THIS AND THAT

This is a photograph of Arthur Babb, taken in later life. The date and place are uncertain.

Preface to This and That

The most important affairs of life that have made social or economic changes in our time, or that have been of most importance in our personal affairs, are those that we most frequently talk or write about. But there are thousands of things of more less importance that go to make up a big share of life that we rarely mention and never write about—just "This and That," that we have thought not worth mention. Still, we know that collectively, these are the essence of our very existence. Those little things are to life what the vegetables and seasoning are to the soup, and to omit them, life would be only a thin broth. So this little collection is what the housewife would call a soup-bunch, "This and That" grown in my own garden. If you don't like the soup, change the order and I would not blame you. The fact is, when I look over the "menu" of literature, I am ashamed to offer my guest the bowl at all—but it is the best I have. I remember when the Gods dined with Philemon and Bacchus and they cut the strip of bacon and baked the hoecake. The gods, seeing it was the best they had, pronounced it good and would not permit them to kill the goose to add to the repast. So I trust you will not request me to draw further upon my larder—for I assure you that I have not even the goose in reserve. Or is it the goose I have already served?

A. B.

The Death and Burial of Captain Denton

The following is an account of the death of Captain (or Doctor) Denton, as told me by my father, I. L. Babb, who was an eyewitness to the tragedy and one of the party:

In the spring or early summer of 1841, a prospecting party was assembled in the vicinity of Babb's Mill in Tennessee, the purpose of which was to explore the new Republic of Texas and to shoot game, was abundant at that time. The party went from Tennessee to Arkansas. I do not remember my father stating whether Captain Denton left Tennessee with the party or if he joined them in Arkansas—but he was with them when they crossed the Red River at Preston Bend. Using my father's words: "We went from Arkansas through Chickasaw Nation and crossed the Red River at Preston's Bend. There was a trading post there, where they bought pelts from the Indians and other hunters and trappers and sold blankets and such articles as pleased the Indians. There was a crude ferry boat there at the time, propelled by a rope cable.

From Preston Bend we headed south for the nearest settlement, which was Sherman, in the Republic of Texas. There was a pretty fair settlement at this place, with several stores laid out kinder town fashion." he said.[78]

"From Sherman we traveled in a south to southwest direction, just across country, there being no roads to speak of. We kept an advance scout to look out for Indians but saw none. When we reached a shirt of cross timbers, between where Ft. Worth and Dallas is now, we began to look for a place to camp. We were then about two days from Sherman and it had been raining all day and the streams were swollen. To the west of us was a little creek full to the banks." (Doubtless, Village Creek.)

"East of us was a prong of the Trinity River (perhaps the east fork)." It was at this time, about an hour by sun, meaning the sun was an hour high, "just as we were unhitching our teams and unsaddling our horses, a squad of Indians dashed out of the bushes on their ponies and in no time, arrows were flying like straws in the wind. We took shelter

[78] See footnote about the town of Sherman, p. 22.

behind our wagons and horses and returned the fire with our rifles and shotguns."

"After the first volley, they dashed away at full speed, leaving 4 or 5 of their braves lying in the grass—the victims of our rifles. None of our party were wounded. Feeling it was not safe to remain there overnight, fearing that the Indians might return, and feeling that the swollen stream would give some protection, we swam our horse across the branch of the Trinity, putting it between us and the enemy."

"Upon reaching the opposite side of the stream, we saw a brown horse tied to a sapling. We could tell from the size and appearance that it was not an Indian pony, but had likely been stolen from some emigrant. We debated as to whether or not it was a decoy. As some of our horses had been wounded by arrows, this horse was much desired. But who should take the risk of getting it?"

As they pondered, Captain Denton suggested, "Boys, I'll get the horse if you will promise that if the Indians shoot me, you will not let them scalp me." My father said that to a man, they all vowed that they would not.

Denton went alone. He was riding a mule. He dismounted, but before he could unhitch the horse, an arrow struck him in the back. They did not see an Indian at all and could not tell from what direction the arrow came—only that it struck him in the back. Denton fell by the horse.

My father said that this was one moment of his life of which he had always felt ashamed. He said, "We wheeled our horses and swam across the stream to the side whence we came and left poor Denton to his fate. Returning where we had left our wagons, we again began to prepare for camp. It was then getting dark and one of the men stumbled over an Indian squaw that had been shot in the skirmish and a little papoose was crawling over her. He exclaimed that he had found himself a pet and went on to lariat out his horse. But when he returned, his pet was gone. Some Indian buck had doubtless crawled up through the high grass and rescued the child."

