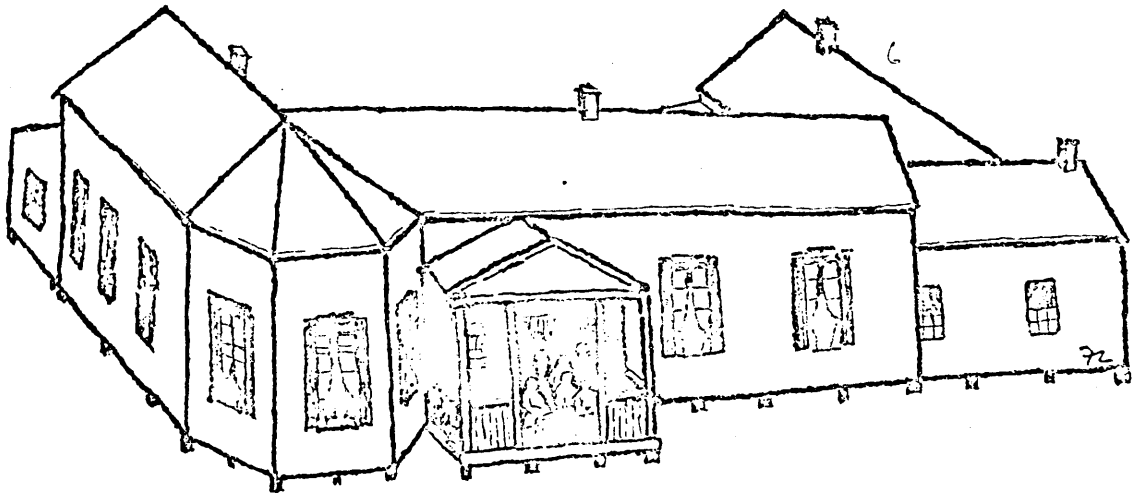

VI. Farm Life in Central Texas

This life, all "beer and skittles" as George was wont to say, was too good to last. Mother Nature did not always cooperate. In 1894 a hard-shelled, greyish black beetle, about a quarter of an inch long and with a hard snout projecting another eighth of an inch had appeared near Beeville, Texas. In the following years the boll weavil multiplied and spread throughout the cotton areas of Texas. The insect flourished in wet warm weather, and though reduced in numbers each winter, reproduced so rapidly in each new season that it sharply reduced cotton production. Guadalupe County cotton production in 1900 was 59,981 bales but in the two next years fell to 24,904 and then to 20,896 bales. (The Seguin Enterprise, Jan. 27, 1905).

One year the cold weather continued late and cotton could not be planted on schedule. Then, when the seed was in the ground, the rains came again and the cotton and grass seed came up together. Any work in that black and sticky soil was impossible when the ground was wet. By

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The drawing shows the Long Branch house.

the time men could get in the fields the grass was so high that there was serious danger that much of the cotton crop would be lost. There were two Mexican families on the farm, one lived in the old Ireland house and the other in the Old House. They set to work. George and the two older boys and even the youngest was impressed to pull weeds, chop cotton and work from dawn to dusk to try to save the crop. Extra help was out of the question for the whole countryside was in the same situation.

At noon one day Mary announced that it was time for the women to go to the fields, where neither had worked for two years. Mary would keep th house, prepare the meals and lend a hand outside when she had a chance. mid-morning she would come traipsing across the fields with a bucket of h tea in one hand and a small sack of sweet cakes or sandwiches in the othe That fifteen-minute break was a life saver. At 12:00 noon, aching and tired, the workers came in to dinner (never called lunch); then flat on their backs on the back porch with cushions under their heads for twenty minutes, and back to the fields at 1:00. There was no two-hour break at such a time. Again about 4:00 in the afternoon came "drinkings" of tea a a sweet cake. Half an hour before sundown Frank and Wilfrid left the fields to feed the stock and chickens, while Ethel went to milk the cows. George, Herbert and the Mexicans worked on until dark.

Staggering with weariness the children now almost resented their Father's long standing rule: no gentleman sat down to his evening meal in dirty clothes. Stripped to the waist over a wash basin the cold cistern water wrought wonders. Then in clean though simple clothes the strangely refreshed family sat down to supper. By 9:00 o'clock all were in bed, to be ready at daybreak for another day's struggle. A good part of the crop was saved and a fair harvest was the result.

Other complications arose almost in routine fashion. Old Prince, the horse who had refused heavy work but who was quite good as a buggy horse, got one of his front feet over the bottom strand of barbed wire around the pasture. As the barbs pricked him he lunged sideways pulling his foot along the wire until the barbs cut deeply into the flesh just behind and below the lower leg joint ankle and above the hoof. The next morning he was found with blood and hair entangled in the barbs for a couple of feet on each side of his still suspended foot with the wire now deeply embedded in the flesh. The wire was cut and pulled out of the wound, then a creosote preparation poured over the cut as a disinfectant. This treatment had to be repeated twice daily to prevent the ever dreaded screw worms from getting into the wound. Occasionally thereafter Prince was used for light work but after trotting for a quarter of a mile he began to limp badly.

This scourge of screw worms was a constant danger to all live stock. In warm weather the creatures multiplied with incredible rapidity for there was no system of control by radiation and release of sterile male flies — the practice that became routine shortly after World War II. Any open wound, even a galled spot on a mule's shoulder where harness had rubbed the flesh raw, would almost certainly be attacked if not doctored with creosote regularly. Another animal disease greatly feared was the blind staggers. This infectious ailment claimed two of Herbert's horses as late as 1909.

A major event took place two or three times each winter. This was hog killing. There was no artificial refrigeration so a prerequisite was a "norther" to drive night temperatures down to freezing to chill the meat. If this did not occur a third to a half of the season's meat might be lost. When a good strong north wind came in George would have to decide if it was a true Canadian front, a Pacific front that might just possibly turn cold enough, or was merely a local disturbance. If the prospect indicated a cold night ahead, a miserable day's work was guaranteed.

The first job was to start fires under two wash kettles (each holding fifteen to twenty gallons) to provide boiling water. The intended victims were given no breakfast to lighten the task of cleaning the intestines. One procedure was to shoot the animal, then at once to cut its throat. The other and preferred method was for two men to seize the animal and to stab its heart with a sharp knife: This got more blood out of the carcass, and. In either case the blood was saved for blood pudding or sausage. The saying to "squeal like a stuck pig" was truly applicable.

