it. As a buggy or horseman drove along a road, one of the

birds would jump in front of the animal and stay a few paces in the lead. Few horsemen could resist the challenge. As the horse speeded up so did the bird. After half a mile of this exercise the bird would begin to get beyond his own area so he would blithely jump to one side to wait for another passerby to give him a run in the other direction.

About dusk on a summer's day as the heat subsided and the insect world began to arouse itself there appeared flying a hundred feet or so in the air the bull bats, birds somewhat larger than mocking birds. They flew along with keen eyes turned downwards. When one of them sighted a hapless insect fifty to a hundred feet below, his flight turned into a vicious and swift dive. As he plummeted downwards his wings started a hum that would be audible for a distance of several hundred feet. On reaching, or missing, his victim with wings and tail taut he pulled out of his dive to keep from crashing into the earth. At this point the hum reached almost a screech. How successful was the dive in securing a victim the observer seldom knew for all he heard was the noise of the dive-bombing attack.

Martins too were occasionally seen with their peculiar, darting flight. More obvious were the glistening black birds that traveled in flocks of twenty-five to a hundred or more. They loved to settle on freshly ploughed fields to search for bugs and worms.

Migratory birds occasionally made an appearance. From time to time tens of thousands appeared in flocks flying through the country and taking half an hour to pass a given point. These, however, were only to be

seen occasionally and did not become a part of the life of the people. More noticeable in the fall and spring were the flocks of ducks and geese that made their way to and from their winter feeding grounds along the Gulf coast and in Mexico. The geese, with their necks outstretched, followed their leader who flew boldly ahead with his flock trailing behind in a wedge shape with five to fifteen birds on either flank. When they were fleeing a blizzard they pushed on during the night when their plaintive cries could be heard as they fled southward at a height of several hundred feet to two thousand feet following their built-in nature-provided compass to their destination.

At dusk on these same summer nights following a period of wet weather one could see thousands of fireflies (lightning bugs) blinking their tail lights. They would shimmer and gleam as they flashed along a few feet from the ground. Higher in the air were the bats that emerged at the same time. Their flickering, jerking and erratic flight as they sought for insects after a hot day were a never ending mystery and matter of interest.

Another long remembered sight followed heavy rains. That black gummy soil soaked up the water slowly. Throughout the area were quantities of earth worms that sometimes reached a length of seven or eight inches. As the rain filled the worm holes the creatures came to the surface for air. At times they would crawl out in the open and at others would simply get their heads out. This gave the chickens a splendid chance. One sould dart down and seize the exposed end of a worm. Especially if he was a big fellow the worm would wrinkle his skin and grip the sides of his hole. There ensued

a tug of war. The bird would swallow an inch or so of the worm then closing its beak for a firm grip it would rear back and pull another inch or so of the creature out of the ground. Another hurried swallow would follow, then another tug until the worm was vanquished or broke in two.

Slowly the family got more land under cultivation. The good rains of 1888 and 1889 meant good crops in Guadalupe County also the Galveston price of middling cotton in early October was reasonably steady at around ten cents a pound. A team of mules was acquired and it appeared that better times were at hand. On June 21, 1890 George and Mary proudly bought 100 acres of land from John Ireland. The purchase price was $2,000 gold, payable in annual installments of $200 each with the first payment due on January 1, 1892. The whole sum bore interest at the rate of 10%. (Deed Record Book No. 3, p. 295. This is found in the Guadulupe County records at Seguin, Texas.) As though to emphasize the improved conditions, on May 28, 1891 a second son, Frank, was born. Then in February 1893 another boy, Frederick William, arrived. Both were healthy and promising youngsters.

Unfortunately the worst of the hard times was just coming on. The rains failed. On October 2, 1890 middling cotton in Galveston was quoted at 8 1/2 cents, a year later it was down to 7 1/2 cents and in 1894 plunged to a sickening 5 3/4 cents. A short rally in 1895 was followed by another decline until the bottom was reached when the record showed a mere 4 7/8 cents* on October 1, 1898. Massive farmer unrest swept the country and the Populists

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*See The New York Times for cotton prices at various markets.

made their bid for power in the national election of 1892. Cleveland, the Democrat, was elected only to be forced to desperate measures between 1893 and 1897 to try to keep enough gold in the national treasury to maintain the country's solvency. In Texas, however, gold was almost unknown. This was silver country and the farmers clamored for free coinage of the white metal.

George knew little of national affairs but he did know that after a year of hard work he was lucky if he got over five cents a pound for his cotton when he took it to the gin. The Galveston quotations were discounted in Central Texas because of shipping costs to the port city. For ten bales of cotton there was a pitiful $275.00 for the year's income. Interest on the purchase price of the farm was nearly $200.00 and that without any payment on the principle. This left less than $100.00 for a family of six for the year. Meanwhile plows and hoes with which to cultivate crops did wear out.

