

## **Pages From An American Diary**

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From the time we landed at Boston, Mass, until the time we left the United States of America almost nine years elapsed. Traveling far and seeing much we came away with memories enriched by an abundance of varied experience, and with a profound admiration for the natural and artificial wonders of that truly mighty country. Also, we had lost many of our pre-conceived illusions. It is in the hope that I may be able to help my fellow citizens here to get the American picture straighter that these lines are primarily written.

In the course of my story, however, I shall no doubt often stray from the strict path of chronological narrative. There will be stories of odd adventure; of intimate personal experiences; of the many acquaintances and the considerable number of friends we made; of the travel we enjoyed and did not enjoy; of the dozen or so various ways in which we made our living; of the astonishing marvels of American achievement in business, in organization, in material creation; of the beauty and the ugliness and richness and poverty of State capitals, industrial cities, sleepy county towns and the country side. Also, because the United States touched what is probably the highest point in results from capitalism that that system will ever be able to give, there will be occasional reflections of a philosophically speculative nature from the point of view of one who all his life has been a socialist.

Comparatively few people have any clear idea of the vastness and the immensity of the United States. To help to a realization, look at your map of Europe for a moment. From the shores of Portugal to the Ural Mountains in Russia, and from the Orkney Islands to the heart of the Sahara Desert in Africa, is roughly the width and the depth of the United States. In other words, the area of what is usually referred to as America, that is, the U.S.A., is approximately that of the whole of Europe. Thus, some twelve months after we had landed in America and on a certain Wednesday at midnight, we left Cleveland, Ohio, on the shores of Lake Erie, by train, and rolled south through State after State until finally we left the train at San Benito, Texas, on the banks of the Rio Grande, at 11 o'clock on Sunday morning. Three years later we drove back by car, and the speedometer on that occasion registered two thousand, three hundred miles of travel.

Of the forty seven States that make up the body of the American mainland, Texas alone, for example, is five times as large as Great Britain, California and Pennsylvania are each three times as large as our Island. Lake Erie, the smallest of the five Great Lakes, is almost two thirds as large in area as England.

Speaking of Lake Erie, here is one of those incidents of which I spoke. A friend and I had driven by car from Akron, Ohio, to Erie, Pennsylvania, and thence by the lovely Lake Shore road to Buffalo, N.Y., over the Peace Bridge into Ontario, and so by St. Catherine and Hamilton to Toronto, passing Niagara Falls on the way. A run of about 374 miles. Coming back, we decided to ferry across Lake Erie, and we drove to Port Dover,

Ontario, from where we could get a boat to Erie, Penn., on the American side. Our car was the last to be taken aboard and we congratulated ourselves on our luck. But we spoke too soon! The journey across is about seventy miles, roughly the same as from Liverpool to Douglas, I.O.M., and the scheduled time for crossing is three and a half hours. But a strong and heavy west wind was blowing straight down the Lake. Ten minutes after leaving the dockside the scene lost all interest for me. Every one of the huge waves caught us broadside, and the old boat shuddered and groaned and rolled fearfully. No one would have been surprised had she foundered – and most of us wouldn't have cared at the time! Somehow or other, however, she kept afloat and at last, after six horrible hours, limped wearily into Erie. Fortunately my companion had weathered the trip well, and took over the driving on the remaining ninety miles home. We heard afterwards that that was the last trip made, on Sunday afternoon, until the storm abated the following Tuesday night. Personally, I should have been better pleased had the one before that been the last!

One of the commonest of the illusions that persist regarding America is as to the nature of the population. There has been talk of "Uncle Sam" and "our American cousins" for so long, and it has been assumed for so long that British Colonists were the first to settle in America, that America is generally considered to be Anglo-Saxon. Nothing could be further from the truth. Long before the "Mayflower" left Plymouth the Southern States had been infiltrated with Mexican migrants; and settlers were found in considerable numbers in California when the covered-wagon colonizers arrived from the east. There, English – or rather American English – is the most usual language heard. True, too, that there are more English and Scots in America than in Birmingham and Glasgow. But it is also true that there are more Irish in America than there are in Dublin, more French than in Paris, more Germans than in Berlin, more Scandinavians than in Stockholm and Oslo, more Italians than in Rome, more Greeks than in Athens, more Mexicans than in Mexico City, more Japanese than in Tokio, more Jews than in Palestine, and more Negroes than in the whole of Africa. But the American nation is heterogeneous, complex, impossible of assessment as to character. There is no such thing as a typical American. A New York American Jew has no more in common with a slow-witted Middle Western farmer than a ballet girl has with a heavyweight wrestler. A Minnesotan-Scandinavian is no nearer to a Californian-Indian than an Esqimau is to a Hottentot. America is, as yet, a cross section of the world's population, a cosmopolitan country.

The green hills lining both sides of the Charles River looked good to us that Sunday morning in late September as we sailed up the harbor to land at Boston. Our ten-day crossing of the Atlantic had smashed yet one more illusion. Life aboard trans-Atlantic liners has been highly romanticized in song and story. Possibly under some conditions it can be a happy, carefree, and interesting experience, but those conditions, I am sure, are quite out of reach of the average emigrant. The boredom and dullness and drabness of day after day in the confines of a 10,000 ton vessel, even when the whole of the promenade deck is at the disposal of all the passengers, becomes wearying almost beyond bearing. We read interminably, we made conversation, played such games as were organized or we could devise for ourselves, lounged in deckchairs, wrote letters, promenaded round and round for exercise. But each morning as we rose the same empty, gray waste of endless waters was there. Each day we changed our

watches to correspond with our position farther west; each day we read the log chart to mark our progress to our destination. Nothing else marked the passing of time, and the thrill of excitement which ran all through the ship when land was first sighted was the measure of the general relief at the nearness of our release.

Hometown friends, already long domiciled in America, were awaiting us as we disembarked. For two weeks we enjoyed their boundless generosity and hospitality, and renewed through their agency contacts with acquaintances which had been broken for many years. Through them, too, we saw something of the oldest of American cities, classical and sedate Boston, conservative through and through and plainly striving to combine the leisurely progress of the old world with the feverish tempo of the new. The result is a typical conservative compromise, both materially and immaterially. There are buildings which would grace and harmonize with any of the older European cities. And there are constructions in the American mode which approximate to the more modest of New York's marvels. In quite another field, the "Christian Science Monitor" stands for all this is best in American journalism. It is universally respected, and its standards of justice and fairness are beyond reproach in the newspaper world. Yet it is published in Boston, where more than one of the very worst of the world's miscarriages of justice have originated. I shall never forget, for instance, the cold shock of horror that went through me years after I had left Boston when, walking down Main St. in Akron, Ohio, I saw a newspaper placard announcing "Sacco and Vanzetti Executed". [Missing words] Boston just as truly as is the "Monitor".

From Boston we went on to Akron, Ohio, a 600-miles train journey, and had our first experience of travel by Pullman en route. After the initial adventure of undressing in the close confines of a Pullman berth we found sleeping not too difficult while the train was moving. But these trans-continental monsters are so long and heavy that apparently they can only be started again, once they have stopped, by a mighty jerk which every time threatened to pitch passengers either through the window or onto the floor.

Akron was a "mushroom" city of a quarter of a million people, and grew to its present size, from a population of about 20,000, in less than twenty years. It is said that less than one adult person in thirty living in Akron in the 1920's was born there. Like all other American cities, Akron quotes figures interminably. But in its case a lot of the figures were as startling and strange as they were true. More than 95% of the crude rubber of the whole world was received and manufactured into usable products in Akron. Geographic economists may be able to say why the rubber manufacturing industry should be practically the monopoly of one North American city, situated hundreds of miles from the seaboard and cheap transportation, and many thousands of miles from the source of its raw materials. And when they have told us that, they may be able to explain how the manufacture of cotton cloth came to be for so long a Lancashire monopoly!

Every rubber company of any consequence has its main plant and headquarters in Akron. But the giants are still Goodyear, with 28,000 employees; Goodrich, with 23,000; and Firestone, with 21,000. By far the greater number of these employees are engaged in some way in the production of tires, nearly all of which are American

consumed, since 95% of all the automobiles in the world are, or were at that time, in America.

But in the case of B. F. Goodrich Co., rubber footwear manufacture occupied 4,500 employees; and it was in this department that I started to work, less than three weeks after landing in America, in a modest clerical job. In every sense I was a long way from the president of the company, a man in receipt of a salary of \$80,000 – or 16,000 pounds sterling – a year, one thousand pounds a year more than is paid to the president of the U.S.A. (pre-war dollar values).

One of my contemporaries worked in the time office. He was a tall, gangly, modest boy of nineteen years, just starting his first job, after leaving high school at his little home town of Kent, about ten or twelve miles from Akron. His name was Clark Gable. There was no indication then, that one day his star would shine so brilliantly in the Hollywood galaxy, and that his name would be a household word throughout the world. The movies seemed to have less appeal to him than to the average boy or girl of nineteen. But the stage itself was an irresistible magnet. He never lost a chance of visiting the "Grand Theater", even though nothing better than third-rate burlesque was ever put on there at that time. He had to stand a lot of leg pulling about it, but the "Grand" was the only stage show of any kind in Akron, and it was the stage rather than the show which interested Gable. In a very few weeks he was busy every night helping with the heavy scene shifting and running and fetching and carrying for everybody. Yet it never affected him at the office. He remained a good and capable and genial worker until I left for an interval of nearly four years. When I returned to Akron and Goodrich, Clark Gable was already far on his way to stardom.

The months went by easily and pleasantly enough at Goodrich in the early 20's. Jobs were plentiful and wages were high, and there was no pressure from a reservoir of unemployed to bring down the standard of living. As was natural in the circumstances, there was no such thing as a trade union at that time, and although at times I tried to talk about economics and systems and trends here and there, and to suggest the inevitable end which did actually overtake the footwear division in 1929, I never found anyone who was really interested. Everybody had money to spend and spent it. Today was grand and tomorrow would be grander still. There's something to be said for that attitude of mind of course. Life is temporary anyhow; and why take thought for a morrow which may never dawn? That was the general reaction to any attempt at warning.

It is impossible not to be affected by such an atmosphere. The very air of an eager and vividly alive American city is stimulating in itself; and when everybody and everything seems agreed that life is a good and worthwhile experience, any lingering concern, or pre-occupation with the future was apt to be thawed out by the geniality which at that time surrounded one everywhere. Nevertheless, I could not revert altogether to the mentality I had before the brutal realities of British industrial life had left their mark upon me. I could not forget those whom I had left in the cotton mills at home, men and women who were the salt of the earth, and who were committed to lives of long and wearisome toil in one of the dreariest and then worst paid of all occupations. After starting work myself at eleven years of age the iron had quickly entered my soul, and I

knew I should always be a rebel against any form of wage slavery. I had become a conscious socialist at fifteen. And because I was a socialist I had, not long before emigrating, completed two years imprisonment in English gaols as a political objector to military conscription. I looked round, therefore, for signs of those whose outlook on the social scene might possibly be similar to my own. Thus it was that before I had been in America a month, I made application for membership of the American Socialist Party. Alas for my hopes! The secretary thanked me sincerely for my application, but regretted that their constitution allowed them to accept none but American citizens as members. This, he explained, was due to the necessity of knowing their voting strength at election times. I replied that while I had no least objection to taking out my first papers for citizenship – which would simply have certified my renunciation of my subjection to the King and State of Great Britain – I should never take out final papers which identified me with a particular country. Nationalism was antagonistic to the spirit of socialism; and only when the whole race saw its community of interest in socialism and made that community its first loyalty regardless of consequences, would wars and capitalism pass.

We had lots of happy times with the Goodrich office crowd, and in particular, as was natural, with two hometown folks who had long been on the staff. One day I went to the races at Ravenna with two companions. I knew nothing whatever about horse racing. But one of these friends had just become an owner, and had entered one of his horses in one of the races. That his horse came in an easy last seemed not to discourage him at all! Nor did his ownership bestow any prescience upon him as to how the other horses would fare! In spite of the fact that my friends were supposedly versed in spotting winners, they nevertheless fortified themselves with a copy of an expensive and very famous 'tipster's' publication which was well known to the fraternity, throughout the county. They trusted the tipsters in the end, too, rather than their own judgment. There were eight races on the card, and in the first six races every single one of the tips went into the discard! They were nowhere! One companion had staked but a modest two dollars on each race – the minimum stake at the "tote" – and was only twelve dollars down as yet. But "the owner" had occasionally tried to recoup and was some fifty dollars to the bad. I questioned the wisdom of following the tips farther, and suggested they let me pick their horse for the seventh. They turned me down with good-humored condescension, and backed "the tip" once more. I borrowed their program, looked it over, and announced my intention of having two dollars on "Red Scot". "Red Scot", they asked incredulously, "why on earth that outsider?" "Well," I said, "I once saw some lovely sweet peas called Red Scot over home, and that seems as good a reason for picking him as I'd have for picking any other!" To my friends' consternation and to my undisguised exultancy, Red Scot romped in first by several lengths at eight to one. I collected my own two dollars and the sixteen I'd won, and rejoined my crestfallen friends. "What're you going to back in the last race?" they asked. I replied that seeing that the "Collins" had tipped seven losers in succession he could hardly be wrong every time, and I'd put all my winnings – but not my own two dollars! – on his choice. No! The story isn't going to end as you think! "Collins" last tip was no better than any of the others. The "tote" got its sixteen dollars back from me, plus nearly a hundred from my owner friend and another sixteen from our steady punter. Neither of my friends ever again bought a "Collins Tip". I ought to make it clear, though, that the "Collins Tip" I am referring to here had no connection with the

very excellent weekly magazine of that name, which is so deservedly popular everywhere in America.

My progress at Goodrich was rapid. I took time out of the office to work on the night shift in the dispatching section of the factory. At the end of about four months I felt sufficiently conversant with a sufficient number of the 220-odd stock numbers we made, to go back to the office, scheduling production. A few months more and I was in charge of my section of office administration. With a staff of sixteen I was responsible for every one of the thousands engaged in footwear-making, getting a daily ticket of instructions, of parts and stocks required to be prepared and finished. We were turning out more than 50,000 pairs of boots and shoes of all kinds every working day. Some of these contained over fifty separate pieces in each finished boot. Goodrich still had a monopoly of the recently invented zipper, and there was no limit to selling except that imposed by limited production. Quality was excellent consistently. Goodrich footwear boomed. In one year over a million dollars profit was recorded by the footwear division. In another year millions of dollars were spent on changing over from bench production to conveyer mass production. Money rained on the shareholders, and Goodrich shares bounced almost to the skies. So it continued until 1929. Today was still very good indeed; and tomorrow would be better still! In 1929 the inevitable end began to be discernable in the gathering clouds.