Now boiling water was brought from the kettles and poured over a patch of the animal's hide from six to eight inches square. This loosened the bristles which could then be scraped off with a sharp knife. Slowly the whole hide was thoroughly cleaned. In the meantime a 10 to 12 foot step ladder had been leaned up against the house. To one of the top steps a pulley

was attached. Now a single-tree was secured from a nearby plow or wagon. The hooks at each end of the single-tree were caught under the Achilles tendons of the hind feet of the animal. This spread the legs in preparation for opening the carcass. The center of the single-tree was attached to another hook at the end of a rope that ran over a pulley attached to the ladder. The scraped animal was hauled ignominiously under the ladder and hung head down.

After the body was thoroughly washed, it was slit from top to bottom (or from tail to throat). The head was cut off and used for souse, though the brains might be kept to be mixed with scrambled eggs as a special dish; the intestines were cleaned to be used as casings for sausage; while sweet breads, liver and kidneys became special items of diet for a few days. After the animal was cut up the Mexican workers were given generous portions. As night came on the ladder was placed against the porch and the pieces of meat carried to the roof. Hands still wet were now thoroughly numb. All that remained was to clean up and pray for a good cold night.

Chilling wind, scalding water, breath fogging out on the frosty air, wet hands numb with cold, the stench of the hog pen, the reek of the scalded hide, blood oozing out, muddy feet, tugging at the heavy carcass, curious dogs wandering around and hens with heads held high and cackling nervously — hog killing.

The second day brought the job of trimming all the pieces hastily cut up the day before. Loose bits and surplus fat were put aside to be ground

into sausage, packed in crocks and covered with hot lard. Shoulders, hams, bacon and other large pieces were salted down in tubs or hung up in a small "smoke house". The smoke house itself was a tightly built cabin of about seven by ten feet with 2x4 scantlings nailed across at two foot intervals and at a height of about seven feet from the floor. The meat to be smoked was hung from these. A large wash pan was filled to within an inch or two of the top with earth. In the center was built the fire to provide smoke. It was not to blaze up but to "smoke" steadily. The fuel used was mesquite twigs and chips whose distinct aroma and flavor was preferred to hickory smoke. When the meat had been properly seasoned it was a dark brown in both flavor and color. Here was the season's meat supply.

The extra fat was dumped into one of the wash boilers over a vigorous fire until the lard was "rendered" out of it. The remaining fibrous bits from which the lard had been extracted were known as "cracklings". Tender and choice pieces were saved to be used in "crackling bread". This was simply corn bread spiced with small bits of cracklings scattered through it in place of the shortening customarily used. The rest of the cracklings were chopped up and mixed with chicken feed to give growing fowls a happy time of it.

George frequently experimented with new types of cotton. One variety from which much was hoped was called King cotton. Its bloom carried a pretty red spot at the base of each creamy white petal. The plant

was prolific but the bolls were small and picking was slowed down considerably. Also, once the bolls were open, a wind or rain dashed the locks to the ground to become embedded in the dirt and mud. A more successful variety was known as the Mebane.* This gave a good yield from large bolls whose lint held in place quite well. A special advantage was the fact that 1350 pounds of seed cotton normally gave a 500 pound bale of lint, while the older varieties usually required 1500 pounds of seed cotton for a bale. Poly-unsaturated fats had not been heard of and lard or butter was used in kitchens for shortening, so the seed remained of little value.

Both Herbert and Ethel were especially nimble and quick with their hands. One good season, it must have been in 1902 or 1903, Ethel challenged her brother to see who could pick the most cotton. Such contests were quite common among the young men and boys of the neighborhood. The agreement was for the contestants to start as soon as daylight permitted and to continue until sundown. Each would drag a regular cotton picking sack that had been specially lengthened to eight feet, instead of the regular six feet. This was attached to the shoulders by a shoulder-band to help drag the weight, as well as by a strap attached to the top of the sack and tied around the picker's waist. With the band over the left shoulder the top of the sack would be at the right side, or vice versa. As the worker picked the cotton it was stuffed into the sack until some forty pounds had been gathered. At that point an attendant would provide a new sack so the worker could continue picking while the attendant took the full sack to be weighed.

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*This variety of cotton was produced by careful selection and plant breeding by Mr. A. D. Mebane who started his experiment in 1882 in Caldwell County (Maurine M. O'Banion, "The History of Caldwell County," M.S.,

George joined in the fun and agreed to serve as attendant for both of the workers. He told the two that if either of them picked as much as four hundred pounds in the day that he would give them the cotton which was worth about three cents a pound unginned. Mary provided the "drinkings". Forty-five minutes before sundown, when the next to the last sacks were weighed, it was evident that each of the contestants was close to the coveted four-hundred-pound mark. Also it was evident that the two were very close together as to total quantity. Furiously the work went on. As the last glints of the sun disappeared time was called and the two last sacks were carried to the wagon for weighing. Ethel had picked 412 pounds and Herbert 418.

The young men of the community frequently boasted that they regularly picked a bale of cotton (1,350 to 1,500 pounds of seed cotton) during the week and took it to the gin on Saturday. This was considered a good week's work in a good cotton season.

On Saturdays the boys begged to go to the gin with the cotton wagons. At the height of the season this meant a wait in line while wagons ahead of them received service at the rate of one every twenty minutes. The waiting time was spent in watching the sights, and of course in eating. Bottled drinks had not made their appearance but sandwiches could be carried from home and a jug of cold water made out the meal. When the boys had some cash they went to the country stores, one of which was close to the gins at Redwood and at Zorn. Here for 5¢ they bought a glass of root beer, (warm but sticky-sweet) from a keg, and for another 5¢ handful of crackers from the cracker

barrel, and even a slab of cheese (usually without worms) from the round of cheese on the cutting board.