Mary learned to salvage bits and pieces of her husband's clothes with which to make new garments for the children. Her own worn out dresses reappeared as shirts for the boys and as dresses for little Ethel. "Hog and hominy" again became stapes of diet with black-strap molasses for sweetening and an occasional rare treat in the form of a vinegar pie made of a pie crust with a coating of vinegar mixed with sugar and corn starch for filling.

It was while conditions were especially bleak that George made a painful trip to New Braunfels to see a Mr. Landa from whom he had borrowed some money. The merchant-banker-money lender was himself "spread thin" and his own obligations were coming due. Now George came in to say that he

simply could not pay the small debt that he owed. Both men were desperate and voices rose as the exchanges bordered on recriminations. At that point an understanding, motherly soul, Mrs. Landa, entered the room bearing a tray on which was a pot of hot coffee and some little German cakes. Ignoring the strained atmosphere she asked: "Would you gentlemen like a cup of coffee?" The creditor became the host, and the debtor the guest. Twenty minutes later two friends consummated a satisfactory extension of the loan.

Doctors were few and poorly trained and the Pure Food and Drug Act had not yet been passed. Patent medicines flourished. Their advertisements appeared in all sides. Dr. White's electric comb was said to "positively cure dandruff, hair falling out, sick and nervous headaches, and when used with Dr. White's Electric Hair Brush are positively guaranteed to make straight hair curl in 25 days." (The Seguin Enterprise, April 1, 1904). Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound was reported to have cured "a distressing case of fibroid Tumors after everything else failed." (The Hays County Times, September 9, 1904). Electric Bitters and Arnica Salve "completely cured" a case of Virulent Cancer" (The Texas Democrat, San Marcos, Texas, Sept. 21, 1906). "One small bottle of Hall's Great Discovery cures all Kidney and Bladder trouble, removes Gravel, cures diabetes, Seminal Emissions, weak and lame backs, and all irregularities of the Kidney and Bladder, in both men and women. Regulates Bladder in Children". The price was $1.00 per bottle (The Seguin Enterprise, Sept. 30, 1898). Something of a high point in

the advertising art was reached when Prophylactic Germicidal Tablets were reported to cure fifty-six listed ailments, among them: Asthma, Gout, Coughs, Syphilis, Ulcers, Tumors, Croup, Fevers, Weak eyes, Bad blood, Rheumatism, Gall stones, Women's Diseases and all contagions." "Germicidal Tablets will prevent the inception of any germ disease under normal conditions and will destroy the disease germs under all conditions." They "will cure you as certainly as the sun rises again." Price 50¢ and $1.00 (The Seguin Enterprise, April 28, 1905).

Advertisements of such marvelous cures, however, had little to do with the everyday life of the Callcotts. Mary was again pregnant when little Frederick faced the critical second summer of childhood so dreaded by frontier mothers. Just what his ailment was is unknown, but it was covered in the language of the community as cholera infantum. The doctor was called from San Marcos. He said vaguely that there was some talk in medical journals that orange juice was effective in some such cases but there were no oranges to be had at that time of year so the remedy could not be tried. The lad, whom fond parents referred to as the most promising of all their children, died. A little home-made coffin was buried under a sweet-gum tree about a hundred yards from the house. There through the years a pitiful little picket fence stood as a silent reminder of lost hopes.

On November 12th following came along the last of the children, Wilfrid Hardy. He was a puny child in contrast with the lost boy.

Slowly the depression was wearing itself out and the crisis seemed to be passing as the price of cotton improved to from 6¢ to 7 1/2¢ per pound.

William Jennings Bryan had caught the spirit of the mass unrest and made his astonishing campaign in 1896 calling for free coinage of silver and a millenium for the farmer. Bryan was defeated but during the next three years the country slowly absorbed its overproduction. Mills reopened, international trade resumed, new gold came in from Alaska and a new gold refining process made possible enabled the use of lower grade ores in this country. Then the Spanish American War gave a new lift to American feelings and a new direction to thought.

Before the turning tide could reach central Texas, however, the Callcott family had some additional bridges to cross. The cow had "dried up" and milk was not to be had. Crop prospects were poor and the 1898 cotton brought the disastrous low price of less than five cents a pound (4 7/8¢ was the actual price of middling cotton in Galveston on October 1st.) Should George give it all up and go back to England a failure? No!! Never!! Rather starve and be done with it. If Mary shed a few nostalgic tears at night she said nothing. Her pledge had been "for better or for worse."