The next morning the streams had subsided and they returned to investigate the fate of their comrade. He had not been molested and the horse still stood hitched to the sapling. His mule was grazing nearby.

"We took the horse and mule and Denton's body back to our camp and prepared

for the burial. We dug a grave under a large oak tree, near the bank of the little creek, with our axes and hatchets—almost in solid rock. After removing the top soil, the rock was soft and chalky and easy to cut with axes. We wrapped him in his blanket and placed him in the rock vault, with a large slab over it, to be sure that the wolves did not molest the body."

It appears that Denton's grave was lost for a long time. I remember my father answering an inquiry by Mrs. Denton, for someone who knew where Captain Denton was buried. The streams were not named at that time and he could only describe the location.

My father continued by saying: "We took Captain Denton's mule and the brown mare [as it proved to be], together with his personal effects and sent them back to Mrs. Denton by one of the party that had become discouraged by the sad experience." The party then proceeded on their tour.

In recalling the memory of my father's story, I cannot remember a single name of one of the party except Denton and he was always referred to as Doctor Denton. Nor can I recall the number of men that comprised the expedition. I only remember him saying: "There was a small party of us and we was not prepared for fighting Indians."

He also said that there were a few settlers near where Dallas is now (possibly at Cedar Springs), but did not speak as though there was any settlement at Dallas proper.

After the burial of Denton, the party proceeded in a southerly direction and he commented on the abundance of game. Buffalo, he said, were in herds too numerous to county and deer in small bunches could be seen galloping across the prairie. Wild horses were to be seen in large droves—mustangs he called them, adding that the mustangs were more wild than either the deer or the buffalo.

The settlement they came to was at Tehuacana Hills, which is now in Limestone County. He said there was a well-established community at that place and that it appeared to be the oldest they had come across except Sherman.

Conflicting Reports in History

Conflicting dates, conflicting localities, and conflicting occurrences—these are the things that sadden the heart of the student of history.

There so many places where errors can creep in, that one recording the facts of history should regard them as sacred.

I have just finished repairing the Life of Captain Denton,[79] by Allen, and noted the difference in the circumstances of his death as compared to that related by my father, who was an eyewitness to the tragedy—also Judge Bates' account in his History of Denton County.

What are the facts in the case? And who has made a mistake? How it could have occurred, we cannot say.

As to the ability and integrity of Captain Denton, as set forth in Mr. Allen's little book, it is well-attested to by my father's description of the man. My father described him as being far above his contemporaries and as I understand him, Doctor Denton (as he always referred to him) was at the head of the party up to the time of his death.[80]

This account written from the memories of my father's story.

A. Babb, son of I. L. Babb

[79] At the time he wrote this, Arthur Babb was rebinding old books as a way to earn money.

[80] I have not been able to locate copies of either of the books Arthur mentions but John Henry Brown's Indian Wars and Pioneers of Texas (Austin, Texas: L. E. Daniell, Publisher, 1880), contains a detailed account that also contradicts Isaac Babb's story. Brown says that Denton and another man (Henry Stout of Wood County) were fired on while scouting near a thicket that skirted the edge of a creek and that after he was hit, Denton "rode back up the bank, and fell dead, pierced by three balls, one in his arm, one in his shoulder, and one through his right breast." Brown says that afterward, Captain Bourland, who was the leader of the party, not Denton, "took twenty-four men, went back and carried off the body of Denton." The

My First Horse and How I Saved the World

This narrative had its origin some years ago, near a little town somewhere in East Texas, when I was a little boy about nine years old. My father worked in town at a shop, and we children raised a small crop as best we could, or rather, as best we would. My older brother, "Brother Willie"—as I called him, was about ten or eleven years older than myself and brother Guy about four years younger. Then a whole lot of sisters, and my mother, comprised the family.

One evening in the late spring or early summer, Brother Willie rode up to the front gate leading a dun mare with a little bay colt, that he had got in a trade somehow. They said the mare was an "outlaw." Some said that she had killed one man, others said not. But that she was just about the worse thing wrapped in horse hide, in all those parts, was not disputed. He threw down the long rope and said that I must stake her out to graze and water her each day, as he was at work from home. It was quite a job for one of my years since the water had to drawn from a well - and I was only a little heavier than a bucket of water. Mother offered some protest as she was afraid the old reprobate would hurt me, but it had to be done and the job was up to me.