Even more sought after than crackers and cheese was another edible. Mexican women were to be found squatting at one side of the gin yard each beside a five-gallon tin. This was perched on stones holding it above a slow fire of mesquite twigs. The sides of the cans were smoked black. Downwind from the cans a delightful spicy aroma filled the air. In the bottom of each can was a little water in which a small inverted dish was placed. On top of the dish was a plate holding small bundles of wet newspaper saturated by the steam arising around them. In each bundle were six tamales. These choice morsels, compounded of meat scraps (and they usually were scraps) and various Mexican chile peppers were brought to the proper pitch of exaltation with the local Chile Piteen, which easily vies with the Tabasco pepper for emphasis. The spicy mixture had been rolled in a paste of hand-ground corn meal to form a roll about 1/2 to 3/4 inch in diameter and from three to four inches long. A selected corn husk had meanwhile been softened in hot water and was now wrapped around the tamal. Placed in the slow and steady steam bath in the five gallon can the corn husk flavor permeated the tamal with its own peculiar flavor during the hours from daylight to dusk as the patient saleswomen waited for customers. If some of the original preparations and ingredients failed to qualify under modern sanitary regulations the long cooking and curative quality of the peppers used could be relied upon for thorough sterilization.

Six tamales cost five cents. In memory's book no more choice viand was ever prepared by the finest French chef.

The men meanwhile squatted in groups to chat as they waited. Most of them smoked or chewed their favorite brands of tobacco. Ready made cigarettes were not yet available invented and very few smoked pipes. Cigarette smokers were divided into two groups. Standard equipment was a five cent sack of Bull Durham tobacco with small yellow draw strings through the top, and an accompanying thin package of tissue thin cigarette papers. The second group frowned on the tasteless bought papers and insisted on using the inner husks of an ear of corn. These soft husks were cut to size and kept handy in a shirt pocket.

Now the artist emerged as a man held the 1 1/2" x 3" paper or husk in his left hand and cupped it lengthwise as the forefinger depressed the center between sides supported by thumb and second finger. Into the trough thus formed the right hand, holding the sack of tobacco, tapped just enough of the shredded weed to make a cigarette. Next a skilful movement of the left thumb turned the edge of the paper inward and rolled it upward against the tips of the index and middle finger until the cigarette assumed its shape. A lick of the tongue moistened the edge of the paper to cause it to stick along the length of the roll. Meanwhile the right hand had transferred the end of one yellow draw string to the mouth while holding the other draw string between thumb and forefinger. A smart tug and the mouth of the sack was closed. The same arm movement next transferred the sack to the shirt

pocket and continued downwards to extract a match from the watch pocket of the trousers. Still talking casually one end of the cigarette was crimped tight by the left hand as the other end was transferred to the mouth. At this instant the right hand which clutched the match between the first two fingers as the thumb nail rasped across the sulphur tipped top to strike it. A graceful swing of the arm brought the burning match up to the tip of the cigarette. The whole process took far less time than has been used in describing it, unless perchance the striking of the match caused a loose bit of sulphur to catch under the thumb nail just before it burst into flame. In that case the onlooker was entertained with some effective English expressions.

By community practice a child's labor belonged to the parent until the age of twenty-one for boys, or until marriage for girls. George did not like this, nor did he approve the idea of an allowance or gifts to his children. Instead each received "wages" for his work. It was understood these were for special needs, not as pocket spending money. Ethel got $5.00 per month for helping in the house; Herbert got $10.00 for work on the farm; Frank was entitled to $3.50 and the youngest got $1.00 for helping in the house, for bringing in chips and wood to start fires and for increasing chores around the barns as he grew up. When cotton picking came, however, wages ceased and the children were paid for the work done. Each child received half the current picking prices, he paid the other half for board and room. Normal prices were from 50¢ to 80¢ per hundred pounds so

they children received from 25¢ to 40¢ depending on the time of the year and the condition of the crop.

Payday was at noon on Saturdays for both the children and the Mexican pickers. Here was the money for a winter suit, a new pair of shoes, and Christmas presents. Work clothes were made by Mary from cloth purchased at the store. Now Montgomery Ward and Company's catalogue was searched to consider the possibilities of tweed, herringbone, serge, flannel and other exotic fabrics or weaves. Toward the end of the season Mary and Ethel would set off for San Marcos for a session in the stores to select organdies, ginghams, calicos, shoes and the rest. The pieces of fluffy, or sturdy, stuffs would be brought home, together with "val" lace, embroidery, colored embroidery threads and other items for the season's sewing. Women's stockings were not much of a problem for they were always black and were to be kept out of sight anyway.

There were no springs or running streams in the community but farm animals needed water. Each farmer in the neighborhood selected a low spot on his land and there dug out a depression sloping from two or three feet to six or eight feet deep at the lower end. The procedure was to use a drag pan, commonly called a scraper, pulled by two good stout mules. First the surface was plowed. Next the scraper was driven over it until the pan was filled. This was then dragged to what was planned as the deep end of the depression. Here it was dumped to form a bank against which

the water would be caught. Once more the ground was plowed and aga scraped until the required depth had been reached. In the process ends of the bank were rounded or curved to form a pond, regularly called a "tank." From the upper end trenches or shallow ditches we plowed out for a hundred yards or so to channel the run-off from periodic rains into the tank. In a few years silt accumulated to fill the pond. Then, in case of drought it quickly dried up. Once more drag pans and plows were called in and the original work was repeated in a modified form.

Once the tank was empty a critical situation developed quickly A couple of cows, pigs and eight to ten horses and mules, to say nothing of chickens all demanded water. In a dry summer a parade of wagons, each carrying a few barrels, wended their slow way from the surrounding farms to the San Marcos River. At its nearest poin this stream was seven or eight miles from Rattlesnake Hill. Realiz ing the recurring nature of this need George bought some cypress lumber and built a water proof box that would exactly fit onto the bed of a farm wagon. To this he could hitch four mules to bring in a sizeable load of the precious water.

Frank's diary entries for the summers of 1902 and 1903 comment that his older brother was "hawling" water. On one occasion he recalls that a fresh load of water arrived just when he was feeding the stock. He opened the spigot to run water from the wagon tank into the animals' drinking trough. While the trough was filling he went to get hay from the stack and corn from the crib. This took half an hour or more. Supper was waiting.

He forgot the running water. The next morning an empty tank and a wet spot on the ground were silent but damning evidence of what had happened. It all added up to a day wasted for teams and a man to get a new load of water when both were badly needed on the farm. Three trips instead of the usual two per week were only partly offset by a full day's work on Saturday instead of the regular half day.