Conviction that the flow of milk and honey could not continue interminably did not prevent me from enjoying the feast that first year in America. The automobile was constantly in use, and by its aid cities and sights which had hitherto only existed in imagination were brought into the reality of experience. We were only thirty miles from Cleveland, on the shores of Lake Erie. Detroit was 190 miles away, only five to six hours by road. Columbus, Ohio, was about ninety miles south, Cincinnati 200 miles farther on. Toronto, in Canada, was easily within a weekend's motoring. Pittsburgh and Youngstown could be reached in a few hours. I was always interested in sport and took to the American national games of baseball, football, and basketball with avidity and relish, and I followed sport to all these cities.

Another interest I had taken with me from England was Esperanto, the international language. As it had been with politics, so I found it with Esperanto. No one, so far as I could discover, was acquainted with the language in Akron. It couldn't be, however, that not one in all Cleveland's million people was an Esperantist. I wrote to the Universal Esperanto Association at Geneva, Switzerland, for information, and was put in touch by that means with Stanley Kozminski. My family and Kozminski's were close friends until the day he died. He was a Polish Jew by birth, having been brought to America by his parents when he was ten months old. By profession, he was a commercial artist, designing illustrations for advertisers. His vitality was amazing. He was an expert photographer. He was secretary of the Cleveland Esperanto Group and of the North American Esperantist Association. His skill as a speed and figure skater was widely known in the city. He played first violin in the Cleveland symphony orchestra; and had his own dance orchestra, in which his wife was piano accompanist. The basement of his home contained, it seemed to me, every known tool that was usable by hand, for in addition to doing all his own mechanical repairs to his car and in his home, he made all the toys and playthings his two children used. He never retired

before midnight and he was almost literally never still. When I pleaded with him once to take it easy and sit, and have a smoke, he made a characteristic reply that he'd always wanted to smoke but he'd never yet had time! Yet somehow he always had time for his friends. To our deep sorrow and regret, Stanley died at the early age of thirty-five. I lost a good friend and America lost a fine character.

With Kozminskis living in Cleveland, and with Cleveland Indians playing baseball regularly at Dunn Park, I came to know this largest Ohio city well. It was as diversified and general in its industrial life as Akron was specialized, and as a consequence it escaped the awful crash which followed Wall St's panic collapse perhaps as well as any city in America. It is a beautifully laid out city. Along its twenty-eight miles of lake-shore front are playground-parks, drives, and boulevards which are a never-ending delight. Its main thoroughfares are designed for the automobile, with traffic lights so arranged that a car, by maintaining a steady speed of twenty-five miles an hour, can pass along miles-long roads with all signals favorable and not one interruption in the whole length. A progressive city in every respect, Cleveland is a metropolis without much history but with a future full of promise.

My interest in politics and kindred matters led me into some strange gatherings during my first year in Akron. The first World War was not long over, and the wave of revulsion against all war had scarcely touched America as yet. Non-participation in the League of Nations had left America free of responsibility for attempted maintenance of world order, and organization of expression of opinion on this issue was left to individuals and to small and disconnected groups of people. In the main, the country was ebullient with relief from serious problems of social concern. The old days of freedom of individual enterprise were back again, and America asked for nothing better. Nevertheless, little eddies from the wave that had flowed over Europe in particular did infiltrate America here and there. One such just touched Akron. A meeting on war prevention was called to take place in the offices of a lawyer, called by the lawyer himself, a Jew who was highly respected in his own fraternity. I attended as a matter of course. About thirty people were present, and at least eight different nationalities were represented. Presumably these were all, out of Akron's quarter million population, who were interested in the prevention of war in the future. The lawyer spoke movingly and well. But the material on which any promising organization could be built just wasn't there, and his case and his eloquence produced no concrete result. No other meeting was ever called in Akron while I was there on the issue of peace amongst the nations.

A very different atmosphere surrounded another meeting I attended at about the same time. The Irish Free State had only just been freed of the "Black and Tans". The bitterness of a century and a half of incessant struggle with Great Britain had burned deeply into every Irish heart. Passion still flowed hotly in Irish veins, and feeling against the hated English was, as yet, as strong as ever. It was in these circumstances that a meeting was called in an Akron hall, in support of the De Valera government in Ireland. It was not advertised as a meeting for Irish people only. I had always sympathized with the Irish people in their struggle for political independence, and as a sympathizer I felt free to attend the meeting. About four hundred people were present, and I am fairly sure that I was the only one in the room not of Irish blood. Worse than that, I belonged to the hated English, and there was nothing to show that my sympathies were not with

my own race! The air was electric even as the meeting began. Drama increased the tension as, interrupting the chairman's opening sentences – probably by pre-arrangement – two young Irish soldiers in uniform, both lacking limbs they had lost in Ireland, assisted each other onto the platform. Then speaker after speaker vied with each other in inflaming the crowd. Eloquence poured out in an all-consuming fire. Money was called for to assist the Irish cause back home. The crowd moved almost en masse to throw bills and checks on the platform, and in a quarter of an hour the chairman announced over \$5,000 (one thousand pounds sterling) had been subscribed. American-Irish, as is the case with our own Colonials, are more fiercely patriotic than people still in the motherland. The hysterical semi-madness of that meeting was a damaging experience for one who had faith that reason was making some advance towards acceptance as a medium through which social difficulties could be resolved. I was glad to see the meeting's end, for more than one reason. For one thing, had that meeting known my nationality at any time in the last hour, I could only have attempted to echo Christ's "Forgive them, father, for they know not what they do."

Shortly after this we decided to leave Akron and resume our travels in search of more sunshine and warmth. This had been our objective in emigrating in the first place, and experience of one winter in Ohio had convinced us that what we hoped sunshine could do for us could not be accomplished there. Summer itself was genial enough, but the winter was too long and severe for our need. We made this decision on a day in early May, when seven inches of snow obliterated almost all the results with which a mild April had covered the countryside. The acquisitive instinct has never been very strong in me, and the fact that I had good and steady employment with excellent prospects weighed little against the desire to make a change.

This longing for escape from the rigors of North American winters is by no means confined to disillusioned immigrants. Exploitation of this desire had already begun with respect to Florida amongst the well-to-do industrialists of the North, though it had not yet reached large dimensions. In Ohio, however, it was the Lower Rio Grande Valley in south Texas which was being pushed by land speculators as the nearest thing to heaven that this world would ever be likely to know. Organization to the end of selling land in the Valley had all the efficiency and subtlety quite correctly associated with American big business generally. First, alluring advertisements of the carefree, sunny South, were given abundant space in Northern papers in the depth of the bitter winters. These were followed up by repeated personal visits to selected prospects, by land agents. Next followed an organized, carefully conducted two-weeks tour to the Valley, timed to take place when the contrast between the long-frozen North and the eternally blooming South would be most striking. Quite often sixty people, representing two thirds as many families, were gathered together for these trips from a number of Ohio cities and towns. From first to last these parties were never for a moment away from their guides. The trips themselves were very cheap, for the end in view was always the sale of land.

The technique of these salesmen with their parties of prospects varied little. In the course of their stay, the parties would be taken by automobiles to every one of the string of towns from Sam Fordyce at one end of the Valley to Brownsville at the mouth of the Rio Grande. Here and there the cars would drop off the only paved road in the district almost as if by chance, and would happen on a citrus grove or a delectable



market garden, or truck farm as they are called in America. Actually, of course, these visits had been carefully planned beforehand. There was no collusion of any sort between the owners or tenants of the farms visited and the agents or land company, and there is no suggestion here that there was anything crooked in what occurred. Indeed, those who were called on were usually ignorant of what was happening, and entered readily into conversation with the guides. But a close observer might have noticed that none of the visitors was allowed to talk to the occupiers of the land alone. Moreover, the guides knew the complete record of every settler they called on, and conversation was invariably steered round to the one particular thing in which the particular settler had been specially fortunate. Thus one man one season had done particularly well from his grapefruit. The talk here went on grapefruit and on the fine returns which accrued to the investor from this crop. Another year one man had had big success with very early potatoes as a truck crop. Yet another told of a crop of fine string beans – French beans as we call them – which had been first on the market and which had netted him such and such substantial returns. With another it was carrots, another green peppers, another cabbage, and so on. But again our close observer would have noticed that in each case it was just one thing on one particular occasion, with the occasions and the things varying with each particular case. Nor did the visitors ever hear a whisper of crop failures, glutted markets, storm or burning heat or other of the fierce and elemental forces of the semi-tropical and untamed South.

The round of sight seeing visits having been completed, the visitors were then taken to the sites it was desired to sell. But not directly. Oh no! First of all they had to see sites which lacked this, that, or the other advantage, and which could be bought for so and so much an acre. "But", the agent would gently suggest. " Although this is our land I shouldn't advise buying here. Wait till we get to so and so." Two or three more stops, with the price per acre increasing at every stop, and the agent arrived at the focal point of weeks of careful maneuvering. Usually, by this time his party was almost beyond the point of resistance. They had lived well and luxuriously in first class hotels and had been royally entertained. Sun-tanned and invigorated, they had stolen summer from the cold heart of winter. They had heard stories of success in everything. Life was easy and good here. "Sure we'll buy land," they reasoned, "and in another year or two we'll be able to settle here, make a quick fortune, and then play happily all the rest of our lives." In a kind of intoxication they signed on the dotted line for ten, twenty, thirty, and up to eighty acres of land, much of which was in the brush and had never been cleared, much was inaccessible after rain because of the lack of usable roads, at prices anywhere from two hundred to three hundred and fifty dollars an acre. Not very many years before, all of these thousands of acreages now bringing these fantastic prices had changed hands at under three dollars an acre, and the sole capital investment which had ever been put into the Valley by way of improvement was a system of irrigation canals which supplied water from reservoirs filled by pumping from the Rio Grande.

Friends of ours had bought land in South Texas in just these circumstances during the winter before we decided to leave Akron. This land was a thirty-acre tract lying about four miles from a tiny Valley town called Rio Hondo. On buying the site, our friends had had the foresight to include a clause in the signed contract, under which the land company undertook to plant young citrus trees, and to plant cotton rows between the

young citrus, the proceeds from the cotton to be credited against the cost of planting citrus, and the outstanding balance debited against our friend the owner.

I learned of this situation in the early summer. And my friend learned of our decision to seek a warmer climate at the same time. A little later, he suggested that we might do worse than go down to Texas and tenant his land, taking off the cotton crop in the autumn and planting truck, and tending the citrus trees until they reached a commercial bearing age, which they would at four-five years old.

One place was as good as another to me, so long as I escaped from the zero and sub-zero temperatures of future North American winters. I had already had a fair amount of experience of cropping in a modest way, and felt quite confident I could get along. Nor was I insensitive to the romantic appeal of cotton growing, of citrus raising, or of the glamorous South or the illimitable vastness of the sweeping prairies of the West. Thus it was that I did not hesitate long before agreeing to go. My friend and I laid out such plans as we could at that distance from what, in the event, turned out to be my home for three years. We sought diligently for information from the land company in Texas, and its representatives in Ohio, for information as to what the situation was on the farm. We could learn nothing, however, and met only evasion everywhere. Still we went on with our planning in all faith and confidence, I because I had nothing to lose and was still young, my friend because he was still unshaken in his faith in the good fairies of the dreamy South. We were both enthusiastic; but there was no more prospect of anything tangible emerging from our theorizing than there would be were two men in Kent to plan the management of thirty acres of jungle in central Africa!

When the long summer days began to grow short quickly and the first light frosts gave a snap to the morning air, we made our final arrangements to leave Akron, and on a mellow September day, the anniversary of the day we had left England, we rolled southwards from Ohio by the midnight train. Akron, built like ancient Rome on seven hills, has a mean height of 1,100 feet above sea level. We rolled downwards and westwards, as well as southwards, on our 2,300 miles journey through State after State for three and a half days, and when we finally left the train at San Benito we were no more than a few feet above sea level, and a thousand miles west of Chicago. The country was perfectly flat in all directions as far as vision reached, and we were reminded of the wit who described the State of Florida as being 1,000 miles long and three inches high!

Just as there is no such thing as a typical American, so there is no such thing as "the American climate". The same extremes are experienced in the North-eastern States of America as are experienced in the Baltic States. In the North-central States winter has the same ferocity as is met with on the Russian steppes at the same season. Desert conditions prevail over large areas of the South-central and Central States proper. Almost uninterrupted hot weather, sometimes torridly hot, is experienced by those States fringing the Gulf of Mexico and the South-central Atlantic seaboard. Only in the far West, in the States falling on the Pacific side of the Rockies, is the climate comparatively free of extremes the year round. Meteorologists account for this by explaining how the vast oceans of air over the high plains of the Canadian Northwest deepen and deepen in intensity, of cold as the winter months advance and the sun

withdraws from the northern hemisphere. Movement of these immense oceans is induced by the slow rising of the warm atmospheric surround of the tropics. And for the northern air oceans there is only one possible direction of flow. Effectively cut off from the Pacific by the Rockies, and from the east by deeper and no less cold air oceans over the eastern seaboard and the north Atlantic, the shallower and therefore lighter cold waves from the Canadian plains move with gradually increasing momentum and with gradually decreasing intensity of cold, first through the Northern States of America and so down the Mississippi valley to the Gulf of Mexico, the Caribbean sea, and often almost into the southern hemisphere. The phenomenon may be observed three or four times in the Lower Rio Grande Valley between the end of November and the end of February. Or it may not be observed at all, the waves having spent themselves before reaching so far south. In any case, forty-eight to seventy-two hours was all that was usually required for a "norther" to pass, and summer conditions to return.

The word Valley, in the phrase Lower Rio Grande Valley, is a misnomer. As I have said, the land for miles and miles is completely, absolutely flat. For 150 miles north of the Rio Grande there is no natural rise anywhere of more than perhaps 25-30 feet. And even such a rise is so gradual as to be almost imperceptible. Across the river and into old Mexico for I know not how far the same topography obtains. Even the Rio Grande itself reaches the sea as best it can, not swiftly, noisily, as through a valley and over a rocky bed, but slowly, laboriously, waywardly, over a quiet bed of alluvial soil of unknown depth and richness, brought down through countless centuries from countries more than 2,000 miles away. It is a wandering river, too. As it floods every year in mid-June, carrying the melted snows of months before from its tributaries from the mountains of central Mexico, it not infrequently breaks through some softer place along its almost unresisting banks, and changes its course altogether for quite considerable distances before returning again to its original bed. One such instance was when, much to our consternation, we awoke one morning to the knowledge that our pumping station, on which thousands of people depended for fresh water for all purposes, was three-quarters of a mile from the river. During the night three-quarters of a mile of territory had been added to the U.S.A. and lost to Mexico, but that was small consolation for us having to ditch that distance to fresh water again. In a few days, however, the river was back again and ditching was not necessary after all.