We dubbed her Dolly Varden, I don't know what suggested the name, but it seemed to fit. I had not cared for her very long before she quit snorting at me and would sometimes neigh an expression of thanks when she saw me coming. Horses are not unlike people. They feel kindly toward those who serve them. Things moved along swimmingly until late in the autumn. One day, I went to care for old Dolly and found she had broken the rope and was loose. I hastened to break the news.

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next morning, Brown added, they crossed “Fossil creek bottom to its north side,…[and] buried Denton un-

Brother Willie chanced to be at home that day and haste to saddle his horse and go for Messrs. Townsen and Sanders (our neighbors) to help pen her—for it was usually a big job. I opened the big gate to the field, as the crops were all gathered, and after some trouble they succeeded in forcing her through. We all felt she was safe, at least for the time being. But not on your tintype! She did not stop for one minute. She went straight to the back of the field and cleared the fence without touching a rail. Then, giving a snort, she waved her pursuers a farewell and made a bee-line for Blue Ridge—her old range.

Dolly Varden was of modern mind. Her liberty meant more to her than her child. The little colt was left behind. Mr. Townsen roped it and dragged, rather than led it, back to the house. Now it had to be cared for and there was no question as to whom the task should go. But the task soon became a pleasure.

I had often wanted to handle the colt before, but it would always run around behind its old mother where it was "verily safe." I asked Mother to suggest a name for the colt and she told me to call it Lucy. That pleased me very much, for that was one of Mother's names. It was not long before Lucy and I were great friends. I always called her by the name that she soon learned. I often took sport in concealing myself and calling her by name, to hear her answer. She would always meet me at the end of her long rope when I came for her in the evening. I would take the rope off her and she would follow me anywhere I went—sometimes so close that she would strike my bare heels with her hooves.

It was mid-summer of the following year that this experience began to take on momentum and assumed a more interesting form. One evening, I laid down on a pallet for a nap. While I was sleeping, Brother Willie came home for the weekend from Jot Longbotham's, where he had been working. When I woke, Brother Willie and Mother were sitting nearby, talking. I heard Mother say, "You ought to give Arthur that colt. He has been attending to it for nearly a year, besides caring for that old reprobate of a mother." I tried to stop breathing. I was sure they could hear my heart beating - to be sure, it was sounding quite loud to me! For my life, I could not hear Brother Willie's reply. I remembered that he did not always comply with Mother's wishes—but sometimes he did. Now

der the bank of a ravine, at the point of a rocky ridge, and not far from where Birdville stands."

what would he do on this occasion is what had me guessing. Brother Willie got up and walked out and Mother was soon called for something too.

I raised my head and looked around. I was alone. I rose from my pallet and made my way hastily, but noiselessly, to the peach orchard. That is where I did all my thinking. In my boyish way, I took in account and weighed every factor of which I was aware that Brother Willie and I were not of the same trend of mind and therefore, but little congeniality existing between us. To what extent he would allow this feeling to influence him was the question which by no means could I be sure of the answer.

It was not my customary time to bring the colt in, but I felt I must see her. When I appeared, she neighed to me as usual, but was doubtless a bit surprised at my early appearance. She laid her chin on my shoulder and I put my arms around her neck and wondered if she was mine. I knew that she thought so and I resolved never to tell her differently, whatever happened.

I started to the lot with her, stopping now then for her to crop a few bunches of choice grass. Presently I saw Brother Willie coming. I was excited. It produced a queer sensation, something close to fear. It must have been very much like that experienced by a girl when she is expecting a man to propose marriage to her. He came up to where we had stopped and asked how the colt was getting on and the like. Then made a remark about it making a nice animal and casually walked away. Can you beat it? I was plumb weak and had to lean against Lucy for support. I was of a great mind to sit down and cry. I wished that I could keep my composure, like Lucy, and watched her as she nibbled away at the bunches of grass, so unconcerned, now and then brushing a fly off her nose against my arm. But I felt that I knew more than she how both our interests were at stake. For the first time in my life I realized that "ignorance is bliss." I thought to myself, suppose he goes back to work and says nothing more about the matter. How can I stand it a whole week! But it was Saturday evening and there was another whole day before he had to leave and maybe the Lord would soften his heart. Whether I mentioned it to the Lord that night or not, I will leave you to guess.