Drinking water for the family was collected by guttering installed at the edges of the roof all around the house. This led to a twenty-five foot cistern that had been dug toward the back of the residence. It was a peculiar pot-bellied thing. When the diggers got down to about fifteen or eighteen feet they struck a layer of "rotten" blue clay. This stuff flaked off on all sides until there was an overhang of about two feet all around the cistern and about four feet from the bottom. ~~bottom of the hole~~. This provided danger of a serious cave-in on the workers. Temporary shoring of the sides was followed by a hasty completion of the work. Next Then the floor and sides were bricked up in the pot-bellied shape and the walls behind the brick firmly packed with soil. In the years that followed the cistern gave good service so the work was evidentally well done.

The cistern provided cool water the year around for drinking and kitchen use. A well wheel or pulley was rigged above the cistern so that water could be "drawn" (pulled up) in a bucket attached to the end of a chain that ran over the wheel or pulley. Near by On the back porch near the cistern was kept a cedar bucket filled with drinking water. For the use of any passer by a dipper hung conveniently by a hook on the end of a fifteen-inch handle.

It was used promiscuously by all comers for the germ theory had not yet been accepted by Texas farmers.

The fire hazard was so real that with the good years at the turn of the century the whole country side became enthusiastic about lightning rods. A salesman came through the country and for a substantial sum put six-foot rods at intervals along the crest of the roof of the house. Each had a glistening round silvered ball about eighteen inches from the top. Then a ground wire was installed to conduct the current safely to earth. The crowning inducement of the salesman was that he would also install, free, a weather vane that would infallibly indicate the direction of the wind. This was on the center rod at the front of the house.

In the mornings Mary and the children were up early and about their work. The kitchen fire was started and oatmeal cooked. While the women made breakfast the boys fed the work animals, pigs and cows. When a light rain was falling and the temperature down to 35 to 40 degrees or even Farenheit the job of dragging more or less wet hay out of a stack was heavy drudgery. A loaded pitch fork of sorghum hay had to be hoisted over the shoulder while cold wet bits fell down the worker's neck as he carried the load forty to sixty feet to the hay rack. The rack itself was in the center of the barnyard ("lot" it was called) so the animals could feed from all sides. When the lot had been churned up by animals walking back and forth through the night the worker had to step carefully lest he stumble into slushy holes of barnyard filth that stuck to his shoes and contaminated the air for a

distance of five to twenty feet throughout the day. In addition there was the sheer misery of wet, cold hands. Milking the cows was a similar chore as the worker tried to argue with a stubborn animal. The cow might begin eating peacefully but she resented the man's cold, numb and clumsy hands on her warm teats. Then, when the job was about half done the casual creature was likely to suddenly lift a foot and either kick the milk bucket from between the unwary worker's knees, or else put a foot in the bucket itself.

Recurring dry periods effectively ruined most of George's efforts to introduce new crops. He tried fruit trees. Figs were reasonably successful. Peaches and pears did not like the soil. Plums grew reasonably well and the young trees put on an excellent crop. Then there followed a hot dry summer and most of the exhausted trees died. Alfalfa too could not stand the dry periods. Peanuts (goobers they were called locally) did fairly well but there was no market for them and they were looked upon as a novelty, for as yet the work of G. W. Carver had not yet affected central Texas. The most successful of the introductions was kaffir corn which was reported to have been introduced from the arid districts of Africa. George seems to have planted it for the first time in 1902. This crop liked the Texas climate and became a welcome addition to the menu for farm animals. It frequently "made a crop" when corn failed.

Even more active as an experimenter and gardener was Mr. I. B. Rylander, a neighbor who lived about four miles away.* He installed an irrigation system for he had a reasonably good water supply. Many of the neighbors looked upon his experiments with a mixture of amusement and envy as they laughed at his "playing" at farming. Corn, tomatoes of luscious quality, squash, beans, peas, cucumbers and other items were tried including the exotic egg plant which he introduced to the community. George was always interested in irrigation but had to give up the idea for no stream was available and his efforts to dig a well for water ended in striking a supply of sulphur impregnated water of no use for animals or crops.

Another of George's efforts was to raise chickens. Inquiry from the United States Department of Agriculture brought encouraging reports. The result was an order for a one hundred and fifty egg capacity incubator. The heat was provided by a kerosene lamp. Inside the front glass door of the egg compartment there was a thermometer which was to be kept at 103

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*Mr. I. B. Rylander was brother-in-law of Mr. W. D. Malone of San Marcos who had a truly notable truck farm in operation. The Hays County Times (May 26, 1905) reported that the Malone truck farm contained 256 acres. A concrete canal 300 feet in length enclosed two turbine wheels, one for operating an 8 inch centrifugal pump with a capacity of 3,000 to 5,000 gallons of water per minute which it drew from the San Marcos River. The other turbine operated a dynamo to generate power and lights for a cold storage plant. The farm was reported as having "100 acres in onions this year, from which he, Mr. Malone, will get 50 cars, some of which are very late. He has 50 acres in potatoes, three acres in garlic, 15 acres in sweet potatoes and cabbage, 4 acres in strawberries. One of the most impressive features ... is the 60 acres of alfalfa." It should be noted, however, that this was dependent on an ample water supply.

degrees Farenheit. Thermostats were not yet available so the flame of the lamp had to be adjusted by hand taking into consideration the outside temperature. On a cold night this meant getting out of bed once or twice to see that the lamp was properly lit and the flame high enough to keep the eggs warm, but not too hot. Of course there was considerable danger of fire so the machine was placed in an outhouse at a safe distance from residence and barn. In that dry climate a fire in a wooden house in the country was almost certainly a burn-out and insurance rates were prohibitively high. so high no farmers could afford them

Fresh eggs were secured in town and the new venture began. Later George sent to San Antonio for a dozen eggs each of six different varieties of chickens. These included Buff Orphingtons, Langshangs, Rhode Island Reds, Plymouth Rocks, Leghorns and one other breed whose name has been lost. Few of the heavy breeds did well in the hot climate but George perfected a cross between Rhode Island Reds and Plymouth Rocks that produced an excellent meat chicken even though the plumage was not too attractive.

Unfortunately, the local market was limited for even in San Marcos town most families kept a few chickens. Frank's diary notes that on one day he took fifty fryers to town and sold them for twenty-five cents each. This was the standard price for birds that weighed from 1 3/4 to 2 1/4 pounds. To peddle these from door to door in a town of 3,500 people took a lot of time. One boarding school, and at times one or other of the stores, took a number but sales were slow.