Still, the Lower Rio Grande Valley it is called; the Valley let it be. It is a district really, a district between eighty and ninety miles long, and about thirty miles wide on the average. A number of small towns are strung along its length, roughly paralleling the Rio Grande, and all connected by the one paved highway which existed in the Valley at that time. A smaller number of even smaller towns are to be found lying at varying distances from the Valley road. It was to one of these, Rio Hondo, that my wife and I, and our ten-years old son, Leonard, were going, as being the nearest place to our 30-acre farm. The single-track branch of the railway which connects Rio Hondo and San Benito, and which is known as the Spider's Web, carries no trains on Sundays, and we had to reach our first destination by road. We had some difficulty in securing transportation over the nine miles of road. It was a punishing undertaking for any car. The whole length was a mere dirt track, and recent very heavy rains had reduced it to a series of sticky gumbo patches and deep mud holes. Only by keeping to the tracks and grinding slowly along could progress be made at all. Frequently cars stuck fast, bogged

down in the mud. And as it was impossible to drive round such an obstacle, it meant that the crew of a following car had to dismount, wade ankle deep through the black gumbo, and assist in getting the leading car moving again. This was an experience which became quite familiar to us, but it was new to us on this occasion, and we were relieved when finally we reached Rio Hondo.

For a time we made the inn at Rio Hondo our headquarters. There was nothing we could do until the flood waters from the rains already referred to had drained away. We were four miles away from our land, and under prevailing conditions our future home was unreachable. Actually, six weeks elapsed before we finally moved out. We spent the time acquainting ourselves with Rio Hondo and its people, and we discovered that at last we had found something typical. Rio Hondo was a typical wild west, movie, cowboy town. Its single, short, unpaved street was lined with buildings which could have done duty on any movie set. A general store, a dry goods store, a hardware store, two drug stores, a garage and filling station, a lumber (timber) yard, a tiny bank, an even tinier post office, a butcher shop, two truck (vegetable) consignment offices, these comprised the "business" section. Two small churches, a first rate and large consolidated school, and a number of houses here and there accounted for the rest of the town in this, its center. The total population within its fairly wide limits was 400. Fully half of these were Mexican; and in the district as a whole the proportion of Mexican population was 75% with the result that Spanish was in more general usage than the English language. Boarded sidewalks raised pedestrian traffic above the mud of the main streets in the town. Every shop had its little porch or shaded veranda. Before every store was a tie rail for horses and mules. Rio Hondo was a center for many miles of outlying country, and was a busy little place. Traffic under dry conditions was mostly car or wagon or motor truck. Under wet conditions, horseback or team wagon was the only possible means of transportation over any distance.

By the end of the second week things had settled so that, by making a wide detour, my wife and I were able to walk out and see for ourselves what our "farm" was like. Through conversation with the innkeeper we were just a little prepared for what we found. He had assured us very seriously that there were no trees, meaning citrus trees, on Sugarland – which was what our particular district was called. We already knew, therefore, that to that extent at least the land company had failed in its contract.

We had no difficulty in finding, roughly, the particular piece of land which was ours. The Spider's Web rambled with its single track through four miles of country without any halt until it terminated at a strongly built stockade or corral, and the last few yards of track and the corral formed the south line of our land. The north line, six hundred yards away, was formed by the Arroyo, a deep waterway of which I shall have more to say later on. The west line was a continuation between the track and the Arroyo, of the bridle path and wagon road – not even graded at that time – which came out from Rio Hondo, and which was the only "road" we had. The east line was as yet indeterminate, but was roughly 150 yards away from, and parallel with, the west line.

That morning, as we stood on the railway track and looked at the prospect before us, we suffered in a moment the shattering of all the enthusiastic and glorious imaginings which had sustained us through months of eager planning. No promising young citrus

trees, no fruitful cotton plants, met our eyes. There was no cultivated land anywhere, nor any sign of any human habitation. The last third of our land, at the Arroyo end, was covered with a dense and impenetrable growth of brush; mesquite, yuccas, cactus, ebony, eucalyptus, and all manner of fearsome growths. The near twenty acres had been cleared of brush at some time, but was now covered with knee-high weed and coarse heavy grass. Not an inch of the countryside, save one or two small clearings, cotton-farmed by predatory Mexicans, had ever known the feel of a plough. There was no fresh water nearer than the immigration canals a quarter of a mile away. We had passed our nearest neighbor's house a mile away along the Rio Hondo road. Nor, as we knew, was the railway of any use, for the spur was never used save for the transportation of large shipments of cattle from north to south, or vice versa, for pasturage according to seasons, perhaps twice a year. We were not only on the very edge of civilization, but would have to start from literally nothing if we made a start at all.

There was food for much thought in our situation. As in duty bound, I reported in full detail to my friend the owner on the situation we had discovered. After releasing his indignation at the bad faith of the land company he characteristically and very generously left the final decision with me, as to his course with the company. If I felt there was little chance of making the place approachably what we had hoped, and wished to return to Akron, he would sue the land company forthwith for breach of contract and damages. If I chose to stay and try to make a go of it, he would compel the land company to finance me to a degree, under threat of suing. For himself, he'd like me to have a crack at it, though I wasn't to let that influence me in any way.

It was the sunshine that made my decision for me, the sunshine and the obviously abounding fertility of the Valley. In mid-October I needed a wide brimmed straw sombrero. I needed neither coat nor vest, and watched day after day, now that the fall rains were over, the thermometer climb easily to the eighties and often to the nineties. Realizing even then, I think, the many tough problems and the real hardships which lay ahead for us if we stayed, I nevertheless thought of the already snow-covered north and shuddered at the prospect of returning. We had already made friends with an Irishman and his wife – she was one of the only two English people we ever met in the Valley – who had been on the land very near Rio Hondo for fifteen years, and who had started much as we should have to start. I felt if Pat and Effie could make a go of it, I could. I decided I'd stay.

Two things were immediately necessary now that we were to stay, a house to live in and some means of transportation. The second need I met by buying an old Ford car from the local schoolmaster. I knew nothing of the waywardness of a 1919 Ford. That particular sample of that vintage was reasonably genteel from careful driving around town under decent conditions. But when subjected to the rough usage which was inevitable on the road between Rio Hondo and our land it often turned temperamental. It boasted no self-starter and had always to be cranked by hand. For a time it would start easily on a mere half turn of the crank, on a certain combination of choke adjustment, spark advance, and gas feed. Then, for no apparent reason, it would fail to respond at all until an entirely fresh combination of crank, choke, spark and gas had been hit upon by more or less blind experiment. Though it gave us much good service

as well as many pleasure trips, its vagaries were a constant anxiety. Many a time it failed us completely and most vexatiously. On the other hand, road conditions were often so bad that it was little less than miraculous what the old Ford could and did achieve. I likened it to the man who didn't know the job couldn't be done, so just went ahead and did it! Certainly, equipped with tire chains, a spade for digging out in case of bogging down in some mud hole, and a long chain to assist some mule team to haul me out when extremity had been reached, I have traveled many miles of road in that old Ford that I wouldn't have cared to tackle in any other petrol driven vehicle with less adaptability to such conditions than has a tank. It was a constant companion in adventure for some two years, when I sold it for less than I should now have to pay for one new tire.

The vagaries of the Rio Grande through the centuries have left two well-defined old river channels in the Valley. One of these channels, with raised and leveed banks along almost its whole length of twenty-seven miles, serves as the reservoir for all the Valley towns and countryside which lie below it. In places it is no more than a few yards wide, in other places it reaches a width of perhaps 200 yards. From this "Resaca", kept at gravity feeding level by pumping from the Rio Grande, all the fresh water needs of people, stock, and land are met, and on it any sort of life at all for the Valley depends. Nor is any alternative means of storing water available, for catchment reservoirs are quite impossible anywhere in the lower hundreds of miles of reaches of the Rio Grande. All cultivation in the Lower Valley depends entirely on the irrigation canals threading the land everywhere below the Resaca.

The other very similar though much larger, and longer, abandoned channel of the river is the Arroyo, which serves as a natural drain for the flood waters of thousands of square miles of country. Into it empty the surplus waters of the irrigation canals. Not in any sense a river in its own right, it has no natural floor. Yet, lying between banks which are often twenty feet deep in a dry period, it is capable of rapid and ominous risings in times of heavy rain and storm. Normally, its level is sea level, for it is actually an arm of the sea, winding and twisting back into the Valley for a hundred miles from its outlet in the Gulf of Mexico. Normally, too, its waters are slightly salty, carrying diffusion easily from the ocean. At its mouth, the Arroyo is more than a quarter of a mile wide and nowhere more than waist deep. Where it skirted our land on the north, it is but 150 yards wide, yet more than 60 feet deep just a few yards from the bank. One sees easily that the storms of centuries have scoured out deep channels in the soft bed and laid the deposit on the wide sand banks at the mouth, some forty miles away. Forty miles, that is, by the Arroyo's course, for we were no more than seven miles from the Gulf at its nearest point.

The Arroyo became our park and our playground later on. But at first we saw it only as a menace to our intentions and a possibly unconquerable challenge. Not yet, when we arrived at Rio Hondo, had the flood waters of the exceptionally heavy recent rains got away, and each morning when we awoke we were confronted with a few more inches of rise in the already menacing flood. Even at Rio Hondo, where some precautions were possible, the danger of serious trouble was daily and almost hourly more real.

It was while the Arroyo was still rising that I made my plans to build some sort of house to live in, out at the farm. I got in touch with a carpenter, and together we figured what the requirements would be for the small one room and porch affair which was all we should need for a while. This done, I bought the timber from the local lumber yard, hauled it out by mules and wagon, stacked it near the site I had chosen, and left it a few days until the carpenter was free to give a hand with the actual building. Still the Arroyo continued to rise, and presently it was bank full at Rio Hondo and people were anxiously seeking information as to the state of affairs farther up the Valley. Tyro though I was, it was plain to me that few more days of rise, just a few more inches, and the whole countryside in the whole of the Valley would be under water. When I next went to see what things were like on my land I was only just in time. Already the water, backing up quietly through a break in the Arroyo bank, had overflowed and was lapping at my piled stack of timber, more than a quarter of a mile from the stream. Making my way back as quickly as I could, I raced mules and wagon out again, loaded up while standing in water, and hauled and stacked my wood once again, this time on the railway track. From this stately eminence of perhaps two feet I looked round on a broad expanse of lake which stretched far to the north, east, and west. Only south, towards Rio Hondo, was there dry land. Concluding there was nothing more I could do, I started the team and jogged roughly back to the inn. For the moment at any rate I had retrieved my potential house. The lumber would be as safe where it was as it would be anywhere else, and even if it did finally drift down to sea I should by that time have so much to think about that a few pieces of wood would be neither here nor there. Two feet more of rise and life would be unlivable anywhere in the Valley.

The very next morning, the first time in weeks, the Arroyo showed no rise. Turbid and heavy, it swirled its rich, wasted burden of silt and soil sullenly to the sea. Rio Hondo gathered on the banks and rejoiced. Some day, perhaps, the Arroyo would get them, but this time at least they were safe once more. A week later the little wooden wagon bridge leading from Rio Hondo to Harbinger, a town nine miles away, became visible. No more than two feet above the normal level of the Arroyo, the bridge had been under fifteen to eighteen feet of water for more than a month.

I had now to move quickly if I was to make any use of the farm that autumn. Luckily my carpenter was available, and a day or two after the Arroyo began to subside we rode out with the Ford loaded down with tools, nails and other requisites. Also, we had two stone jars of drinking water, and our first job was to bury these neck deep in shaded soil. To work in the open without copious supplies of good drinking water was impossible in the Valley, for more than very short periods. My original site was now proved to be impracticable, and I decided to set my house up about 100 yards from the corral and the Spider's Web.

No more substantial foundation was needed for the modest place I was building than a dozen concrete blocks on which the base of the house could rest. In one day we laid the base, the floor, and made most of the frames for the walls. Next day we finished the frames for walls and roof, nailed on the shiplap wall-boards and shingled the roof, and screened in the veranda. The third day we fitted doors and windows, underdrew the roof as added protection against the burning heat from an almost overhead sun, made steps and a few trimmings, and went back to Rio Hondo dog tired, insatiably

thirsty, burnt to blisters and a uniform brick red, but with the shack finished. Finished, but not yet inhabitable. Next day I went out alone, and from the remnants of my building operations made a table, chairs, stools, cupboards, bedding and clothes boxes, and frames for three camp beds. Meanwhile my wife had been assembling cupboard supplies, along with hardware, crockery, and such similar necessities as she could in Rio Hondo. And on the fifth day after starting to build we said a temporary goodbye to our hosts at the inn and drove out to Sugarland and "home".

Very lonely and unprotected we felt, and a little overawed at the immensity of our undertaking, as we stood and looked around in the quickly fading southern twilight that evening. From the dark menacing jungle of brush four hundred yards away came the eerie, mournful cry of the coyotes. Apart from that, silence. Silence vast and absolute. We were standing on the very edge of civilization, with all our past life and its associations far behind us and completely unhelpful. In this new world into which we had stepped we were strangers, with no more credentials than our faith, or, as some would say, our innocence and ignorance. Nature here was wild and fierce and young and lustful and strong. In one of nature's rages in this meeting place of the storms our tiny house would be no more than a straw in the wind, our lives no safer than a moth's in a flame. Not a sign of animate life could we see anywhere, and apart from the brooding forest of brush which had stridden the Arroyo with ease and which was unbroken for a hundred miles to the north, the whole world was empty. Overhead the deep inverted bowl of golden twilight poured out its color on the far away western horizon, while the indigo of the ocean stained its eastern rim. When the darkness had gathered we lit our lamp and a little later prepared for bed. Our small bark was launched. Our anchor had been weighed and we were afloat on a new life.

Next morning I started to plough. Having of course nowhere to house stock or implements it was necessary to hire both. Five acres of land close to the house were quickly ploughed, disked, harrowed and ridged. And, seven weeks after leaving Ohio, I had three and a half acres of virgin Valley land planted to diversified vegetables. For two weeks after the seeds started to break the soil I was busy early and late thinning and spacing to an even stand. From that point on to harvest I could keep my crop clean and thrifty by one good long day's cultivation each week, and could give much needed attention to development of various kinds in our environment. I built a poultry pen and cabins, and acquired a couple of dozen laying birds. A shed of sorts was sufficient for the time being to house a big, strong, bay horse that I bought and, in rather striking contrast, a small but good and pretty and one-horned Jersey cow. "Brownie" became a domestic pet quite quickly. Only quite young, she had just come in with her second calf when I bought her, and she gave us three gallons of milk a day for a long time before reducing again as her third calf approached. With lots of milk, cream, butter and eggs for ourselves and with young and tender vegetables of a dozen kinds to pull, there was not a great deal we required from Rio Hondo in the way of food at that season.