The next day was Sunday. I did not play or take an interest in anything. Guy complained to Mother: "Make Arthur play with me!" But I stole away to the peach orchard

and steeped myself in solitude.

Late that evening, just as I was putting Lucy away for the night, Brother Willie came out again. It did not excite me this time. I was mad. He walked up and said, "Arthur, how would you like to have that colt as your own?"

"Oh fine!" I exclaimed.

"Well," he said, "I will give it you."

"Sure? Mine to keep? No joking?" I queried, not quite believing.

"Yes," he replied, "If you don't believe it, ask Mother."

We went to Mother with everything of doubt. If she affirmed it, there was no appeal. I threw down the rope and made for the house, where Mother assured me that the colt was mine.

There was a dark spot ahead of me however, unknown to me at the time. Thanks to nature for concealing the future—one of its greatest gifts to man.

The colt had grown fast under my constant care and was, by this time, as large as a small pony. Father came home from work a little early one evening and walked out to where I was holding her to graze. He commented on how large she was getting and said that I might begin to ride her a little. He had cautioned me previously, about riding her too soon and making her swaybacked. I had obeyed the instructions very strictly - but this suggestion was received very eagerly. When he walked away, I ran to find Guy and told him what Father had said. I proposed that he would lead the colt while I took a ride and that I would do likewise for him. He came and "gave me a leg," and I was soon sitting upon Lucy's flat back. I felt like Xerxes, as he sat upon his marble throne at the Hellespont. I pronounced myself a happy lad. The next few days we took turns riding until I am sure Lucy was tired of the sport.

About this time, a large meteor fell. It created quite a bit of excitement in the neighborhood. Several smaller ones had fallen shortly before and tension was high. The big one brought the climax.

The people of the community were, for the most part, uneducated. They immediately began talking about the world coming to an end. Several of Mother's neighbors

came in one evening and their main topic was the end of time! Mrs. Sherly said she had observed many things that, to her mind, was evidence that the world would soon come to an end. She said her bean seed ran out until many of the vines bore no fruit at all. Mrs. Aultman said that she had noticed the same thing, and that her cabbage would not head like it used to. Mrs. Townsen was sure that they were quite right and vowed that the sky was not as bright as it was when she was a girl, and that she could not get more than six or eight chickens out of a setting of thirteen eggs. They all with one accord decided that the morals of the people had so degenerated that they were bringing the wrath of God upon us.

I hung around to catch every word possible and could check some of their observations too. I had located some stalks of cotton in the field that had not a bole on them, and quite a few ears of corn with grains very scattering.

Mother tried to explain to them that all the things they complained of were quite natural, and that the falling of meteors was not an uncommon thing and that only a few reached the Earth. But the odds were against her. They quoted scripture and rehashed the story of Noah.

After her company had gone, I discussed the subject with Mother and she assured me that there was no danger. Ordinarily, this would have allayed all fear. But there was too much talk on the outside, and the papers were full of it—which made my mind impervious to logic. It would just not soak in.

About this time there was an evangelist, "Parson Haynes," passing through this section of the country. He chanced to be holding forth in our little town and that meteor, to his meeting, was just like striking a gusher in an oil field. His favorite text was "Prepare ye the way, for the kingdom of God is at hand"—and he always put on the loud peddle. The attendance was heavy and collections good. The little church was so crowded that he had to move the meeting into a large tent.

I remember we had a neighbor boy, Billy Crouch, who had a withered arm. All the women got together and staged a special meeting to pray for Billy's arm to be restored. What puzzled me was, I could not figure out why Billy would need his arm if the world was going to come to an end. But I guess they were figuring on having better success than

old man Noah did. For my part, I surely would have furnished them one for at that time I was verily righteous!

I questioned Mother, asking her if she thought that Billy's arm would be restored after being withered so long. She said, "It might," and that there was nothing impossible with God. Then I asked her to get them to pray for Mr. Hallmark, who got his arm shot off in the War, because he had to work with one arm to make a living for Joe and Tom and Clarie, and he needed his arm much worse than Billy—and besides, Billy was not a very good boy. But she explained that Mr. Hallmark's arm was off and gone. I replied that I did not see why that should make a difference if, as she said, nothing was impossible with God. Then she said that I asked too many questions and she was tired of answering them. I saw she was getting impatient, so I went to the peach orchard to think it over.

The meeting lasted until the purses gave out and many joined the church. Someone told Mother that Brother Willie went up to the "mourner's bench," but when I asked him about it, he got mad.