Farther away there was the San Antonio market. To reach it, however, meant a half day's trip for man and team to take the chickens ten miles by dirt road to San Marcos. Then came express charges on the chickens and shipping crate to San Antonio, plus return charges on the crate. To break even it was necessary to sell the chickens at $4.00 a dozen in San Antonio, where the commission house added its charges when it sold to the retailer, who still had to get his profit before the housewife secured her meat. The result was that another venture paid its own way, but no more than that.

George's ingenuity reached out in other directions. He installed his own blacksmith's shop. There, plows were sharpened, broken parts repaired for farm implements, and horses and mules shod. Ready-made horse shoes, in small sizes for mules with their small feet, and in medium or large sizes for the horses, were bought at the hardware store. These were heated until red-hot in the coal-burning shop furnace with its hand-driven bellows to provide a forced draft. Next the shoe was re-shaped to fit the individual animal's foot and when cool was nailed firmly to the hoof. The rough edges of the hoof and the bits that extended beyond the shoe were then filed down with a rasp. Performing this job on a skittish young mule required skill and care but George always enjoyed it.

Periodically George went to town and bought a cured hide that he cut up for patching harness, saddles and other equipment. He also kept on hand an assortment of shoe soles. They could be cut from a hide but

usually the kind of leather required for harness was lighter than that needed for shoes. When shoe soles wore out George or Herbert brought out a cobbler's stand with three assorted lasts; one was for childrens', one for ladies' and one for men's shoes. Linen thread was drawn through a lump of beeswax to toughen and waterproof it, and make it slide easily through the leather. This was used to patch the uppers but new. Then the soles were nailed on with shoe tacks. The work may not have been as artistic as that done by a good cobbler but it served its purpose.

In all of his work George was inclined to the sturdy and substantial. His carpenter work, his blacksmith shop work and the like could be relied upon to last even if the products were heavy and cumbersome. He rather frowned on the popular gewgaws of the gay nineties with brass bedsteads and the like, but was extremely proud of some mission furniture that he acquired just after 1900. During the winter and at times when there was little work on the farm George and the boys took a few days to overhaul thoroughly all vehicles, harness and farm implements. No broken plow was ever placed in the barn, instead it was taken directly to the blacksmith's shop. Nothing could arouse his non-too-quiescent temper more surely or more violently than to find a broken piece of equipment in the machine tool shed when he went there to find something ready for use.

For cold and wet winter days there was the pleasant task of loading shot gun shells. Empty shells, powder and shot were bought. A special little ladle measured out the powder, the wadding followed, then

came the shot that varied from tiny bird shot to heavy buck shot depending on the game for which the shells were intended. At the end was a firm wadding that was crimped in place by setting the full shell in a small gadget that turned the cardboard outer shell in on itself. George also had molds for making shot but seldom undertook the task for it was easier to buy the commercial product.

In February 1903 the eldest son, Herbert, reached twenty-one years of age. In honor of his new status George rented to him forty acres of land and presented the new citizen an excellent hunting-case watch to redeem a promise made to each growing boy. The promise was that, if at age twenty-one he would honestly state that he regularly refrained from smoking, the parents would give him a good watch.

According to the regular procedure for new renters George provided a team of mules and feed for the animals, the land, the seed and the tools for the work. The renter, Herbert, cared for the animals and provided the work on the crops. The cotton produced was divided "on the halves" so that owner and worker divided the proceeds equally. At the same time Herbert paid $10.00 per month for board — as a tenant he had a right to expect living quarters. He was a hard worker and a good farmer and soon made money of his own. His next step was to buy a "trap" (a kind of buggy) and a buggy horse. Then came increasing trips to San Marcos for a year or so.

In 1906 Herbert informed the family that he was to marry a girl who was working as a clerk in one of the better dry goods stores in town. If George and Mary preferred an experienced farm girl as a daughter-in-law no such suggestion was ever made. Personal experience with family complications during their own courtship firmly closed their lips. Each man and woman had the right to choose his own life partner; it was not the business of anyone else.

By the time he was ready to marry Herbert's savings enabled him to buy two teams, a wagon and farm implements, which cost him paying a thousand dollars in cash. ~~for them. He went to~~ In the near-by community of Long Branch he and made arrangements to rent land from Mr. George Rylander on the "third and fourth." This meant the owner was to provide the land and a tenant house; the tenant provided the work, the teams, the tools and the seed. Then the crops were to be divided with the owner getting a third of the cotton and a fourth of the corn raised. The tenant kept the rest. Another Texas farmer family was on its way.

After Herbert left home George had more land than he and the two remaining boys could handle. Two Mexican tenants were secured. Each came in "on the halves" and occupied one of the two old houses. Each of them was to cultivate 40 acres of cotton. In addition the old Ireland house usually accommodated an extra family on a wages basis. Surnames of the families have been forgotten but the men were always known by their names of Manuel, Vidal, Matías or Pedro.

George and the boys cultivated the rest of the farm. And this had its sensuous pleasures. Let a twelve-year-old lad take out a team on a June morning. The rising sun sent pleasantly warm but not yet hot waves over his shoulders and back while a flopping straw hat protected his face and neck. The team stepped out briskly and the four cultivator blades cut smoothly into the damp soil, two on each side of the row of young cotton. While a mocking bird bounced up in the air from his fence post and told his lady love of his admiration, the boy's bare toes sank gratefully into the soft cool earth at each step as he blithely guided the plows down the field. Not a care! Pure joy! But daydreams could be rudely interrupted. Let a large stone jerk a plow beam suddenly to one side. As the boy lurched with it to pull the beam back in place, his foot struck the stone a blow with all his own weight and the pull of the plow behind it. The lancing pain and rapidly swelling toe quickly focussed his attention on the business in hand.

George was well known as a somewhat stern taskmaster but as an absolutely just one. There was no question that he was respected even when feared by his tenants. One of his proud boasts was that he never asked a new worker on the farm to do anything which he personally was not willing to do himself. They soon found out that he meant this and respected him accordingly.