Water was a different proposition. The obtaining of water, fresh water for all purposes, was an ever-present difficulty and a never-ending chore. We were a quarter mile from the nearest irrigation canal, which was our sole source of supply as regards drinking water. Moreover, it was not permitted that stock should drink from the canals – a sensible and very necessary precaution. For a time we hauled our water in kits in the



Ford, a most laborious and wearying job. Next, I built a sled, a contraption on skids which would slide over the level ground and which would carry an upended barrel quite safely. To this I used to hitch "Prince". Ordinarily he had no difficulty in hauling the full barrel back from the canal, but I remember one occasion when the ground was slightly soft and sticky. Prince balked somewhat at the unusual effort required. He pulled hard enough for a time, then stopped, backed on to his singletree, and rested his haunches against the barrel. It is the only occasion I have ever seen a horse literally sit down on the job! I think my hilarity at the spectacle must have shamed him, for he started again immediately and pulled his load home as if in high dudgeon.

It was very fortunate for us that we needed no water for the growing crops that late autumn. Our friends Pat and Effie had shaken their heads about our starting on the farm at all before the water was there, and had tried in vain to convince us that irrigation ditches from the canal to the farm were the very first and most basic necessity. With the confidence of the inexperienced, however, I felt sure there was enough ground moisture to germinate seed, and would be enough rain at that season to keep the crops growing if they were well cultivated. And as I proposed to grow cotton the following summer – a crop which needs no irrigation if good germination is secured at planting time – I decided to follow my hunch and postpone the making of my irrigation ditches until I could give more time to it.

The occasional rains which helped us to secure good crops of vegetables in due course created many difficulties in other directions. The tracks which served as roads into town often became impassable for any kind of wheeled traffic. Not infrequently mule teams drawing wagons and bound for Rio Hondo from Anaquitas or some other large ranch east of us had to abandon the trip; or unyoke the mules and leave the wagon at some specially bad place and complete the journey with the teamster astride a mule.

I have mentioned that Rio Hondo had a good consolidated school. It served an extremely wide area, and had no less than six trucks running routes into the country, like the spokes of a wheel with the school for its hub, picking up children from the farthest points and all the way in. Leonard had started school almost at once on our reaching Rio Hondo, and I had secured agreement with the school when we moved out to Sugarland that the truck on the north route would start picking up at our place. But the last stretch out to the end of the Spider's Web was usually too much, and indeed there was one period of six weeks when not a wheeled vehicle of any description passed our farm. The Ford was often useless too for several weeks at a stretch, although, equipped with tire chains, it could occasionally be seen cavorting through the country and performing tricks that would have done credit to an acrobat!

It was in these circumstances that we added the next member to our growing family. He was a chunky sorrel mustang, a Mexican cow pony, very fast yet very gentle. In no time Leonard and "Ranger" became great friends and inseparable buddies. Barebacked and bridle-less, with only a neck rope as a guiding rein, Ranger carried his 11-year old boss to school every day. On the plentiful pasture near the school Leonard would change Ranger's stake-pin three or four times before the afternoon session broke up and the children headed for home. Often I caught my breath at the sheer beauty and the perfect balance of the picture I saw as Ranger galloped swiftly and eagerly home

down the last half mile. Leonard, one hand hanging easily and the other holding loosely the unneeded neck rein, straight and comfortable and graceful, following every movement effortlessly and in perfect harmony, Ranger, sorrel coat glistening and shadowing with the pony's movement like burnished copper, taking and leaving the ground with all four feet easily and swiftly, with flying mane and his long tail streaming to a rhythmic, rocking motion of thrilling loveliness.

To our great relief and delight we were not left long neighborless on Sugarland. Other Ohioan families had fallen for the lure of the sunny South and by New Year seven or eight other constructions similar to our own were housing people who had come to seek the sun and to make a living in the wide open spaces. Mostly, they were themselves owners, and were committed to the new venture to the very limit of their financial resources. Something of the tragedy of their betrayal will be realized when I say that when we left the Valley after spending three years there, not one of our original neighbors was left. All had given up in despair, and in most cases had gone back to their hometowns in the North broken and all but destitute. Easy to believe that the Valley, like California before it, would require at least three generations of settlers before it was colonized. Indeed, when we ourselves finally said goodbye to our neighbors, they were already, in three cases, the third occupants of what were still farms less than three years retrieved from the brush.

Lacking almost unlimited resources, luck plays a determining part in the fate of any Valley settler, if he sets out to make his living by farming of any kind. The best laid plans and unceasing industry can end in complete disaster through circumstances quite unforeseeable and altogether beyond human control. While a neighbor, on what amounts to a speculation as hazardous as a gambler's throw, can reap winnings of almost fantastic degree.

Let those who hold that good or bad luck is simply good or bad management explain what happened to Jim Drew. Already half retired and no longer young, Drew had bought no more than ten acres of young citrus trees some thirty miles or so from us, in a neighborhood already well settled and developed. He knew nothing of truck farming when he came to the Valley, and he only intended to play at it anyway. Arriving one January day, he at once began inquiring about what was usually done at that season. His trees were quite small yet, and there was plenty of room for intercropping with vegetables. Neighbors very willing to help a novice, advised that he get string beans in at once, in order to catch the premium prices of the early market. About a week later than his advisors, Drew planted the whole of his available land to beans. Five or six days passed, and hundreds of acres of early spring beans had their first pair of leaves above ground. Then came a "norther". For two days and nights the freezing wind and the icy rain poured torture on the young, defenceless growth, and when the norther had passed and the temperature was again in the eighties, every plant above ground was dead. Three days later Drew's beans broke ground. And before the end of March his crop of many scores of bushels had been marketed at six dollars seventy five a bushel, before the weight of later crops broke the market to less than a dollar a bushel.

Another instance was that of Dan Palo. Palo was an experienced market gardener who brought a lot of capital and much technical knowledge with him when he came to the

Valley. He had bought land heavily. And in the second late autumn of our stay he planted fifty-five acres to diversified truck, probably twenty different varieties of vegetables. These fifty-five acres were in one field. And amongst that tremendous planting of vegetables was just one row and a half of parsley, about 800 yards of row. Ordinarily the parsley requirements of the great northern cities in the winter months are supplied from the Mississippi basin lands in southern Louisiana. However, this particular winter an especially severe norther wiped out all the parsley beds in Louisiana, but spent its severity before it reached the Valley. Nobody else had parsley but Palo. The result was that he turned all his help onto the parsley row. Every leaf was zealously garnered, and as fast as the bunches were packed and shipped out the row was irrigated and cultivated again, and again cropped in four or five days. All the rest of those fifty-five acres of practically perfect vegetables were completely neglected, and went to seed or were lost to weeds. Nothing else save that small planting of parsley was harvested. Yet Palo made more money from that 800 yards of row than he and all his neighbors made fro all their crops put together.

These strange turns of the wheel of chance are of course of rare occurrence in this degree, but beyond question the possibility of a lucky strike is an ever-present gambler's hope. Only now and then is a nugget such as these unearthed, and generally one has to be as satisfied as possible with the few grains sifted by much toil.

With the coming of neighbors my old itch for social and cooperative activity began to bother me again. One common need that was crying aloud to be met was that of as good a road as possible into Rio Hondo. A hard-surfaced road was of course out of the question for us. But there was no good reason why we shouldn't plough out gutters on either side of the track that was all we still had, and with a grading scraper push the ploughed out soil to the top and the middle or center. Disking and dragging would then give us a road usable in any but the worst of conditions. Not always easily usable, of course, but still usable. A small difficulty was the obtaining of permission from resident owners, to plough up sufficiently wide widths of road. These we managed to persuade by stressing, what was quite true, the enhanced value of land, which a decent road would bring. As for the absent owners of land through which we proposed to go, we just ploughed up the land anyhow! Did they feel so inclined, the owners could plough the road and push it back if and when they ever came to the Valley. Meanwhile, they were not present to raise any objections; and we did need that road. On long stretches of the nearly four miles length we worked in relay teams. On other stretches, an owner would accept responsibility for the particular stretch which abutted on his own land. As a tenant, I fell into this latter class on behalf of my owner friend. And, being placed at the far end of the length with which we were all concerned, it fell to my lot to grade and fit the last quarter mile of the Rio Hondo road. In addition, I graded the quarter mile to the nearest canal and bridge and the six hundred yards down the west side of my farm to the Arroyo, on my own account. After cutting and grading all these stretches, to the end of my stay I kept them all drained, weeded, disked and dragged when the occasion required it. Today all that is paved road, administered and controlled by the State. But the satisfaction of original creation belongs to me.

Meanwhile my crops thrived mightily. To one who had done all his previous cropping on the cold, clayey hillsides of north-east Lancashire, the abounding progress of vegetation

here was little short of miraculous. Good fortune was with me too. Although, as I have said, I had ignored Pat's advice about the water, I had had the good sense to take heed of what he said about the safest things for a beginner to grow, between October and February or March. Consequently most of my stuff was hardy, or fairly hardy anyway, and all of it came through the three northers of that winter not a bit the worse. Moreover, prices were reasonably good for the grower that year. Early in the New Year I started bunching and bushelling and consigning turnips, beets, lettuce, spinach, green onions, and carrots. So busy were we that I had time to plough and fit only two more acres of land before cotton-planting time for the Valley was upon us. Five tons of cabbage; and from 200 bushels of bunched carrots down to a dozen bushels of spinach, had given me a good stake with which to play the hazards of the Valley game. In my first spring harvest, everything I had raised had sold well. Nothing fancy or sensational, but just a steady though fortunate start. Later on, I was to experience the bitter disappointment of raising much larger crops of perfect vegetables and finding it literally impossible to give them away.

Finally I had seven acres of fitted land for cotton in my first summer. By the second week in March all that was left of my three and a half acres of truck had been disked in, and nine bushels of cotton seed had been planted in seven acres of clean, tilthy loam. On the plane of hard, material considerations it was admittedly the picture of a 30-acre citrus orchard that was full of allure; but in the meantime I would work quietly and steadily along, planning as best I could, growing cotton as a safe money crop in the summer and gambling if need be on truck at other seasons.

With my cotton in the ground, my first truck crops sold and thus some independent standing at the bank; with the roads now nicely in shape, and a developing routine of some sort of ordered life for ourselves and our stock making things a little easier, we had time to make closer acquaintance with our neighbors, and occasionally to travel farther afield.

Old John and Mrs. Stocker had bought twenty acres just south of us, and had had a nice house built for them before moving their furniture down from Ohio. To do this they had sold the little farm which John had owned and tended through thirty years. They were already over sixty years of age, and had fallen victims to the alluring pictures drawn for them by high-pressure land salesmen who must have had no other objective than an easy sale, regardless of all consequences to the buyer. And when we had time to give the Stockers what help we could of a social nature, it was already too late. They had resolved to return "home" at all costs, to seek congeniality in the evening of their lives among their own folk. Less than four months after arriving in the Valley they were back again in Ohio, tenanting the farm they had owned so long, and with all their life's savings abandoned 2,000 miles away. Easy to say they had invited their own fate, that they were too old for pioneering work, that they couldn't expect to strike new roots at their age. Easy, and perhaps all true. But this was only the first of very many similar domestic tragedies that we were to hear of and to know, and every added instance confirmed us in our conviction that the Valley land racket at that time was a classic illustration of the soullessness of big business. Not that misrepresentation is practiced directly and of intent. In my experience, the Valley was never positively misrepresented. All of the things claimed for the Valley were there all right. But the

difficulties connected with acquiring them were never mentioned by the sellers, and even when a "prospect" had sufficient imagination to raise objections of a real nature, these were made to seem so small that the objector almost shamed to have raised them at all.

There is no social service in business carried on on those lines. Nothing came of the innumerable "Stocker" tragedies in the Valley save commissions to land salesmen and added profits to the land companies from the resale and the resale again of land already many times sold. Meanwhile, stories of failure after failure of those who were never fit to attempt colonization, and of those who, though fit, fell for lack of forewarning of the size of the job that was awaiting them, filtered back to the home-towns and the countryside the people had left. Discouragement is infectious; and in due course the return of the broken to their homes in the north brought nemesis to the land-sellers. Sales dwindled and at last became almost impossible. Yet the Valley remained. Limitless in its potentiality, seething with living promise in infinite directions, it awaited only vigor, enthusiasm, faith, to transform it into the garden of a mighty nation, an inexhaustible storehouse and a welcoming refuge from the wearing struggles of intensive industrial existence. With the right men and women to tame it, to build it, to till it, the Valley may easily be one of the magic wonders of the world. But in the hands of those who care only about self-profit and the exploitation of human weaknesses and failings, who are concerned only to sell and not to make or build, it will remain one of the greatest of America's unrealizable assets.

Harvey and Mrs. Stamm were another couple who had settled not far away. They were of German stock, stolid and sound and already middle-aged. Mrs. Stamm was the typical German haus-frau, clean, capable, and a generous provider for her quiet and steady husband. Harv had been a steelworker in the North. He had long pined for an open air life, and had entered on this venture as a sort of now-or-never experience. But his long years of subservience in the mills had unfitted him for personal responsibility for the ordering of his own life. He was a good, hard worker; and both he and Mrs. Stamm were temperamentally well fitted for the job they had undertaken. What Harv lacked, however, was native initiative. Without that, and without some directing authority external to himself, it was from the first only a question of time before he too would write off his losses and pull his stakes again. He was slow of speech and had little sense of humor, was difficult to know, and inclined to be unconsciously suspicious of other people. This last quality was fatal to what is a basic necessity in the Valley; that is, ease of association with the Mexicans. He was a good man, honest and dour and kind. We had many enjoyable visits with the Stammers, pleasant evenings largely spent in exchange of experiences, Harv and I discussing mills and farming and social questions and urban life, while our wives contrasted – sometimes in practice – the different approaches to well-served and satisfying meals, as reflected from their German and English backgrounds. With true German tenacity the Stammers held on for as long as they could, though obviously fighting a losing battle all the way. But with equally true German caution they had not burned all their bridges, and when they returned to Ohio after a year or so in the Valley, they were able to regard their experiment as a rather costly twelve-months visit to another country, and Harv returned to the mills as easily as a hardened gaol-bird returns "home" for another sentence.

We also visited a lot with the Harmons and their 20-year old son Neil, and we discovered early that we had a lot in common with them. For one thing, Fred Harmon was politically conscious. Back in Oklahoma he had served several times as county treasurer, and he knew both American and Oklahoman politics from the inside as an administrator and from the outside as a party man and a campaigner. He had held office before and after oil was struck in the Oklahoman fields, and he loved to tell his many stories of the curious twists of fortune which befell the Indians as a result of the discovery of oil in the reservations. When the reservations were first thrown open to the Indians on almost identical conditions which first accompanied homesteading, those who were thrifty and agriculturally inclined soon chose and occupied and commenced to work all the best lands. The late-comers, mainly the shiftless and those who were disinclined to cooperate in an unsatisfactory arrangement, made no personal choice but were simply apportioned a piece of land as their settlement. Generally, the best farmland being already occupied, these latter homesteads were apparently worthless; thin, poor soil in a stony, hilly country, or flat, arid stretches of high, drought-stricken, and waterless prairie. Rarely did these legal owners live on their lands. Until the oil came! When the oil was discovered, it was precisely these apparently worthless areas which gave easiest access to the boundless liquid wealth. The farmer Indians continued to produce food and fiber as diligently as ever; but overnight the shiftless and the rebels became multi-millionaires.