Some time, a week or two. I presume my mind had become more quieted and I had began to think it was all a mistake about the world coming to an end. I had began to play games, to go to the swimming hole, and to take interest in things as usual. Then, the world slipped another cog. It was a hot, sultry evening, about 4 o'clock on the 29th of July, 1878. I was taking up the ashes. I had gone out to the ash hopper to empty my bucket and I noticed that the elements had a queer appearance. It was getting dark. I ran and called Mother. She stepped into the yard and said, "The sun must be in eclipse." Now what did that mean? I knew it must be something bad. The chickens flew up to roost. Mrs. Townsen and Mrs. Sanders had run to Mother—which robbed me of my comforter. The whole neighborhood looked to Mother to explain everything. As for my part, it sure needed no explanation. It was "Judgment Day," pure and simple. I had heard it said that the sun would be darkened and the moon be bleeding. I looked up for the moon but it was cloudy. I expected to see the blood come dripping through the clouds any minute. But all this time, Lucy had not left my mind and I thought to myself, "Now, here it is, just as I might have expected—just as I got my colt broke to ride, the world is coming to an end and I can't enjoy her."

It began to grow lighter and the chickens flew down from their roost. Doubtless, that was the shortest night that had passed since they were hatched. Brother Guy was hurrying Mother to get supper ready. He said that if the world did come to an end, that he wanted to have his supper first! The next day, the sun showed up as usual - but the peoples' minds were still in eclipse.

The Haynes meeting took on a new momentum and there were many converts. Someone said that John Fairtrace and Billy Graham had gone up the mourners' bench. And someone came in from the New Hope settlement and said that Old Man Holiday, an "infidel," had retracted every word that he had said. And another said that Old Man Quimby had quit cursing and that John Stubs was going to quit selling whiskey at his grocery store. The old women also began talking again. Some said that they had queer dreams that they did not know the meaning of, and they knew of no one to interpret. There was an old "Aunt" somebody up near Tehuacana Hills that had made many predictions, most of which had come true, and was a "dead-shot" on telling the meaning of dreams. She was the 7th child in her family, was born on the 7th day of the week and, some said, she had 7 teeth when she was born. But she had died only a short while before, on her 77th birthday, and there was no one left in her place to unravel the mysteries of the slumber lands.

One woman said that she thought it likely that it was not intended for the meaning of the dreams to be understood, which was generally conceded. But the question that bobbed into my mind was, "Why the dreams?" But I offered no suggestions. I was there for information and I was getting it and I did not care to throw a monkey wrench into the machinery.

Mother assured me that there was no cause for alarm—but we are so prone to believe things which are sinister, rather than benevolent. The daily papers were full of strange phenomenon and the sanctity of the press had a hold of my mind that logic would not unloose.

Over the next few days I questioned Mother very close as to what effect she thought prayer had on material things. She answered me in scriptural terms: "If ye have faith of a mustard seed, ye can move mountains." That word, "faith," always made me

"jump." I felt that was my weakest point. It was not hard to do right, in fact, it was the easiest thing in the world to do, and the most foolish thing to do wrong (and I maintain that opinion to this day), but I thought I might scrape up as much faith as a mustard seed and resolved firmly to believe the whole scripture, whether true or not.

I had made some investigations along the line of prayer some time previous. It was just about 50—50. It was in the early summer when the peaches had begun to ripen—but they were very slow turning. Too slow. Our Sunday school lesson had been on the subject of prayer. "Whatsoever ye ask in my name and believe it, it shall be granted unto thee." I thought that it would not be unreasonable to ask the Lord to ripen just one tree to appease our appetites until the other trees took their time to ripen. I took my position under one particular tree to make my request, but admit choosing the most favorable one. I felt sure that I speeded it up quite a bit, it was so far ahead of the other trees, that the fruit was half gone before the next one came in. But there was another tree in the orchard that we called the October peach. I thought it would be a thorough check, as well as interesting, to bring it in with the other trees. I was a little afraid that the difference between them was too great. It was about the same as restoring a withered arm or growing a missing one. Sure enough, I failed flat.

Whatever my failures or disappointments might have been in the past, I could not afford to let it daunt me. There was too much at stake: Myself, my colt, and other little boys who had ponies, as well as the whole world at large. Something just had to be done.