On the other hand he commanded a peculiar loyalty from them. These one-time Mexican peons had a striking sense of oneness with their

landlord. He was their boss; and they, his men. Some corn from the field was expected to disappear as tenant donkeys waxed fat in the fall; maybe even a chicken or two might come up missing (the large number of chicken houses that were needed after the purchase of an incubator were always kept locked at night). The Mexican laborers helped to raise the crop, why should they not enjoy a part of it? On the other hand, whenever the family was to be away for a short time and Manuel was left in charge, the owner could return with the absolute certainty that all would be safe. No pilfering took place when one of the Mexicans was responsible.

On one occasion a temporary worker asked for a loan of $20.00. It would take a long time to work this out while supporting a family and only earning $1.00 per day. The man's tale of a sick mother and the need to pay a doctor was plausible so the money was lent. He took the money, went to town and bought a pistol. Coming back to the farm he continued a previous quarrel with his wife and ended by shooting himself. Surprisingly, the serious chest wound was not fatal.

George called a doctor and paid the doctor's bill. Slowly after but only after several weeks. several weeks the man recovered. Meanwhile, family maintenance, the doctor's bills and the original loan had mounted to a substantial sum. The convalescent came to the house one morning and said that he was ready to go back to work. George bluntly told him that he did not want any such fool on the place; to get busy, get a job elsewhere and move his family out so that another worker could have the house. George kept meticulous records of

every item of expenditure, but this item was cancelled on his books with the accompanying comment of "fired."

About two years later there was a knock at the back door one morning. The victim of the shooting stood there and asked for "Mr. George." When he came out the culprit held out some bills to repay the old debt in full. Amazed, George asked why he had returned when he had been kicked off the place. The answer was simple: "Mr. George, you trusted me."

And George liked his laborers to call him by his given name. The Mexicans on the farm probably did it because their tongues could hardly master the name "Callcott," but also in the back of their mind For the Mexican tenants there was the connotation derived from the Spanish use of "Don" with the given name of the master. With them it carried an implication of affectionate and intimate respect. In any case the use of the name carried a suggestion of distinction. Did not the knight of old England glorify his given name, such as "Sir" George, rather than be called by the much better known and recognized surname of the family? Here was the tacit implication of the country squire, almost as much cherished by George as was the occasion when his old superintendent of railroad porters called him "Mr. Callcott."

Interestingly enough George's innate reserve and sense of dignity was such that throughout his life in Texas there were few indeed except for his tenants, who addressed him by any other name than "Mr. Callcott." With a touch of regret in his old age he once commented

that "since I came to America only two men have ever called me 'George,'" One was George Rylander who was one of those friendly souls who could talk easily and unselfconsciously to any man regardless of his wealth or station; the other was A. J. (Jim) Durham whom he came to know in Sabinal at a later date.

In mid-August of 1904 or 1905 cotton was open in the fields and at the stage where a heavy rain could do serious damage. One Saturday when Herbert was going to the gin (this was before he was married) George told him to hire some cotton pickers — as many as he could. On Saturdays the gin yard became a kind of informal employment agency. Owners swapped gossip of the community or information on workers while hands wanting employment shopped around for jobs. The various fields and their types of cotton, the owners and their peculiarities were all open secrets via the thoroughly efficient workers' grapevine.

While waiting their turn at the gin the farmers gathered in small groups and exchanged news and gossip of the community while prospective cotton pickers had been shopping around. They were at last in a position Mexican laborers were to make the unscrupulous owner pay for his past sins by being the last to get workers. Offenses, fancied and real, as well as personality quirks, and the condition of tenant houses on each neighborhood farm were public information among prospective cotton pickers. This was their vacation anyway a holiday for them so while willing to work long hours they were also very sure that they wanted to enjoy it.

One familiar trick played by some farmers occurred while weighing of the workers' cotton in the fields. The regular cotton scales were suspended from a 2" x 4" lashed across the top sideboards of a wagon and projecting for three or four feet on one side. As each sack of cotton was weighed the weight was recorded to the picker's credit and the sack emptied in the wagon. The scale itself was a steel shaft about a yard long, accurately marked with figures along the beam. One end was heavy so that the center of weight was close to that end. At the exact center of weight a hook on top of the shaft was attached to a rope at the end of the timber across the wagon top. Toward the heavy end of the scale and about an inch from the center of weight was another hook which projected downwards from the lower side. To it was attached a sack of cotton to be weighed. At once the scale shaft would fly upwards. Now the farmer took a standard two-pound, or an eight-pound, pea (weight) and ran it along the beam until the sack of cotton was exactly balanced The markings on the beam indicated the weight of the cotton. The regular eight-pound pea was cast at the foundry at a little under the weight required, though it had a small hole in the bottom. Into this hole was poured enough lead so that the pea would balance the scale at the exact weight required. Unscrupulous farmers were inclined to drop in a little extra lead when they got the pea in their own possession. This balanced the scale at a lower figure than the proper weight of the cotton called for. It was next to impossible for an illiterate Mexican, speaking a different language, to do anything about such trickery which short-changed him — but he did not have to work for such

a man when pickers were most needed. If storms destroyed his crops, that was God's will and they could approve the results.

The cotton pickers themselves were capable of a few tricks of their own. Many a thirty-five pound sack of cotton from the field recorded forty pounds on the most accurate scales. In most fields an oversupply of stones was available. One or two or these could easily be secreted in the pickers' sack. For this reason at weighing time the farmer usually had a man he could trust to empty the sacks into the wagon. Discovery of a stone did not carry moral shame to the trickster, but only provoked a hearty laugh because he had been caught.

While Herbert was waiting at the gin he was approached by an "old" man in his mid-fifties who said that he wanted work for twelve good hands. Inquiry among the farmers indicated that these were exceptionally fast workers but the whole clan insisted on staying together and few farms needed so many extra pickers. The patriarch and his wife had two married sons. In addition there were the sons' wives and six grandchildren from the ages of twelve to eighteen years of age, as well as others younger. They wanted fourteen drag sacks and insisted that they could turn out two bales a day in good cotton. They had a spring wagon (a light wagon with wheels similar to a carriage that was the forerunner of the motor driven station wagon) and a couple of hacks. Each vehicle was pulled by a team of old mules or donkeys. In these vehicles the clan had come over from Old Mexico. They were accustomed to sleep in the wagon or in the open air during the summer, but they did want a house in which

to cook or sleep in case of rain. Also they wanted a pasture in which their animals could graze. The bargain was soon struck. When Herbert got back from the gin that night he was followed by the three vehicles.