As well as being a highly intelligent man, Fred Harmon was a good farmer. He knew how to work and he knew what to do. And he knew, too, how to use his capital. In one short year he transformed a completely bare twenty-acre patch into a home-farm of promise and comeliness. He built a nice house, efficient and commodious barns and outbuildings, and acquired sufficient stock to meet his requirements in all ways. Apart from three acres which he fenced off for pasture, and perhaps another acre for the home lot, all his land was in cultivation, and ten acres were actually planted in young citrus stock. He had a nice garden and lawn round the house, and if anybody at all seemed likely to settle in Rio Hondo the Harmons did. Then one day they announced quite suddenly that they were leaving. Of course Fred did not lose by his venture. He knew how to sell as well as he knew most things, and had no difficulty in recovering his original investment as well as his additional capitalization of the farm. And a few days later, almost exactly a year after arriving, they were off again. It transpired later that, despite their fairly long sojourn in Oklahoma, they were really nomadic by nature. From Texas they kept on going north and west until they reached Oregon, three thousand miles away; and the last we heard of them, they had an apple orchard and a bee-farm, abundantly successful I have no doubt, but not so much so as to subdue for very long the urge for new experiences and scenes.

I was entranced with my cotton crop from the day when the seed-leaves first broke the ground. I had never seen a cotton plant before, but had of course fully acquainted myself with the theory of cotton growing; and I was familiar with cropping generally. But I was unprepared for the sheer beauty, in all its stages, of the cotton plant. After the first pale seed-leaves, brightly vivid against the rich black loam in their long straight rows, have dropped away, and have been followed by the thick, glossy, dark green true leaves, there is unceasing interest and loveliness in the developing plant. At a foot high the plant will start to show its "squares", or flower buds as these actually are, and will

continue to flower profusely until a height of almost three feet is reached. In a well grown field lateral growth will equal height growth, and as we used to plant our cotton in rows three feet apart – but with plants only about eight or nine inches apart in the rows – the ultimate effect was a shimmering sea of rippling, reflected sunshine whenever a light breeze stirred the heavy, shining leaves. And to walk through the rows, with the plants brushing and rustling at every step, was to open up another picture equally beautiful. Thousands of faintly primrose, convolvulus cotton flowers, changing at the edges at nightfall to a bright, rosy pink, starred the bushes. These were the forerunners of the cotton bolls, the fruit pods of the plant. The tiny speck of boll that was left when the flower dropped would swell and grow until it reached the size of a hen's egg. It would change form the soft, fresh green of a young boll to a brown and russet-speckled hue, hardening and becoming browner and more and more woody until it burst, and a great handful of purest white and softest, fleeciest cotton hung cascading from the fully ripened hull. And all these effects could be seen at one time in a field of fully grown cotton; squares, tiny bolls, bolls in all sizes and stages and differing hull colors, and cotton lint ready for the pickers. To me it was a feast of enjoyment and beauty of which I never tired.

The good fortune which had attended my beginnings at truck farming continued through my first cotton crop. By early planting and constant and clean cultivation I secured a winning lead in the eternal fight with the boll-weevil, and harvested over 3,000 pounds of lint cotton from my seven-acre field. Prices were good; and at the end of our first year we could look back on our efforts with satisfaction, and forward with confidence. Much of this I owed to my ease of association and my good relations with the numerous Mexican squatters and settlers who impinged on the district as soon as people from the north began to work the lands. By all the standards of peoples who claim to represent what is best in civilization, these Mexicans for by far the greater part were pitifully poor. They paid no rents, and spent not a cent in the construction of their shacks. In two or three days they would put up a shack on a scraped piece of bare earth by the side of a canal, using a mixture of mud and tule – leaves – a tall reed that grew profusely in the drainage ditches – for walls, and thatching a roof with any reedy material that was handy. Their "furniture" was of the most primitive kinds. Indeed in many case the bare earth floor served as seating, eating and sleeping accommodation without benefit of any addition whatever. With only a very little money, easily earned in harvesting or in riding herd for the ranchers, they could and did maintain large families. One such family "lived" on our side of the nearest canal; and Joaquin Silvas was, I think, the medium of my unbroken good relations with those scores of Mexicans who were scattered in Joaquin's fashion over the district. It was through his agency that I was able to get sufficient pickers to harvest my cotton at the most favorable time.

I first made his acquaintance through his twelve years old son, Ernacio, who had been Leonard's companion in many an adventure through the preceding months. Theirs was a strange and difficult association for a long time, for originally Leonard knew no word of Spanish and Ernacio no word of English. Many other things, however, the boys did have in common. They rode together often and far and wide, and exercised their love of the wild in all sorts of ways. One of their adventures resulted in a discovery which led to an invasion of our stretch of the Arroyo, by people from Valley towns as far as forty miles away. For three or four days a constant procession of vehicles and

conveyances of all kinds came and went to the water. Leonard and Ernacio had been inspecting Joaquin's raccoon traps along the water's banks, and came across a phenomenon which was never repeated in our time in the Valley. It was a day following two days of near freezing "norther" weather, during which very heavy and very cold rain had fallen incessantly, and when the three main irrigation canals and half a dozen main drainage ditches had poured countless thousands of gallons of ice-cold surface water into a comparatively short stretch of the Arroyo. Apparently the sudden reduction of the temperature of the Arroyo had stunned the big fish that usually fed at depths too low to be reached by any ordinary fishing method, and thousands upon thousands of fish of up to sixty and seventy pounds weight had floated to the surface and were lying motionless along both banks of the Arroyo for a distance of about a mile and a half. Leonard came home on Ranger at full speed, with a fifty-pound fish on each side of his pony's saddle, and almost breathless with excitement. News such as that travels fast in the Valley, and tons of fish were simply lifted out of the water and taken into the towns in the next few days. But there were far more fish than could be taken in the few days they were available. On the third or fourth morning after their appearance they had recovered from their "fazing", as the Valley people called it. Every fish had disappeared, and the surface of the Arroyo presented its usual aspect of calm placidity. We never saw them again.

Through Ernacio and Joaquin, through Jose Garcia and Vidal Flavez and Celledonio Garcia and many another Mexican we gradually became familiar with their tongue and with their ways, and ultimately we could converse with them in Spanish more freely than in English, and could appreciate their ways and their philosophy in the setting in which most of them had been born. Most of them, desperately poor by almost any material standard, had no consciousness of poverty at all, and were happy and content, carefree and quite ambitionless. They seemed to enjoy life all the time, every minute of every day. Moreover, the way they lived was of deliberate choice. It was not at all that they didn't know any different. This was brought home to me one day in a quite unanswerable manner. I was riding the disk, fitting a piece of land for seeding, when Jose came strolling across the field and stopped for a chat. It was a lovely morning, one of those beautiful Valley days when the air was warm yet fresh and strong, and when the ground and all nature pulsed with vigor and exhilaration. No work for Jose on a day such as this! All such days were holidays for Jose and all his people – unless some crazy white man to whom they were kindly disposed wished to harvest a crop, and, did he not do so, stood in some danger of losing it. Then, but much against their better judgment, they would help out albeit reluctantly. And as for those to whom they were not kindly disposed, well, their crops could run to seed and perish for all the Joses and Joaquins cared, and no amount of fancy money wages could buy their help even for an hour. Jose's first remark that morning was a question to which to this day I have never found an answer.

"What for," he said in his broken English, "you 'merica men work so hard all a time?"

His merry face was broken with a mischievous laugh as he waited for my reply. But I could only ponder his question and had nothing to say. He went on to answer it himself, and his laugh disappeared and his face became grave.



"But you must work hard," he said. "You like good, beeg house. An' plenty good things for eat. An' much clothes, an' much things for ranch, an' good, beeg mules, an' car for ride, an' oh! ever'thing!" "An' all, all," he went on, "cost much money. Si, si, you must work hard all a time."

Still I didn't reply, and I strongly suspect that the rascal knew quite well he had me at a disadvantage. As I still remained silent he resumed what was now an entirely one-sided conversation.

"We Mexica men," he said, "no need work hard. Build lil' house in two-three days, no cost nothin'. Have lil' corn for tamales. Have two, three cows for milk and lil' meat. Have pony an' feed him grass an' no cost nothin' an' him better your Ford cos' all a time he go! Oh! work lil' time for lil' money for smoke an' for pants. Other time, sit in shade an' sleep, an' go see my brother an' sister, an' talk an' maybe sing an' swim. No need money so no work." And he grinned again and was on his way, probably to see his brother or his sister!

What can one say to that? Is poverty after all a matter of outlook, a state of mind, a thing of the spirit, related only to material things in respect of vital physical needs? In a very real sense there is nothing else in life but time. According as a man spends his time, so he lives. Since time-capital is limited, is non-interest bearing, and is irreplaceable, it behooves each of us from the time when intelligence first acquaints us with this fact, to review our way of living, our use of this precious time-capital. So, it seemed to me, Jose's position was based. In his topographical and physical circumstances his case was irrefutable. Not, for him, the well paid job on the conveyer belt, which he might so easily have had. That would have meant migration from his own people, the loss of his freedom, dependence on beginnings and ends far removed from perceptibility in the nerve-wracking chaos of modern industrial expansion, and utterly beyond being affected by Jose's wants or desires. It would have meant that somebody else was using his time. Not even, for him, the ploughs and disks and harrows and seeders and drags and all the rest of the paraphernalia with which I had equipped myself and which seemed so necessary to a man with my background. He could have had them easily enough. And he could have used them to better material advantage than could men whose lives had been lived hitherto thousands of miles farther north. But it would have meant less time for play, for talk, for dreaming – and for thinking, too. Less time, in fact, to live.

This fondness of the Mexicans for play was most entertainingly illustrated in the corral at the end of the railway track, one Saturday afternoon. Four of Scott McKie's cowboys had, the day before, brought up thirty fine young horses. They had fenced them in the corral to await special cars which were to come out to the end of the Spider's Web on the Saturday evening, to transfer the horses to Scott's summer ranch up in Kansas. Saturday afternoon, however, was the one special occasion each week when every Mexican who had any means of transportation at all, put on all such finery as he possessed and rode to town. Soon after dinner that day the usual influx into Rio Hondo began. But first one and then another of the young fellows, attracted by the horses, dismounted, tied his pony, and climbed the stockade to perch with his friends on top of the eight foot high posts. Meanwhile, the thirty horses in the corral were becoming

more and more restive with the fear born of concentrated excitement. They were all quite wild and unbroken, not one of them ever having known close acquaintance with men since birth. Vainly seeking escape from the unaccustomed noises, they quivered and snorted and pressed trembling to one end of the eighty yards long corral, only to dash madly back to the other end on finding no escape possible there. They moved in a solid mass, and had churned up the whole corral so that it was six or eight inches deep in liquid mud. In the middle of the afternoon Scott McKie himself turned up, with the intention of superintending the shipment of his horses by rail.

By this time there were perhaps twenty to twenty-four young Mexicans perched on the corral fence. One of them had become interested in a particular horse, and he inquired of Scott how much it would cost to buy. "So-and-so much," said Scott, "but if you want him you'll have to get him yourself." That remark started the fun! The boy's pals challenged his ability to get the horse, dared him to get down there and bring out the one he wanted. But he needed little prompting really, and in a jiffy he grabbed his rope and jumped down into the mud. Stalking as quietly as he could towards the corner where the horses were crowding, he gently twirled his thirty-foot lariat and at the first throw dropped the loop over the head of "his" horse, pulling with all his might as the rope came round the horse's neck, and then letting the rope go as the maddened animal screamed and reared and stampeded the whole herd again to the other end of the corral. Loud cheers at his accomplishment, and much laughter at his condition – for he was already mud all over – greeted him as he followed up the herd and found the trailing end of his rope. Again he laid his weight upon it and again stampeded the herd. Back and forth five or six times, and I began to wonder whether he was hoping to outstay the horse in a straight trial of strength. Evidently, however, he had planned his strategy from the first. Almost ten yards from one end of the corral was a stump of sawn off telegraph pole, sticking up a foot or so above the mud. And now, when the horse had a number of times felt that heavy pull on his neck and almost seemed to expect it when he stopped, the Mexican borrowed a short rope to improvise a halter, and worked his way more warily than ever to the loose end of his trailing lariat. This time he didn't pull. Instead, he threw three or four quick turns of the rope round the sawn off stump, and then with a yelp and a whistle started the herd careening off again. Of course his own horse didn't get far. Pulled up sharply in full flight, his back legs described a semi-circle and with a heavy splash the horse came smacking down broadside on into the mud. Quick as a flash the Mexican dived at his head, as a goal keeper dives for a low shot only just within reach. And in a moment the halter was in place, and boy and horse were on their feet again. No single inch of either could be seen for mud. Silk shirt, bandanna, linen pants, high, figured cowboy boots, all were lost in the uniform color of black mud. For all that, the sense of exhilaration as he led the now docile horse out of the corral, and the delighted appreciation of his companions, were quite sufficient compensation for his ruined clothes. Moreover, he had started something! One after another of his companions made a deal with Scott for this or that horse, always on the same conditions. Some of them bought two. And in the end Scott McKie sold the whole thirty and drove off to Rio Hondo to countermand the order for horse-trucks to the corral. As for the Mexicans, they had ruined their finery and had become possessed of a bunch of horses they didn't really want, horses neither they nor anyone else could use until much more work had been put in with them. Also, their usual Saturday jaunt to town was now impossible. But they'd had a

real time, and they were well satisfied with their lot as they mounted their ponies and led their newly acquired stock along the trails to their homes.