George went to town and returned with nothing but fatback (the cheapest grade of bacon containing no lean meat and usually used only to boil with turnip greens or cabbage as flavoring). Oatmeal and flour were dispensed with. Corn meal mush was staple for breakfast. The fatback was cut thin and fried as bacon and the "drippings" used for shortening in the corn bread that was eaten with molasses for dinner and supper. Left-over corn meal mush was saved. When cold it stiffened, then was cut in strips and fried. Occasionally vinegar pies, or wild plum preserve or agarita (some called

it Texas holly) berries were made into jelly, and scraps of bread appeared as bread pudding (truly "poor man's pudding"). But for supper (dinner) at the end of the day's work, the men and boys always put on a clean shirt, and a clean and ironed table cloth (even though ragged) always covered the rough board table. Mary refused to use the new oilcloth. It was "improper".

Late in the spring of this bitter period (spring of 1899) Herbert and a Mexican laborer were busy planting cotton for there was still a chance that late planted cotton might possibly yield an extra bale or two of lint. There was no money for help so George took another plow and mule and opened a furrow in another part of the field, while his eight-year-old son (Frank) followed, wrestling with a single row planter.

The implement rested on a front wheel. Behind the wheel was a frame with two handles like a wheelbarrow. On the frame was a box to hold the cotton seed, and below the box was a spout projecting to within about two inches from the ground. In front of the spout through which the seed dropped was a small plow that opened a trench in which the seed fell at about four inch intervals. Then two small plow shares covered the seeds. The spout and the small plow shares helped to support the vehicle in an upright position but when it was pulled along by a mule over ploughed land it was likely to topple over at any moment. The weight of the planter was about a hundred pounds and could be handled rather easily by a grown man who was able to hold the handles at a convenient height. But for an eight-year old boy who had to grasp the handles almost at the height of his own head, and

whose weight was less than half that of a man it was strenuous work indeed. At the end of each row George would turn his plow around and wait for the boy to come up. The lad could not swing the heavy machine to turn it in the opposite direction to plant the next row so George would do this for him and they would start once more. When the boy was himself seventy-five years of age he wrote: "Slow work, but it did get some seed in the ground and that is what we were after .... Not child exploiting, just a case of getting money for food."

On one occasion Mary got four pounds of butter ready and took it to a country store where she went to buy necessities. The owner of the store said that he had enough butter and did not want it but he would allow her forty cents "in trade" for the whole four pounds. With a flash of independence she said she would feed it to the pig and chickens rather than sell it at such a price. But on the slow trip home she was a pensive woman. Had her momentary anger been justified? Had her pride kept her children from somewhat better food than the monotonous fatback and corn meal mush? The wear and tear on the frontier woman is rather strikingly shown in the accompanying composite picture of the Gallcott family that was made as a gift to the family by John Carter (who had married Lucy Ireland, Mary's younger sister) about 1898. The contrast of this picture with that of the girl who was a bride at old Skeeby tells the story more effectively than words can do.

From another direction came pressure on Mary. Well before 1900 George had become an established resident and voter in Guadulupe County

whose County seat was Seguin. Now he was called for jury duty with surprising regularity. Many of the German settlers had not yet acquired citizenship papers and others were handicapped by language difficulties and so were excused from service. George always looked the part of a substantial citizen and his personality and integrity recommended him. Jury duty meant that he had to travel sixteen miles to Seguin, usually to be on duty for a week. The fact that he had a frail wife and young children was no excuse so the English girl was left to listen to the labored breathing of croupy children punctuated by the lonesome howl of prowling coyotes. It was she who had to stand ready to doctor a boy's foot after he had stepped on a rusty nail, closing her mind to the dread possibilities of lockjaw that had recently claimed the life of a neighbor lad. Sick or well, life went on and she was the center of it.

One day when George and the two older boys came in from the field at noon they found the always staunch wife and mother preparing the corn meal, bacon and molasses with tears on her face. Her children were hungry. To add the last straw a venturesome hen, the mother of six promising quarter-pound chickens, had led her brood into the horselot looking for dropped grains of corn. Somehow the cow had stepped on and hopelessly crushed a chick. This was too much.

No wonder George and Mary became restless. A letter to the homeland evidently mentioned that they had received some propaganda advertising the glories of West Canada. "Oh, George," wrote his Mother

from England, "don't go to Canada." It is so cold there. Then she added that his Uncle George was quite feeble, "childish & [has] lost his memory." "... do you not think you could do as well in England ... but of course you must do what you think best for your family." Soon after this came word that the uncle had died on December 8, 1897. He left the Skeeby house, and the farm which was rented at £ 70 ($340) per year, to George's mother with the understanding that at her death it would go to her children. The younger bachelor son, Frank, who had managed the farm of late years, however, was to get the major share. The old ties were breaking and George had no real desire to go back.