On Sunday the men of the new families walked around the fields and looked at the cotton. At dawn the next morning they were at the back door of the house awaiting cotton sacks and instructions. The patriarch spoke for the whole family and soon the arrangements were made. None of the family spoke English though the younger members picked it up readily. The two heads of the younger families were fine workers. Their wives took turns in the fields and in helping the grandmother with the cooking, washing, mending and child care for the whole group. Two of the older grandsons were about eighteen years of age and could each pick his three hundred pounds of cotton per day. The only trouble was that they were so fast that if cotton was on the ground they simply snatched it up, dirt and all. Even so, it was far better to have such workers than to run the risk of a rain which could ruin or seriously damage the whole crop.

With the renters' families also at work there were at least three bales per day coming out of the fields. Wagons were kept on the roads and could not stand in the fields to wait for pickers to bring in the cotton. Instead the workers were given packing sacks to fill and leave at the ends of the rows. These, like the picking sacks, were also made of duck and were about four or five feet high and were made of three widths of ducking sewed together. This gave them a circumference of about eighty inches. When properly filled and packed they would hold a hundred and fifty to two hundred pounds of seed cotton.

When he reached the g

One of the boys would take a wagon to the gin. ~~On arrival a~~ yard a number was side and of the wagon number would be chalked on the endgate and the load pulled over to one side of the gin yard to wait its turn. This often came several hours later. The gin owner kept a team of horses of his own with which to pull the wagons from the yard to the gin itself. This allowed the farmer to unhitch his own team, bestride one animal and go home leading the other mule. He could then return with another load of cotton, only to have it again numbered and pulled to the side. In the meantime his first wagon would have been emptied and was waiting for him. All the farmer had to do was to collect his gin tickets, showing credit for cotton seed and identifying his bale on the gin platform. Cotton buyers were present so he could either dispose of his bale at once or could take it home to "hold" it for a hoped-for better price. Now he transferred his team to take the empty wagon home and bring another full one to repeat the process until the peak of the season was over. Herbert and Frank were kept on the road steadily. George weighed the cotton in the fields and life went merrily on.

After three or four weeks of this the bulk of the crop had been gathered and the vacationing Mexican pickers were ready to move on. In fact, they were about ready to go home to Old Mexico. No one asked too many questions about their crossing the border. The process was a simple one in those days. If any authorities were inclined to become "sticky" about technicalities there were numbers of good dark nights in any one month during which the Río Grande (the international boundary) could be crossed. By late summer there was scarcely any water in the river for miles at a stretch. North of the

line workers were wanted, and south of the line cash was needed. Why should man make mountains when nature had only supplied molehills and dry river beds — and especially when all were pleased with conditions as they existed?

Farewells were said and the travelers left with assurances that they would be back the following July 15. If the grapevine in Old Mexico reported that the ~~crop was~~ harvest would be late the family would appear a week later. As they left George commented: "It was fine while it lasted, but we shall never see them again." He was wrong; the following year they returned, and the next, and the next.

Toward the end of the second or third season that this group was in Texas one of the daughters-in-law came to the house and tried to talk to Mary. Little progress was made until Herbert finally came to the rescue, for he spoke "Mexican" almost as fluently as English. It turned out that the eldest girl of one of the families wanted to be married. The father of the bride hurried off to make arrangements with the priest and the date was set for the Saturday afternoon about ten days after the original enquiry. On Thursday before the wedding the Mother again appeared in obvious embarrassmen Again the interpreter was called, and even he was somewhat puzzled for a time. The woman wanted the priest to "bless her too." Then the fact emerged that she and her husband had never been formally married so they wanted a double ceremony. Admittedly this was a bit unusual but George ended the matter with the remark: "Better late than never."

That Saturday morning there was no cotton picking. At an early hour, while the family was still at breakfast, the old matriarch came to the house, somewhat sheepishly followed by the patriarch in person. She, too, wanted the priest to "bless" them. Inquiry revealed the fact that this family had long lived in a remote section of north Mexico. Priests seldom visited the village, sometimes only at intervals of a year or so. The local folk, accordingly, followed the tribal custom practiced from time immemorial and derived from their Indian ancestors. In the village square they publicly recognized each other as man and wife. Even when the priest did arrive wedding fees were high so the young couples, who had been doing quite well as they were, simply dispensed with the church rites and used their few available centavos or pesos for the new and mounting household necessities. Why should not their native Indian customs be as good as those of outsiders? The priest himself was an outsider and all such were feared on general principles. And why not? Periodic visits were made by other outsiders: government officials who were tax collectors, census takers and the like — and these visits were all too likely to be followed by the greatly feared and hated press gangs which collected able bodied young men who were called enganchados (the hooked ones) for military service.

By ten o'clock all was ready. The family mounted their vehicles and were off for the weddings. Scrubbed until they shone, shy little brown-skinned girls with their jet black eyes and with black hair pulled back until a full-faced view made them look as if they had been skinned, and their long pig-tails hanging down their backs, clung to their mothers' skirts. The dresses

were strong pinks, blues and yellows; though all the women and girls had black mantillas to throw over their heads for the religious ceremony. The bride was beautiful in her white dress and all male members of the family were thoroughly uncomfortable in unaccustomed new shoes. The young men, of course, had acquired those with pointed toes and made of patent leather that shone like glass, but which customarily cracked hopelessly after a few weeks' wear.

Late at night the caravan returned. All three couples had been "blessed," apparently to the satisfaction of all concerned.

One ever present problem connected with Mexican labor was how the semi-migrant was to survive from one season to another. Those who were of a thrifty nature followed much the same course that was to be followed successfully by Herbert after 1907. They started as renters "on the halves," then proceeded to the "third and fourth," and finally to the acquisition of small farms of their own. But few ever did this. Money in hand was usually enjoyed. Occasionally some of it was spent on whisky but somehow that never did present much of a problem. For the most part it went for pretty clothes, expensive gadgets and often in gambling. The Mexican dearly loved a lottery or any other game of chance. Also, there was need from time to time for a new animal, a vehicle for transportation, or a bit of furniture. By mid-November the average family had exhausted the summer's savings.