Another incident in which Scott McKie figured prominently was when he was transferring a very large consignment of cattle from his Kansas ranch to his ranch – as large as several English counties – out at Anaquitas. There were upwards of six hundred cattle involved, and they had been on the railway almost a week when the long train at last rolled slowly out on the last stage to the Spider Web corral. A dozen cowboys had been camped a few yards from our house for two days and nights, awaiting the arrival of the cattle. The beasts were weary and tired and some of them near to exhaustion, but by coercion and cajoling and many smacks and yells they were all finally induced to walk down the runway from the trucks to the corral. They were given a little time to accustom themselves to the use of their legs again, but late in the afternoon the stockade gates were thrown open and the cowboys herded them in a straggling procession along the unfenced road. Then it was seen that ten of the cattle had failed to rise. They were lying about in various postures and to all appearances had passed out altogether. But Scott McKie, who had again turned up in person on hearing of the herd's arrival, knew different. He went round and looked at each one in turn, and then came to talk to the fifteen or twenty of us who had gathered at the unusual sight. "Look, boys," he said, "it's getting latish and I want to get back to Anaquitas. Here's your chance to get into the cattle business cheaply. I'll take \$20 for those ten cows, and I give you my word every one of them is quite all right and can be got on its feet easily. I'd do it myself but I don't want to spend the time. How about it?" We all knew Scott and none of us doubted his word, despite all appearances suggesting he was in error. But we were all small farmers, croppers and not cattlemen, and had neither accommodation nor inclination to take up his offer. He was plainly disappointed. "Boys," he said, "you don't know what you are turning down. Every one of those cows is worth at least \$20. There's \$200 worth there, and I'm offering them to you for twenty. And if you can show me where your farming pays better than that I'll sell out right now and go to cropping myself!" But situation and inclination were still unchanged for us, though we were still quite sure he was speaking the truth. "Well," he said, "I'm not going to leave them where they are, and if you won't buy them I'll just have to spend a bit of time on them anyhow." And he started working on the nearest cow, after taking off his jacket and rolling up his sleeves. In ten minutes, and massage and jerks and twists and punches at strategic points, he had the animal on its feet, staggering a little but now apparently quite all right apart from stiffness and tiredness. "There you are," said Scott, "I've earned myself eighteen dollars in ten minutes. I'll still let you have the other nine at two dollars apiece, and they're all as good as this one. But this one'll cost you twenty if you want to buy it now." And then he went right through the remaining nine in the same way and with the same results. It took him about two hours to do it; but as he mounted his pony to herd his remnants home he couldn't resist giving us one more dig. "Now remember, boys," he said, "if any of you ever comes across a way to make \$180 in two hours, I'd take it very kindly if you'd just let me know the how." And away he went, out to his fine home on the salt lands near the Gulf, to where his boys would be waiting for the "boss". The short twilight was already giving way to dark, but long before Scott and his tired little herd reached Anaquitas the wondrous lustrousness of a southern, star-filled sky would give light and tranquility to ease their way along the long trail.

Just as the savage cold of the northern winter had been a bitter disappointment to me, so the long burning Texan summer was a constant delight. I was out and about frequently in midday temperatures of 110 degrees with real pleasure and such physical benefit, to the astonishment and consternation of those neighbor Mexicans who would no more have foregone the regular siesta at such times than they would willingly have missed a night's rest; while my American friends foretold dire and calamitous results from such unnecessary foolhardy conduct. One day, at one o'clock the thermometer on my veranda registered 117 degrees as I put on my broad brimmed straw sombrero and stepped out into a noiseless and empty world. All day no smallest speck of cloud had obstructed the sun's rays, and now the palpitating earth had become completely subdued. Nothing tempered the merciless heat, and fully two hours ago the last movement of the air had died away. The quiver and pulse of the framework of the atmosphere blurred the otherwise dead straight line of the distant horizon, and over the jungle of brush to the north hung a haze as still as sleep. Not a bird note broke; not a leaf rustled; not a plant breathed; not a blade of grass stirred. Of animate life there was no sign, and even the big red soldier ants had long since gone to ground. The mighty sun worked his will on the torpid and unresisting earth. For an hour longer the scorched and once eager but now completely satiated soil submitted helplessly to the passionate heat. Then, very faintly at first and with no warning of its coming, movement was in the air. Soon movement had discernable direction and had become a breeze, and presently the south east trade wind was blowing freshly from the nearby Gulf. The sun still shone on and his might was still great. But for this day his complete domination was over. All nature appeared to dance in unison at the release and to fill the air with a myriad sounds of gladness that the evening belonged to the earth.

Wild life in the Valley took many forms that were strange to us, and we had many interesting adventures in seeking out animals, insects, birds and reptiles we had previously known by hearsay only. Our dog Rover was helpful in this respect, his loud and persistent yelping and barking often announcing discovery of something he too had never seen before. Occasionally, if his excitement was protracted and seemed unlikely to attract our attention, his valor would get the better of his discretion and he would try conclusions with his discovery. As when we saw him at a distance, with a six foot black snake in his teeth, shaking the writhing reptile as he would have shaken a rat, until all movement left it and the snake was dead. Generally, however, we answered quickly to his calling, to his obvious relief at having responsibility for further action removed. He didn't know what to do on one occasion when he had cornered an opossum in the long sorghum grass. The 'possum, no more than half the size of Rover, was sitting on its haunches motionless, about a yard away from the shivering, excited dog. The rat-like head with its expressionless eyes and the heavy, pouched body were as new in our experience as in Rover's, but it was clear to us that the animal was quite harmless, and its being of a not-too-numerous species, we called the dog off. Unable to appreciate our motives, Rover was distinctly puzzled. He evidently felt he was to blame in some way, either for not making short work of the 'possum in the first place, or for calling us on an unappreciated and too trifling hunt! His cornering of a wildcat near the corn bin brought us close to an animal which was in quite a different category. Rover kept his distance this time. And very wisely, too, for the cat's sharp, pointed, erect ears, and the wide-set blazing eyes, along with an obvious fearlessness and readiness to sell himself

dearly if the dog attacked, all indicated that the cat was a very dangerous animal to tackle and was best left alone. I might have shot the cat easily enough, of course, but again the species was not nearly numerous enough to be a pest, and was probably much more useful as a scavenger than destructive as a menace.

In the brush across the Arroyo javalinas, coyotes, raccoons, and a species of wild dog were all fairly numerous. The coyotes made occasional sorties amongst our farms, after poultry. But even in this respect our luck held, for though we were nearer the forest than any of our neighbors we suffered no losses in this way.

Black snakes were the commonest of the reptiles, which is understandable since they too were not hunted, their bite was non-poisonous to man, yet they were easily able to keep rattlesnakes down in number. In three years I saw only three rattlesnakes, none of more than three feet in length or more than four years old. None of these was allowed the same consideration I had extended to 'possums and cats!

An armadillo appeared on our lawn one day. His gaily colored and scaly, horn-shell back and his placid attitude made him a very interesting visitor. He was unresponsive to every kind of approach, and during the three days he was near us he never moved as far as we could see. I had to protect him against my Mexican neighbors who would have had no compunction about killing him for his shell, which, after cleaning and polishing, would have been made up into a fancy basket, with the tail brought round to the head and fixed in by the teeth, thus serving as a handle. Our visitor disappeared as mysteriously as he had come, but I have no reason to believe he did not go of his own volition.

Land tortoises were very common, evidence of the excellent fare available for them in the Valley. And once, on a big flat-topped mud shelf over the Arroyo, I saw a pair of sea turtles sunning themselves. Very heavy they must have been, for each of them would be fully a yard in length. I could get no closer than about fifty yards, however, for instantly they heard or saw me – I don't know which – they dropped with a heavy splash into the water and out of sight.

Of insects we had always to be very careful. Spiders in particular were quite dangerous, many of the species being highly poisonous. Boots and shoes were a special harbor for them, and we soon learned never to put on fresh footwear without first looking for spiders. The tarantulas never ventured into the house in our experience. But there was a species of short-legged, black, woolly spider, with bright white bars running round his body – which was rounded, and usually about half an inch in diameter – which was a constant and a dangerous pest and for which we had always to be on the lookout. A bite from one of these on one occasion swelled my knee in two hours almost to the size of a football, and necessitated quick medical attention to prevent the poison from spreading. Even so, I was incapacitated for a fortnight.

Flying insects were more of a nuisance than an actual danger. Especially when, having lit our lamp and settled down to read or write after dark, myriads would find their way through the crevices in the thin walls of the shack, and keep us busy brushing them off book or paper. "Chiggers", as the Valley people called them, were a microscopic insect

which abounded in hot, sandy soil, and which were a tormenting pest at certain seasons. Boring into and under the skin, their presence would go undetected until revealed by a crop of small water blisters which itched maddeningly until the water was released, when the sore places remaining would take days to heal. Field work would have been impossible sometimes had we not known to powder our legs heavily with sulfur powder from top to bottom and so keep the "chiggers" at bay. At the same season and under similar conditions fleas were another irritating pest and could not be altogether avoided. When one or two marauders did get past our barrage of deterrents there was no peace possible until they had been hunted down and demolished. We were much freer from mosquitoes than we had been in the north. Apart from two visitations of a real mosquito plague – two three-day periods separated by only three weeks – we saw no mosquitoes at all in our part of the Valley. But these two periods were bad while they lasted. Until the heavy dew had gone, and as soon as sunlight began to fail, it was impossible to be out of doors unless the usually exposed parts of one's person were heavily protected or constantly and vigorously fanned. Animals suffered terribly, and more than one case came to our notice of a cow or a horse or mule being tormented to madness, and crashing wildly through the darkness to its death in some ditch or against a fence. All over the countryside heavy smudge fires were started and animals were turned loose to make at once for the protection given by the thickly billowing smoke. I used this method myself in my own yard, but supplemented it by spraying all my animals from head to tail and ground with a liberal dosage of strong creosote. The fact that they took it quietly and appeared even to welcome it was the measure of the virulence of our visitants. Leonard, who was milking the cow at this time, had to use much ingenuity to get through the operation night and morning in these periods. Fortunately it was not difficult to keep the insects out of the house, and once we were closed up and had made sure those that were already in were destroyed, we were safe for undisturbed sleep even though the night was virulent with the high-pitched hum of countless millions of inimical mosquitoes. Their size, too, was something new to us. Indeed, when reporting on these visitations to our friends back north I dare not simply describe the size of these mosquitoes, but included in my letters a few samples to speak for themselves! I feared a description would not be believed. The phenomenon must have covered a large part of south east Texas, since newspapers published accounts of incidents as far away as Beaumont, 200 miles away, where a large engineering works stopped when all the workers fled before a sudden invasion by thick clouds of mosquitoes. Then, as suddenly as they appeared, the insects were gone from the Valley, and from the time of the second plague, we saw no more until we turned northwards again.

From a business point of view we were severely handicapped by our geographical location in the Valley. Mexico to the south offered no outlet whatever for our products. Between us and the nearest Mexican cities were hundreds of miles of forbidding, unsettled country, mountainous and empty, roadless for all practical purposes and poorly served by rail. Eastwards, only a few miles away lay the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean. Westwards, the flat, waterless and unpeopled arid plains of Texas stretched more than a thousand miles. To the north, three hundred miles away, were Houston and San Antonio, and the same distance farther north still were Dallas and Fort Worth. These cities we had to depend on almost entirely for the sale of our vegetable crops. Occasionally, with special crops packed and shipped with careful protection at

judicious times, we could reach Oklahoman or Louisiana cities farther afield still. But it was all a very chancy business for the small farmer, and quite frequently we shipped consignments for which we received no returns whatever, and had no recompense either for goods, time, or packing costs. Yet it seemed necessary to me that, lacking the steady income which could be derived from a good, commercial-bearing citrus orchard, and which income could be obtained in that way from a sufficiently capitalized small farm, we small farmers must find a way of overcoming our geographical handicap if we were to prosper. We could make a living, and even a good living by Valley standards, from cotton year after year if we farmed our land intelligently. But this seemed a waste of the Valley's potentiality, and to follow that line was to reach stagnation and to accept a situation devoid of hope and social promise.

It was in these circumstances that there began to grow up the idea of co-operative farming, and we lent ourselves to it in Rio Hondo enthusiastically. At our instigation a Valley meeting was called at the most central of the Valley towns, a small place called La Fera. I was one of the two Rio Hondo delegates, and we turned up at the convention full of ideas and good spirits, and with great expectations. Nothing at that meeting diminished our enthusiasm. With true American thoroughness where business is concerned and with that vigor and vitality which is so characteristic of American businessmen, the 150 delegates spent all day tirelessly tackling a prodigious agenda. We set up innumerable sub-committees with specific references, all charged to report progress at the next monthly convention. We voted an executive committee, compiled a roster of approved delegates, appointed a permanent full-time secretary and a president to act for a year, worked out a list of dues and a scheme for soliciting the whole Valley for members. We also had two good meals, told stories and made new friends, smoked lots of cigars and had a really wonderful time! My fellow delegate and I were in good spirits as we drove back to Rio Hondo long after dark. Before going to the convention the Rio Hondo meeting had charged me to put the case for national research into commercial vegetable farming, such research to be made through the Federal Secretary for Agriculture, a case which I had often argued at Rio Hondo. As a result of putting this case I found myself secretary to the political committee of the convention. It was a job after my own heart, and I threw myself into it eagerly. Information was what we needed before we could plan our cropping to avoid the chaos and waste of blind duplication and haphazard marketing. Our two chief competitors for the sale of freshly grown and refrigerated trainloads of vegetables to the great cities of the north in winter time were Florida and southern California. Neither of these two fields was better placed than we were as regards access to the big markets, neither could better our quality or quantity of products if we were given the opportunity to exploit our potentiality, by guaranteed sales. First of all we ought to get some idea if we could, of what California and Florida were likely to put down in crops in the Fall. If we knew that, we knew what thing or things to avoid in order to sidestep that much duplication and waste for both ourselves and them. Next, we needed to know what keeping crops had been or were in cultivation in the big vegetable districts in the northern States, and how the crops were promising and what approximate supplies of each were earmarked for cold storage as winter supplies. Information was what we needed first, planning could come later, as would many developments arising out of experience. Government departments are notoriously slow and in this respect even America is not a striking exception, but by the time the next monthly convention came round I had considerable progress to report and

the work of our committee was highly commended. Things had moved more quickly still with committees whose activities were local, and it seemed that the Valley Farmers Cooperative Association was in a fair way to solid and useful establishment. But from that point onwards the story of the Association is lost in mystery. Nobody seemed to notice that we left that second convention without making any arrangements for a third. No doubt we all assumed that our general secretary would convene us. He never did; and weeks went by in which we waited and expected a call that never came. What happened we never rightly knew. Rumor reported that our secretary had been bought off by commercial interests with a much better job. And it did become known for certain that our president suddenly found himself lifted from a bank clerkship to a managership, which post left him no time for altruistic activities. In any case, it seems certain that the fate of the first Valley Association furnished one more instance of a promising social effort coming to grief through the frailty of men not sufficiently strongly principled for leadership. However, as my fellow delegate from Rio Hondo said during the last conversation I had with him "It was a good idea, all the same!"

Water continued to be our main preoccupation on the farm. Always, it seemed, there was too much or too little, too much when torrential rains reduced the flat lands to a uniform mass of black, sticky gumbo and the roads to impassable quagmires of mudholes; too little when in a few days the rains had drained away and the earth was iron-hard and pulsing with heat until it cracked into long, deep fissures the width of a man's hand. Too little when the barrels in which we caught rainwater from the roofs, for household use, were empty and every drop of water for stock and personal and domestic use had to be hauled every day over the road from the canal.