I resolved to retire to my favorite retreat and muster up every mustard seed of faith that I possessed and take the matter up with God himself. I stole away to the peach orchard and took a position under one of the trees that I thought pleasing to His sight. There, I made a clean breast of the whole affair. I beseeched Him most earnestly to reconsider the rash act that I heard He was contemplating at this important time. I called His attention to the fact, as he was well aware, that I had worked long and patiently to get my colt to where I could ride it, only to be robbed of the pleasure for others' wrongdoing. I could not see the justice. I further called His attention to the fact that on a similar occasion, that He made Old Noah a flat offer to pull off the whole deal for one righteous soul—and I was sure that Parson Haynes could furnish him well over one-hundred brand

new converts. If it was a deluge, as it was before, I felt sure both Lucy and I would be granted a place in the Ark, but I could not see why He was going to burn up the world. Of course, I knew that He was quite a bit older by now, and harder to please. A pictures I had seen of him showed that his beard was grey and that he was losing his hair—and it was likely made in the days of Moses. However, I asked him to be patient and "repent of the evil that he intended to do to the people," as He did in the days of Moses (Ex.22-14).

The Lord saw that my case was just and my request reasonable. My prayer was answered and the world was saved.

After a reasonable length of time had elapsed, I was much pleased and gratified with my success, but kept it all to myself.

Thinking back now, I must have been very much the same cast of mind as Voltaire's "Simple Soule," but admit to being a little skeptical. I never abused the privilege, calling on the Lord only in cases of emergency.

Time elapsed and Lucy developed into a big bay mare, something larger than the average horse of her time. For a little more than twenty years we were companions. She was a pleasure in my boyhood and useful to me in manhood. I have ridden upon her back many miles and followed her many days behind the plough. "Rocenante" was never more to Don Quixote than Lucy was to me. I would not have exchanged her with Alexander for "Bucephalus" or with Robert E. Lee for "Old Traveler."

A half-century has passed and I have never mentioned the above facts to anyone, but have all these years enjoyed the thought to myself of having performed some service for humanity—and the assurance that at least one of my prayers had been answered.

Like almost all real heroes, I always shrank from publicity and have no wish to be lauded for doing something that just had to be done. I only record these facts now that they may not be lost to posterity.[81]

A. B.
Feb. 3 - 1930

[81] Although there is no reason to doubt him, I have failed in my efforts to find confirmation of the natural phenomenon (meteor showers and eclipse of the sun) that Arthur describes in this story. It would be interesting to see if Arthur's recollection of the exact date of the eclipse is accurate.

A Chapter of Life

In the summer of 1885 an estate was settled to which my mother had fallen heir, and which had been in litigation for some years.[82] She decided to buy a small farm and collect the brood that had been scattered the past few years. I was living at the time with a sister and brother-in-law on a farm near Mexia, Texas.[83] Mother wrote, asking us to pay her a visit at Denison - where she was making her home together with another of my sisters. The idea of getting to see my mother and little brother and sister whom I had not seen for more than a year, besides getting a long ride on the train, pleased me greatly. I was then about nineteen years old but small for my years. Thinking back I fancy that I had the appearance of a boy of about fourteen. The crops had just been laid by. "Laying by" means giving the last plowing. I presume the term is still used by farmers. We had quite a bit of preparation to make. We had to find some one to milk the cows, feed the chickens, and care for the place in general until we returned.

A week getting ready seemed a long time to me, and the thrill of the anticipation was beyond description. Beside the pleasure of the trip, there was another thought hovering in my breast; we were going to have a "home" and I could be with my mother and brother and sisters again. We had the money to pay for it and get the necessary implements and feed for the coming year, and I had two good horses. Lucy, that I had raised from a colt, had grown to be a big bay mare and I had a match for her. I felt sure that I had the best team in the country.

After a week's preparation we were all set and ready to go. Wallis McFall, our neighbor, took us to the depot. We got up early and reached town by 6:00 A.M. or before—but the train was late, just as I expected. We got our tickets and it finally came. I

[82] See footnote p. 40.