In the fall of 1899 George as usual sold his early cotton as it was ginned to pay off his account at the store. This was bringing about 6 1/2¢ per pound. As soon as the storekeeper was paid George refused to sell more of his crop at the gin but "held" the bales hoping for better prices if he took them to market himself a few months later.

Furthermore, George was a thrifty soul.

In those days cotton seed was simply a waste product that was not worth shipping from a country gin to a distant plant at which to press the seeds to prepare cotton seed meal for stock feed. Most of the farmers refused to take the seed home and the gins were left to dispose of it as best they could. George as a boy in Yorkshire had learned the value of fertilizer. He reclaimed his own seed. Then, after saving enough for the next season's planting and for feed for the cow he dumped the rest of it back on theland. It could be

expected to sprout with the fall rains but cold weather soon killed the young plants and the food value returned to the soil.

About the middle of February George learned that the best prices for cotton were being offered in Seguin. He borrowed an extra wagon and loaded twelve 500 pound bales, six on each wagon. At five o'clock the next morning the two wagons each pulled by four mules started out. The eight animals and two drivers literally carried the hopes of the family to be able to pay off interest due and to secure badly needed supplies. Fortunately the roads were in good shape so by noon the wagons reached their destination. Then followed the regular ritual as each prospective buyer cut his generous sample of nearly a pound of lint. Next he examined it for trash and for color and finally pulled out a wisp of lint and with mysterious and judicious air he grasped it firmly between thumb and forefinger of the left hand. Next he seized the other end of the tiny bit and tugged at it with the right hand to extend the fiber to its maximum length. This was the all important test in which the cotton mills were especially interested. After proper pessimistic headshaking three buyers made their bids. The delighted farmer got 7 3/4¢ per pound, or about $475.00 for the lot.

Taking his driver to the hotel George walked into the dining room. Soon an apologetic waiter came up to say that men must wear coats if they expected to eat in the hotel dining room.

"Look here," said George, "I have just sold two loads of cotton and I want the two best dinners you have."

"I am very sorry but the manager would fire me if I let you eat without coats," was the answer.

A flash of anger was followed by the memory of his training as a waiter in a gentleman's house. Then: "Hang it all man, we are hungry. But if those are your rules you have to stick to them. I shall know where I can find a proper place to eat when I bring my wife and daughter to town. Now tell me where I can get a good dinner today." The waiter accommodated gladly.

Since most of George's regular business was transacted at San Marcos he decided to take his money in cash. A trip to the bank in Seguin brought prompt payment of the buyer's check — but the payment was in silver dollars for at this time the various silver purchase acts of the national government had flooded the country with silver coins. The bank teller courteously put the money in two sturdy bags made of cotton sacking (duck). George had thoughtlessly told the driver of the second wagon to go on home as soon as the cotton was unloaded. This meant he would have to travel alone and could not possibly reach home until long after dark. He suddenly realized that carrying that amount of silver might be dangerous and as usual he was travelling without his gun. Leaving his money at the bank temporarily he went to a lumber yard and bought a light load of lumber (something always needed on a farm). Then he went back to the bank and reclaimed his money. When safely out of sight of people he stopped and hid the bags in the bottom of the wagon bed and under the lumber. Now, he was

merely a belated farmer taking home a load of lumber. That spring the family ate better.

Unfortunately the youngest baby did not get on well. Petty ailments attracted complications and soon he was a very sick child. George set out the ten miles to San Marcos for a doctor. This meant five dollars (50¢ per mile one way) for the doctor* but one baby had been lost and they were determined to save this child if possible. The doctor came, mentioned the word diphtheria and frankly said there was nothing he could do though some cases survived. It was important to get the baby to take food if he could swallow it, but he warned Mary not to further deplete the child's strength by attempting to lift him. Each twenty minutes she was to lean over and offer her breast to the little fellow. As the doctor was leaving George asked him to come back the next day. The answer was that this would be useless for there was no hope. But the parents stayed up through the night and by morning the mother reported that the baby was sucking slowly. She insisted on feeding him at fifteen minute intervals and the stubborn chap insisted on getting well.

Throughout life he was wont to say that this early fright to his parents had made them unduly anxious. On the first appearance of a cold they plastered his chest with the abominable remedy of the day, a poultice concocted of turpentine and lard, the while they stuffed him with cough syrup composed of kerosene and sugar. Patent medicines were at least more palatable.

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*A little later doctor's fees doubled to $1.00 per mile for visits in the country. It should be remembered that such a trip of twenty miles was all that a team could be expected to do in a day. Also the trip would take at least five hours of a doctor's time.