No longer could I feel safe in denying the experience and the insistent advice of well-meaning Rio Hondo friends, and when my first cotton plants had been mown down, raked and burned, and my twenty acres of cleared land were again bare and awaiting my Fall planting of truck, I turned to the job of bringing water to the farm from the canals by irrigation ditches. Careful surveying was work for a qualified engineer, for only instruments sufficiently delicate could detect the difference in levels or determine the course my own ditches would have to take from the canal-flumes to and through my land. In the event, even the instruments had difficulty in deciding as between the east and the west canals, and the choice of the east canal was finally made more on the consideration that it was nearer than any difference as regards giving a more ready flow of water. Then with my blueprints to guide me and with the necessary permission obtained to pass through land between me and the canal, I started to plough and scrape, and then to push up the loosened earth into low banks over more than half a mile of length. It was grueling work, for each time I turned the water into the ditches the loose banks settled a few more inches, and many times I had to plough and push and scrape again before I had banks two feet high and well consolidated on both sides of my half-mile ditch. Until at last the banks held all the way and I could plant anything I pleased without fear of losing crops for lack of water, and independently of the unreliable rain. Not yet had I storage for water near the house and barn, and another six months of the drudgery of hauling went by before there was opportunity to dig and brick and cement a circular storage well eight feet deep and eight feet in diameter. When that day came, and when I first turned the irrigation water through the rough pebble and sand filters into the cistern, we made as much of a ritual of it as is in the



capacity of people who have their roots deep in the phlegmatic north of England. For, as long as we should stay in the Valley, as long as our new life and our new home should hold us, we were free from slavery to water, man's primary need in the scorched and burning lands of the South. As long as the Rio Grande brought water from the mountains 2,000 miles away, we, or those who followed us, could drink fresh water freely and be refreshed, and we felt justified in rejoicing that one more obstacle had been overcome.

Almost as if I had had premonition, the Fall rains failed that year. Day after day and week after week the sun blazed down from the speckless sky with savage ferocity. Before the ploughshare the land turned up in rock-like chunks, and must needs be disked and disked again before it could be thrown into the ridges alongside which my planting of cabbages was to be made. The ridges were still coarse as my Mexican helpers started to carry and transplant from the nursery beds the 50,000 cabbage plants which were finally accommodated in the three acres I was devoting to this crop. One man passed along the ridges and dropped plants at 15 or 18 inch spacings, while three others followed him in unceasing progress, one jabbing holes in the soil with a pointed stick, another placing the plants in the holes, the third roughly pressing the soil to the roots of the seedlings. Meanwhile, as each six or seven ridges were completed I built a small bank at the beginning of each of these small sections to divert the irrigation water along the furrows between the 150 yards long ridges, stopped the farther end of each furrow, and repeated the process as each section filled with water and settled the soil around the already thirsty young plants. In three days the cabbage planting was completed and all the plants watered in. In a few days more it was necessary to start cultivating; and cultivation and irrigation would have to be alternated every four days, if no rain fell, until the crop was ready for cutting.

This time I did not confine myself to the certainties of root crops, brassicas, and the hardier salad vegetables. I made extensive plantings of tender stuff such as green peppers, squash, okra, cantaloupes, string beans and so on. Any "norther" which might happen along at any time between November and the end of February would wipe out the lot, of course, but if no norther reached us with a freezing temperature it was quite a possibility that some one or all of my long-odd bets would come up at handsome prices! And anyhow, that's the way the world plays the economic game, and in the Valley in particular we just had to get in the game! In the event, none of the stuff survived through January, and I lost time, seed, labor, irrigation costs, and a certain amount of the feeling which had begun to grow in me that Fortune's smile was to attend all my efforts in the Valley.

I did not take such long chances with my tomatoes. This was a crop which I intended to harvest if it was at all possible. Yet I could not delay planting too long if I were to catch the early market. I had to allow sixteen to eighteen weeks from seed sowing in the open ground to harvesting the first fruits, and it was not much use sending tomatoes to market later than mid-May. Precautions must be taken, therefore, to protect the young plants from sharp freezing spells, for by the end of December at latest my seed must be sown. Still no rain fell that autumn, and I had to water down my seed beds before, on Christmas Day, I planted about an acre and a quarter of seed. The seed was sown in the bottom of very deep drills, and a good stand of plants were

several inches high when the first "norther" of that winter was reported approaching. A few hours were sufficient for me to draw the ridges alongside the drills into the drills and so to bury the plants with a protecting covering of soil before the "norther" arrived. At ten o'clock that morning, in the third week in January, the thermometer registered eighty-six degrees, and the weather was as apparently set fair as it had been for months. But by eleven o'clock it was obvious that we were in for a blow, and it was likely that this would be bad. The farm animals suddenly grew restive and nervy. A bedlam of noise broke out in the uncleared brush and in the low woods across the Arroyo, and was almost as suddenly followed by a silence threatening and intimidating. In the clear sky along the whole northern horizon grew a thickening bank of angry dark blue, the condensation of the overhead blues which were now rapidly turning to gray. Still there was no rain and still there was no movement in the air. Suddenly the temperature began to fall. I worked feverishly attending to everything I could, bringing my stock into shelter, fastening down everything movable which I was able to secure, and again and again dashing into the house for yet another piece of clothing as the thermometer fell to seventy, sixty, fifty, forty degrees. There was still much to do but the really essential jobs had been done when the "norther" struck. The low moan of the approaching wind became a roar as it reached us and swept in a bitter gale over an almost empty world. Then the rain, denied to the land for months, poured out its icy floods with cold, fanatical fury. From the terribly precarious shelter of our little shack, shaken now as if at any moment it would lift and be carried away, we peered out and could see nothing but an impenetrable curtain of slashing rain, hear nothing but the howl and roar of the tearing, raging wind. Still the thermometer fell until, at thirty-one degrees, it had registered a drop of fifty-six degrees in seven hours; and in the last two hours over three inches of rain had fallen. Thereafter both rain and the drop in temperature began to abate. But the cold and biting wind continued to search out every crack and opening in our thin-walled house. Utterly unable to fight such conditions successfully, we huddled over our small, oil-heating stove and our oil cooker and oven, and put on more and still more clothes. When the rain ceased it was followed by thin, powdery snow, the first which had been seen in the Valley in the memory of the oldest settlers. With the morning we saw trees still fully draped with foliage, with full boughs weighed to the ground by a thick coating of crystal ice, and from the bush came frequent cracks like pistol shots as some branch crashed, no longer able to bear the unaccustomed burden. The thermometer registered eleven degrees of frost, and it felt intensely cold to us, used as we were to the heat of normal Valley weather. I was thankful that my stock had shelter; and was saddened on my next trip into town four days later to count four mules and three cows dead within sight of the road, victims of exposure to these unbearable conditions. For thirty-six hours the keen frost held. Then, slowly at first but strengthening every hour the sun again exerted his dominance. On the third day the cold land steamed everywhere as we read an eighty degree temperature again, and we were able to get about, take stock of our situation, and exchange experiences with our neighbors.

My hardy truck crops, already well grown, had stood up to the severe punishment very well indeed, and in a very short time appeared to have fully recovered. All the soft stuff that was above ground when the storm broke had gone; but I had quite good hope that my protected tomatoes would be all right when they were unearthed. As soon as the ground was workable I drew off the soil from the growing points of the plants, and in a

few days the combination of abundant soil moisture, boundless soil fertility, and copious heat resolved any lingering doubts I may still have had. I had to take precautions again some weeks later, but this "norther" was much less severe, and by the first week in May I was duly sending to market many bushels and crates of perfect tomatoes. I felt justified in having followed my hunches in this experiment. Prices were good, as they had been all Spring for the many things I had harvested, and again my confidence in the Valley seemed in no way misplaced.

Meanwhile my second planting of cotton had gone into the ground the first week of March, and by the time there was no longer any market for tomatoes the cotton was already approaching ripening stage. This time I had extended my planting and now had all of the twenty acres of cleared land in cultivation. Things were in good shape on the farm. Only one really big job which was within power of my own accomplishment remained to be done, the clearing of ten acres of dense brush between the cultivated land and the Arroyo. There was no real pressure for this job to be done quickly, however, and it was time we took things just a little more leisurely, anyway. I decided to leave the brush 'til the Fall, and to see the country and have some play.

Jesse Walters and his family were our new neighbors in the old Stamm place, and we had many trips with them at this time. No one ever inquired into the antecedents of anybody down there. We accepted Jesse as he was, and didn't know 'til long afterwards that he was a fugitive from the police in his home State, wanted for killing a fellow-worker in an angry personal quarrel. He was quite obviously still near to Indian ancestry, having the black, straight, dark hair, the reddish brown complexion, high-bridged nose and cheekbones, strong, dark brown eyes, sloping shoulders, narrow hips, slightly bowed legs, trim and small feet of the traditional Red Indian. He was unpredictable as to behavior, sometimes moody, sullen, taciturn, almost unapproachable, at other times garrulous, entertaining, optimistic. Never at any time really intelligent, he was nevertheless at all times a first rate mechanic, a wonderful handicraftsman, and a good man on the land. He was also a "natural" in the ways of the wild, and made more money with his home made traps than in any other way. Trapping and fishing were his ruling passions. Born and reared in a central State, he had fished for big game in many a large, fresh water lake, but in all his forty-odd years he had never seen the sea, and when we suggested a trip to the Gulf he was ready immediately. Three hours joggling over rough, little-used roads brought us to the point on the coast I had in mind. Actually, this point was not more than seven or eight miles as the crow flies, but fifty miles of driving were required to reach it. We had brought food, cooking kits, camp beds and so on – and Jesse had brought his considerable and very up to date fishing equipment. It was late evening when we arrived, and there was only time enough left before dark to seek a place for the tents and to get the beds down. We turned in early, and slept to the soft hiss of the warm Gulf waters as they swept gently over the flat sands eight or ten yards away. In the morning when I awoke Jesse was already fishing. Eight hours later he was still fishing standing at the edge of the Atlantic Ocean, oblivious of everything, a lone figure in a vacant world. All the patience and immobility of his ancestors was evident in him as, with truly childlike faith he held his eyes steadfastly on his line. But no success of any kind rewarded his efforts, and as hour after hour went by I grew more and more prepared for the premature ending of our jaunt. Explosively, as I had feared, Jesse's patience gave out. He swore

and blasphemed and raved. There was no other way than to humor him and we packed up quickly and drove home hurriedly, roughly, and in silence. I never heard Jesse mention the sea again; but I am quite sure that that day he lost an illusion in which he had had more than forty years of hope, the illusion that the sea is full of fish.

Some time before the Walters arrived a few of us had built a substantial platform or small pier anchored in the Arroyo's bank and extending some five yards or so over the water. It rested on logs driven deep into the muddy bed, and a few steps at the end of this little jetty led into a depth of ten feet with the Arroyo at its normal level. A springboard similarly anchored in the bank a few yards away from the platform afforded excellent diving facilities. A small enclosure attached to one side of the pier enabled us to provide a place sufficiently shallow to accommodate the non-swimmers and all but the youngest children. Thus equipped, our section of the Arroyo provided a much-appreciated place for recreation. From early March until Christmas the water was a continual delight, and neighbors, strangers, and Mexicans were all alike welcome to enjoy the pleasures to which our little facilities contributed. At weekends especially it was a busy and a lively scene. For us it was a real boon. Every evening when the chores were done Leonard and I, and more often than not my wife as well, went down to the Arroyo and swam and refreshed ourselves. The few cotton clothes we wore required daily changing and washing. We always took with us the clean change we were to wear next day to don when we left the water after our swim, and the lovely feeling of perfect and thorough cleanliness which filled all our being as we walked or drove back through the short twilight was an experience of which we never tired. Often the Mexicans, lacking the clothes changes that we had, removed only their hats and boots and then dived into the water and swam for a little while still wearing such clothes as they had worn during the day.

When the Walters came Jesse insisted on making his contribution, and in a few days he had built a five-seater rowboat which, tied to the end of the jetty, was, like the rest of our equipment, communal property from the beginning. A little later he got an outboard motor. Thus transformed, we could explore by means of what was now a motor boat all the reaches of the Arroyo right down to the mouth, more than forty miles away by water. Nowhere along either bank was there any sign of human life. All the way the dark jungle growth of thick brush overhung the water, broken only here and there by still and eerie lagoons, dim and mysterious under the heavy curtains and festoons of gray Spanish moss which hung from every tree. Long ago the Rio Grande had come this way on its tortuous search for the sea. Over hundreds of square miles it had laid its rich treasures of river silt, and had then wandered away to seek an easier outlet through the delta lands of its own creation. Now nature, avid and prolific, had seized eagerly on the land's endowment, and every inch of surface seethed and exuded life exotic and abundant. The whole range of river lands was at once a paradise and a wilderness, illimitably rich and useless, beautiful and menacing, orderly and wanton, attractive and repellent. For us, the Arroyo was enchanting always, an oasis of recreation and play and varied delight in an otherwise flat and completely featureless country. For Jesse it was a place wherein to fish and whereon to trap. And the brush lands everywhere were places which provided sport for Jesse's shotgun or rifle, without which he never left home in his leisure hours.

It was in the company of Jesse and Mrs. Walters that my wife and I went over to Matamoros in Old Mexico to see our first and only bullfight. Only rarely were these spectacles presented in the little Mexican town across the Rio Grande from Brownsville. But because of the proximity of the Valley towns and the large number of Mexicans on the American side of the river, the shows were always sold out even at the exceptionally high prices charged. And from a commercial point of view this was necessary, since star matadors were always engaged and nothing was spared in any way to make the attraction first class in its own field. Though this was to be our first bullfight we had been across the river often, and we now knew enough to drive down to Brownsville, park our car there, and cross by the row boat ferry rather than to go through the tedium of customs examinations at both ends of the International Bridge if one chose that way into Mexico.

On previous occasions Matamoros had been a dull and sleepy little place, a good hunting ground for curios and for examples of ornamental Mexican handiwork of all kinds, but otherwise interesting only as being indicative of a way of life far removed from our own. This, however, was a fete day, and Matamoros was gay with color and noise and excitement. Saloons were already very busy. Shop fronts in many cases had been entirely removed and the usual businesses discarded for the day in favor of all kinds of catch-penny amusements and gambling devices and games. We strolled into one such converted shop which now contained five or six rows of tiered seats surrounding a ring perhaps ten feet in diameter, where two spurred gamecocks, already bloody and almost exhausted, were being egged on by excited spectators with a financial interest in the outcome of the fight. Setting aside the temptation to pass judgment on the affair objectively, and temporarily swallowing my disgust at the spectacle as entertainment for grown and civilized people, I stayed for a little while to watch how these things were conducted. At the moment the two birds, one white and the other black, were facing each other with heads at ground level, now and then flying at or over each other and striking tiredly as they again fell into fighting position. Then suddenly the white bird started to run round the edge of the ring, chased by the other and by the derisive howls of most of the spectators. To the uninitiated it looked as if it was all over. Apparently, however, this was a sort of end of a round, for when it was clear that the white bird wouldn't stop running until it dropped, the birds' owners caught up the cocks and took them to the "corners", much as a boxer who is saved by the gong is dragged out by his seconds. Restoratives and stimulants were given and there was much sponging and massaging and fondling. There was no hurry about it, each owner being quite ready to wait until the other should declare his bird ready to fight again. When this happened the birds were set facing each other in the center of the ring again. And in a few seconds the black bird, which had seemed so superior in this connection a few minutes earlier, now turned tail and ran for the edge of the ring before either had struck a blow. Twice more this happened and then, in a babble of excited and laughing chatter and shouting the white bird was declared the winner and bets were paid off. It all seemed a little childish and crude to me, an elemental way of gratifying one's natural desire for occasional emotional stimulation, a poor substitute for far more satisfying ways of obtaining personal enjoyment. Yet evidently there is something in this, and in activities akin to this, which still makes a universal appeal in the present stage of social and psychological evolution. For of course pastimes such as these are not peculiar to the Mexican people. Cock fighting still obtains in England in spite of its being outlawed.