Most farmers provided a tenant house free to renters or to a worker employed at day labor or at grubbing in spare time. The farmer, in turn, went

to a local store keeper and made arrangements for the latter to "carry" the worker or tenant until the next harvest was in. So common was this arrangement that few Mexican laborers ever got beyond the stage of working "on the halves."

Usually the store-keeper allowed purchases up to a certain amount each month. Nearly all of this was for groceries: beans, rice, fatback, lard, corn meal and strict necessities. In addition there might be included a work shirt or two and a pair of overalls. Shoes and clothing, however, were usually acquired during the fat days of cotton picking. The ten mile trip to San Marcos was a long one indeed for short winter days when it had the traveler to be made in a Mexican cart pulled by a pair of donkeys. One diary entry as late as December 1907 states that it took four hours to get back from town with a good team of mules because the roads were "so soft" (wet from a recent rain). Few Mexican tenants had such a team.

Because of the distance the tenants often asked that they be allowed to buy their supplies at a cross-roads store located at either Redwood, Zorn or Staples. These stores carried limited stocks but they were only from two to five miles away from the farm and the owners customarily gave much the same terms as the merchants in town. Customarily the prices of goods sold to the tenants on credit were at least 25% above cash prices. In addition the goods sold were often of a distinctly inferior quality. In fact it was common practice for the stores to carry one lot of "Mexican bacon" and another for "white" sales; yet the former were likely to carry the higher prices. In addition, at the end of the year when the bills were to be paid the debtor was required to

pay the amount as charged plus a standard interest rate that might range as high as 10%, even when the purchases had been made at most ten months before, and in some cases only a week or two before the bill was to be paid.

In defense of the local merchants it must be said that when crops failed as they did with monotonous frequency, all too many of the Mexican debtors simply got into their little carts and disappeared, leaving debts and all. These folk had a migratory heritage if they had come on the trek from Old Mexico; and even if they had been residents in Texas for a generation or two the heavy intermixture of migratory Indian blood from the plains guaranteed a love of novelty and change.

Realizing that his own tenants were being exorbitantly charged for inferior supplies, George finally opened his own commissary to be patronized by his own hands only. The tenants were not required to buy from it for they could still make arrangements at local stores if they wished to do so. Most of them, however, were eager for the accommodation. The small store-room carried simple essentials in the way of groceries. No clothing at all was provided but the groceries were sold at the cash prices charged at the local stores for "white" purchasers. At the time of settlement the exact rate of interest being charged at the banks was applied for half of the period since the first purchase had been made.

The store-room was regularly opened two afternoons each week. In addition to regular staples a few specials were added when appropriate. Molasses was to be had from the time the sorghum came in until the last of the

molasses at the bottom of the keg turned to sugar. Milk was sold each night and morning when the cows were milked. The price was five cents a quart while eggs were sold at whatever prices the stores were paying for them. In the winter this might rise to twenty-five cents a dozen, but fifteen cents was a more normal price. It was very evident that when Mary doled out goods from the new store there usually seemed to be a few pieces of candy that appeared from unknown places to bring a bashful smile to a shy little brown face that peeped from behind a mother's skirts.

Times had improved and tensions had relaxed, but farming in Central Texas was still a gamble. In 1904 Mary and several women of Long Branch community insisted that their men folks go to the World's Fair that was being held at St. Louis. By late fall part of the cotton crop had been sold, debts had been paid, and there were still thirty bales unsold in the Callcott yard. Prices had dropped, as they so often did when the farmers were forced to unload during the peak of the season. When George left for the Fair he told Herbert to watch the market and to sell if the price reached ten cents a pound. Herbert was offered nine and a half cents but followed instructions and declined the offer. Then bumper crops in the east drove prices down, and down. Finally, three months later the thirty bales were sold at seven cents a pound. This was a loss of $12.50 on every bale below the actual offer that had been refused.

Frank's diary shows the more normal variation in cotton prices in any one season. On September 27, 1907 Frank took a bale to the gin and sold it.

It weighed 559 pounds (a big fellow) and sold at 11.30¢ per pound for a total of $63.16. In addition the cotton seed was worth $5.10 more than the cost of ginning. Yet on December 17 of that same year the diary recorded that two bales were sold for nine cents a pound. Once the peak of the harvest was passed the markets usually readjusted and the price rose sickeningly.

A set-back to the rising prosperity came apparently in September of 1906. Crop prospects were good and the picking season started though the prices were somewhat low. Then came a few days of stifling weather which was followed by fitful breezes from the general direction of the north as a hazy sky accumulated clouds almost imperceptibly. A dropping barometer left man and beast vaguely uncomfortable. In a murky grey sky the cloud cover piled ever higher in a colorless mass that simultaneously sank ever lower as rain drops fell now and then. Newspapers in San Antonio reported that a tropical storm was in the Gulf of Mexico but the reports were vague. On the farm the fitful and balmy breezes steadily mounted to vicious gusts up to fifty and seventy miles per hour. The rain became a deluge, which, driven by the winds, penetrated every crack and crevice. Open cotton was dashed from the plants and the wind and rain beat it into the ground. Next came the famous interval of quiet as the center of the storm passed over only to be followed by equally vicious winds coming from the opposite direction that stripped from the stalks all cotton that had escaped the first onslaught. The rains continued for three days as a deluge of six inches of rain flooded the countryside. In sandy soil, after such an experience it might

have been possible to salvage some of the cotton from the ground but that central Texas black gumbo soil was so water-logged that no one could get on the land for at least a week after the rains ceased. By that time it was still possible to pick up a few locks of cotton from the ground but the seeds had already sprouted. All cotton that had been open in the fields was a total loss.

Amid such events Herbert left home and Frank's diary proudly records a boy becoming a man. For the first time the ~~It reported that the~~ sixteen-year-old took a two-bale load of cotton to the gin hauled by ~~and that he drove~~ a "four-horse team" ~~for the first time on the public roads~~. Evidently the roads were reasonably good so extra sideboards could be added to the wagon to hold the double load of cotton. The older brother had left home. A man's work had to be done. It was.

Thus, under greatly improved circumstances, with a mixture of back-sets and good times George and Mary began to breathe more easily. George could dignify his new status by getting up a little later in the mornings and now could ride around the farm on horseback to supervise what was going on instead of helping to do it himself.