And in England it is not yet illegal to organize sport which results in foxes being helplessly torn to pieces for the entertainment of people who have the advantage of a much richer cultural background than has the Mexican peasant.

Matamoros made an almost complete exodus to the bull ring in the late afternoon, and by the time we took our seats high up on one of the many tiers which encircled the arena, five thousand people were awaiting the opening of the show. Between the bottom row of seats and the five-foot high heavy wooden fence which enclosed the ring proper was an alleyway in which the necessary paraphernalia for the bull fights was in readiness, and attendants in position at various points to pass things over the fence as required by the various performers. Immediately below where we were sitting the solid gate which gave entrance to the sawdust-strewn ring stood open, and promptly to time the initiatory procession, heralded by a brass band and the cheers of the crowd, paraded colorfully round, halting only opposite the box containing local and invited dignitaries for the principal actors to be officially presented and to pay their respects. The procession filed out and all was ready for the first of the four fights scheduled for that afternoon.

Picadors, armed with long lances and mounted on old nags, rode slowly round the edge of the ring in single file. Each horse wore a bandage round its right eye, each rider had his right leg fully encased in a metal sleeve. Then the bull appeared and the heavy gate was closed. He was a fine animal, sleek, glossy, jet black from tip to tail. He looked round wonderingly at the jeering, shouting crowd surrounding him before slowly approaching the moving horses and coming within range of the lances. He showed no animosity until the jabbing points began to torment him. Even then he was more inclined to retire with dignity than to go into assault, and the crowd obviously was ready to vote him a non-fighter, lacking in spirit, and a poor subject for entertainment. But the howls and the racket began to have effect and the whipping of the bull's tail was the first intimation of his diminishing patience. He came again in his curiosity within range of the lances, which were brought into play this time with redoubled effort and which finally goaded him into a wild charge with lowered head into the body of one of the horses, burrowing his long, vicious horns deep into the horse's belly and goring with all his might and strength. The horse must have been killed instantly, dead on its feet and impaled on the bull's horns. Instantly attendants appeared over the fence and lifted the rider bodily from his seat into the alleyway. With a final shake the bull threw the already motionless and mangled body of the horse into a huddled mass at the foot of the fence, and looked about him for other objects of attack. But while this had been going on the other picadors had ridden their mounts out of the ring and for a moment there was no other moving object within the bull's range on which he could vent his displeasure.

The mounted picadors had served their purpose and had finished their turn, to be replaced by half a dozen or so foot picadors, brightly dressed and with no protective armor. With the coming of these we soon saw the purpose of four heavy shields or screens which were built solidly into the ground at equidistant points inside the ring itself, about two or two and a half feet from the fence and which, from a full face view, were indistinguishable from the fence itself. For a while the picadors made no attempt to touch the bull, their opening maneuvers evidently being designed to work him up into

the highest possible degree of frustrated infuriation. One after another would stand a couple of yards or so from a shield and taunt the bull with movement and bright color into a vicious charge, and then step quickly out of sight behind a shield, with the bull pulling up heavily as the object of his charge disappeared. Time after time, all very quickly, he dashed hither and thither, always to meet nothing in his charges. When his attacks and rushes began to slow down a little the picadors started to carry the contest a little nearer to him. They skipped nimbly out of his path on the first charge, were there when the bull spun round on not having lost sight of his objective, they dodged again on the second and much shorter-range charge and popped behind the shield once more. A little more of this and the attendants began to hand over from the alleyway short, barbed lances, viciously pointed at one end and gaily decorated with paper streamers at the other. And now, as the picadors dodged the bull's first rush they sought to jab a lance into his thick shoulders, and each successful play was greeted with rousing acclaim by the crowd, while each man who chose a safe distance from the bull's tossing horns was roundly hooted and jeered. Presently the bull's shoulders and flanks were streaming with blood from barbs sticking in his flesh and from wounds otherwise received. He began to tire just a little, and seemed now to be almost resigned to finding nothing as he rushed and charged and tossed.

At this point, probably by signal, the picadors all skipped over the fence into the alleyway and for a few moments the bull, nonplussed, had the ring to himself and stood, breathing heavily, a picture at once ludicrous and pathetic, decked as if for a show in gay bunting, from a dozen lances; and yet destined inevitably for early slaughter. Then quietly by way of the main gate entered the star performer of the show, the matador. He was a small man, grandly dressed in black silk tunic and knee breeches. He came slowly to the center of the ring to within a yard of where the bull was now standing, yet seemingly without attracting the attention of the bull at all. The crowd rose to roar and whistle and shout its welcome to the famous man. He acknowledged the crowd's admiration by bowing gravely all round, completely ignoring the nearby bull. It was reminiscent of a singer receiving a crowd's applause before the song begins. Then the actor turned to the bull and the final scene began. A large red cloth was brought into play, the matador flaunting it before the bull's face in flowing sweeps until the bull began to follow its twists with tormented tosses of his head, and little by little he was drawn into rushing activity again by the withdrawal of the red cloth out of range of his horns. As this stage of the show was reached, even the uninitiated could sense something of the fascination which bull fighting has held for the Iberian people and their descendants through the decades. Utterly fearless and supremely confident, the man dominated the animal as he pleased. Again and again the bull followed the swirling movements of the cloth, again and again a small side step, a curve of the body, a quick turn, a swerve full of grace and beauty took the man just a few inches from a mad sweep of deadly horns. On two occasions indeed the man never moved at all. Standing directly in the bull's path, along which the animal now charged with renewed fury, he swirled his flag along his side and stood his ground with the bull rushing fruitlessly and thunderously after the flag's movement. Again the crowd roared its admiration and again the star bowed his acceptance. Then he produced what I suppose was the piece de resistance of his repertoire. He approached to within perhaps four yards of the bull and spread the red cloak as before and immediately the bull began to move for a charge he whisked the cloth behind him and himself very slowly advanced empty handed to

meet the bull. After covering a few feet he stopped and bent far forward with one arm outstretched and open palm facing the bull. A yard away the bull stopped also, bewildered and suspicious. Very, very slowly, with his eyes fixed steadily on the bull's, the man again advanced. There was a tense, strained silence everywhere. One false move now, one slightest error of judgment, the least sign of weakening domination, and the man would have been pitched as a mangled mass to join the dead horse against the fence. For an instant or two the issue was in suspense. Then, as the man still edged cautiously, inch by inch, forward, the bull began slowly to back away. Exultantly, the matador relaxed and stood erect smiling happily as the whole crowd rose and cheered him to the open skies. It seemed to me that the fight might well have stopped there with all parties satisfied. There was plenty of blood about for those who enjoyed the sight of it; and the brutal and needless sacrifice of the aged horse ought to have satisfied any primitive desire in the crowd to see something killed. Picadors and matador had displayed in varying degree their ability to face personal danger, and had shown in a score of ways the beauty the human form can express under danger informed by judgment. In the end the bull, wearied and wounded, had been tamed. Bewildered and seemingly wishing now to be relieved of any further effort, he stood forlornly quiet while his master was being acclaimed. Alas! He was to enjoy no reprieve and his last moments were numbered. The matador strolled nonchalantly to the fence, his back to the bull, and accepted a rapier from one of the alley attendants. Then, his red banner swirling swift and wide, he induced one more half-hearted charge from the bull, which was allowed to pass harmlessly so that the matador could take up a chosen position almost in the center of the ring. Then he poised as would a fencer, testing the suppleness of his steel between hands stretched overhead. Again, and for the last time, the bull rushed. Coolly, as he had done everything previously, the matador pointed his rapier at the chosen spot between the bull's shoulders. At the instant of contact he swerved adroitly aside, holding his weapon until the bull's momentum had buried the rapier to the hilt in the animal's body. For a few seconds longer the bull held on to life. He braced his feet, and every muscle in his body bunched and quivered in a vain effort to remain standing. Then his knees crumpled and he rolled over to his side, motionless and finished.

The patrons voted it a good show. They discussed the points as our football crowds discuss points at half time. The bull, I gathered, had not been too good; a little unresponsive and lacking in eagerness to carry the fight to his opponents. Still, he had come through creditably enough in the end, and had enabled the performers to show their capabilities. Yes! Quite a decent show!

My own party had had enough, and we were all agreed that though there were four fights on the card, we had already seen our first and last bullfight. The mangled horse had been too much for Mrs. Walters; Jesse, huntsman though he was himself, was burning with rage at the spectacle of organized, cold-blooded slaughter. My wife and I did achieve a little more objectivity. Although we ourselves had no desire to stay longer, it was clear that at least five thousand other people present were not of our way of thinking. This was their national sport, we were no more than foreign transients, with no title to criticize.



As we reached one of the stairway exits the second bull had just been turned into the ring, now of course freed of all traces of the first fight. My wife and I turned for a moment to look at this second sacrificial victim. He was a full blood brother to the first in appearance, but was already bursting to feel his strength. He skipped and capered about and went racing around everywhere at nothing in particular. Suddenly he caught sight of some movement just over the fence top and in the alleyway, where the attendants were again gathered. And with a mad, flying leap he cleared the five-foot barrier and landed miraculously on his feet in the narrow passage. The panic-stricken attendants scuttled towards the big gate leading into the ring, which had been hurriedly opened when it was seen what was happening. With the bull on their heels they rushed pell-mell through the gate and made for the shelter of the nearest shields. But they approached them along the fence side and were thus still within the bull's sight. He crashed in after them head lowered for the toss. His horns were too wide to allow him passage. One crashed through the shield, the other through the fence. He was wedged, fixed, helpless; to the great relief of the hapless attendants. The incident occupied no more than a minute, but the crowd was wild with excitement and there was pandemonium. Attendants were busy chopping boards out to free the bull when we left, a little regretful that even this brave show would avail the bull nothing, that in a little while he too would go to join his brother in the happy hunting grounds beyond the skies. But at least he would depart with honors thick upon him. He had struck a doughty blow at his race's tormentors.

Reference has previously been made to the vital necessity of establishing good relations with the Mexicans if a satisfactory economic result from the occupancy of land in the Valley is to be secured. There are other considerations, too, which make this a matter of primary importance. An attitude of superiority on the part of alien strangers, no matter how honest or even well-founded such a conviction may be, to those whose lives and traditions are inescapably bound up with their own homeland will lead inevitably to ridicule, open or disguised, and then to permanent mutual harm.

Not all of the Mexican characters I met were as carefree or as ingenuous as those I have mentioned. Some were moody, taciturn, furtive; and in anger, madly violent. Yet even this type never in my experience visited their wrath or resentment and never indulged their peccadilloes on those who were generally known to be kindly disposed to the Mexicans in an honestly unpatronizing way. Striking evidence of the differentiation the Mexicans made was afforded one evening when two friends came to visit us, driving by team and wagon on account of road conditions. The team was turned in to the barn lot and the harness just thrown into the wagon. And when after dark and some hours later, the harness was required again, it was gone. My friend never saw it again. He had lived in the Valley for years, and was well known as one who would under no circumstances associate with or recognize the Mexicans. His harness was stolen from my yard, yet all the time I lived there I never lost a cent's worth of property by theft, though I was often absent from the farm for days together. I had no lock of any kind on my house; my barn was fully open on east and west and everything in it was accessible to anyone at any time.

Another experience strengthened my conviction in the fundamental necessity of respect for the Mexicans, and of a reputation of fair and equal dealing with them. One of my

wagon wheels needed replacing with a new one. I knew no one in Rio Hondo who could do the job and Joaquin volunteered to take it to San Benito, thirteen miles away. He duly came back with it satisfactorily repaired and I innocently awaited the arrival of the account. Instead of the account arriving the wheelwright arrived in person a few days later along with six of his friends! All were on horseback, all were a little the worse for drink, all were very truculent and all were armed. The wheelwright demanded his money pronto, "or he'd shoot the place up." It was a nasty spot to be in. I never kept so much money on the farm, having no use for cash so far away from any stores. The best I could do was to offer him a check which was of course his due. Whether he would have accepted it in those circumstances, on my assurance, I shall never know. His English was no better than my Spanish and I'm afraid he didn't understand me very well. But Joaquin, who had left his work on seeing what was happening, straightened things out in a few words, and my wheelwright took the check, thanked me with a half-drunken flourish, wheeled his horse round, took his pals with him, and scampered quickly back the way he had come, no doubt to cash the check and finish off the afternoon in style!

Respect for the law as law was non-existent. There was no policeman; and all of us conducted ourselves according to our own standards. Mostly, of course, we were a community, giving substance to the contention that "the law-abiding need no laws." Such really desperate or distorted characters as there were among us were almost invariably whites, people who were either refugees or who had come so far south to indulge some taste or weakness which degeneration had rendered unconquerable. Thus a certain Scotsman of my acquaintance, a good businessman with a fatal craving for spirits came down from the north and drank away all his resources and himself to death in six months time. This excess was due in the main to the ease with which bootlegged Mexican spirits could be obtained on the border in prohibition days. Another man, our nearest neighbor at the time we left, finished his second gaol sentence for killing just before I met him; and in a few months time was serving his third term for a similar offence. His weakness was gambling, and an inability to take his losses with anything but an insane madness. There was one particular cabin to which the habitual gamblers, whites and Mexicans, customarily repaired. It was near to the Arroyo. One night this man lost all he had to a Mexican; next morning the Mexican was found stabbed full of holes in the Arroyo. Everybody knew who had done it, guilt was easily established, the record was well known yet conviction brought no more than a nine-months sentence for this crime. Complication of a case such as this is furnished by the fact that he was a kindly man at home, and to all appearances a good father to his three children. Yet clearly he had a streak of primitive insanity in him. Probably society was at fault in not treating him pathologically in the first instance. Having failed to do that, it appears weak to allow such a public danger to circulate freely and without restraint, carrying always the constant threat of wreaking once again irreparable harm.