was afraid it would pull out and leave us before we could get on, but it did not. We got comfortably seated and it appeared to me that the train waited unnecessarily long before starting. I could smell the varnished coach and the news-butcher's papers and fruit. I have smelling things all my life. I knew the smell of each neighbor's house and my playmates. If a boy came up behind me I knew if it was Dave Strickle or Charley Ragsdale by his smell. Each of my horses smelled different. (Even until this day I believe I can stick my head in a car door and tell if a dog has been riding in it within the past month.) The train finally started. I watched the trees and telegraph poles as they flitted past me. The train was smoother riding than a buggy and ran faster than the best horse that I had ever ridden. I was like David Harrum;[84] horses were always my basis of comparison for everything. We were passing through country that I was acquainted with. As I looked out, each familiar scene was associated with some occurrence of the past. I was taking stock and making comparisons of former days. Presently we were passing through the old Manning farm. I looked out at the prairie in front, where I used to stake old Dolly Varden, the old buildings now vacant and going to wreck. The peach orchard was almost all gone. How could the owners permit such a dear old place to pass into oblivion?[85] The news-butcher[86] was passing through the car crying out his stock, "Apples, peaches, bananas, grapes, nuts, chewing gum, candy." Did you ever see so many good things in one basket?

The news-butcher seemed to give me special attention. I was not used to being noticed much and fully appreciated his graciousness and pronounced him a gentleman. As I remember, I rewarded him pretty well. I had a little money that I had earned doing odd jobs—most of which he got much easier than I did. But I learned a lesson: "It pays to be polite."

We were soon at Corsicana, where the train stopped 15 minutes for breakfast. Sister Alice had prepared a shoe box full of fried chicken and biscuits and a paper sack of tea-cakes. I have often wondered why the shoe box is so universally used for lunches. I would no more ask you if you had ever seen a Negro woman wearing a man's hat, with a

[83] In 1885 Arthur Babb was living with my great-grandparents, William O. and Virginia Alice Butler. See footnote p. 44.
[84] I've been unable to identify this person.
[85] See Arthur's description of life on the Old Manning Farm, pp. 32-39 and 42-44.
[86] A "news butcher" was a person who sold newspapers, food, and other items on a train.

fishing pole on her shoulder. Of course you have, It's just a natural thing—but we do not know why.

When the porter announced, "Cor-si-can-na! 15-minutes for Breakfast!" I did not stop at the shoe box. I was getting to be a man of the world and must learn its ways. I promptly alighted and walked in to the lunch room. But I was a little nervous and sat near the door where I could keep an eye on the train. I had just placed my order and was glancing around when I saw the train pulling out! I grabbed my hat and made a break for the door. I was pretty fleet in those days and knew that it would take a fast train to get away from me if there was nothing in the way. It had about two car lengths the start of me. The first block I did not gain a foot. There were some passengers standing on the rear platform. They were cheering me to beat the band. I put on a little more steam. The next block I was gaining. Then the train began to slow up.

I thought they were going to wait for me. Just as the train came to a full stop I boarded it. Then it began backing into the depot, where the crowd stood jeering. They were only setting out a coach! I resolved then and there never to laugh at a man for chasing a train, even if he missed it. I never knew what became of my order at the lunch counter.

This may be what Arthur looked like, chasing the train at Corsicana.

Dallas was the next stop, for lunch. The depot was a little box building sitting where the old Union depot (now abandoned) sits. It served both the Houston & Texas Central and Texas & Pacific railroads. A large wooden platform extended from the T. & P. track to Elm Street. I did not get off here for lunch but stayed close to the shoe box instead.

We arrived at Denison after dark. Mother, Sister Ella, and Charley, my brother-in-law,[87] were at the depot to meet us. I'd had plenty of riding and was ready to get off. The next day I went sight-seeing. Denison was not a large town at the time, only about six or seven thousand population, but to me it was large, with its big, wide streets.[88] The style and manner of people and things was so different to that to which I was accustomed. It was a great trading point for the Indians then. They'd been paid by the Government a short time before and they came into town in great bunches to spend their money and get whiskey. The saloons weren't supposed to sell to Indians - but there was "bootlegging" then as well as now. Another thing that impressed me were the markets. There was the greatest display of wild game that I have ever seen. There were deer, turkey, bear, wild ducks and geese (in season), quail, and rabbits.

It was soon learned we were in the market for a farm and the real estate men gave us many fine trips in the country for miles around.

Mother, with the counsel of my two brothers-in-law, decided on a little farm about 2½ miles northwest of Denison as best suited to our needs. There were 80 acres in the tract, of which 30 acres were in cultivation. It was owned by an old man by the name of Rogers. He was disposing of his wife as well as his farm. In order to make it agreeable all around, he was giving her 20 acres out of the northeast corner of the tract - leaving 60 acres for sale.[89]

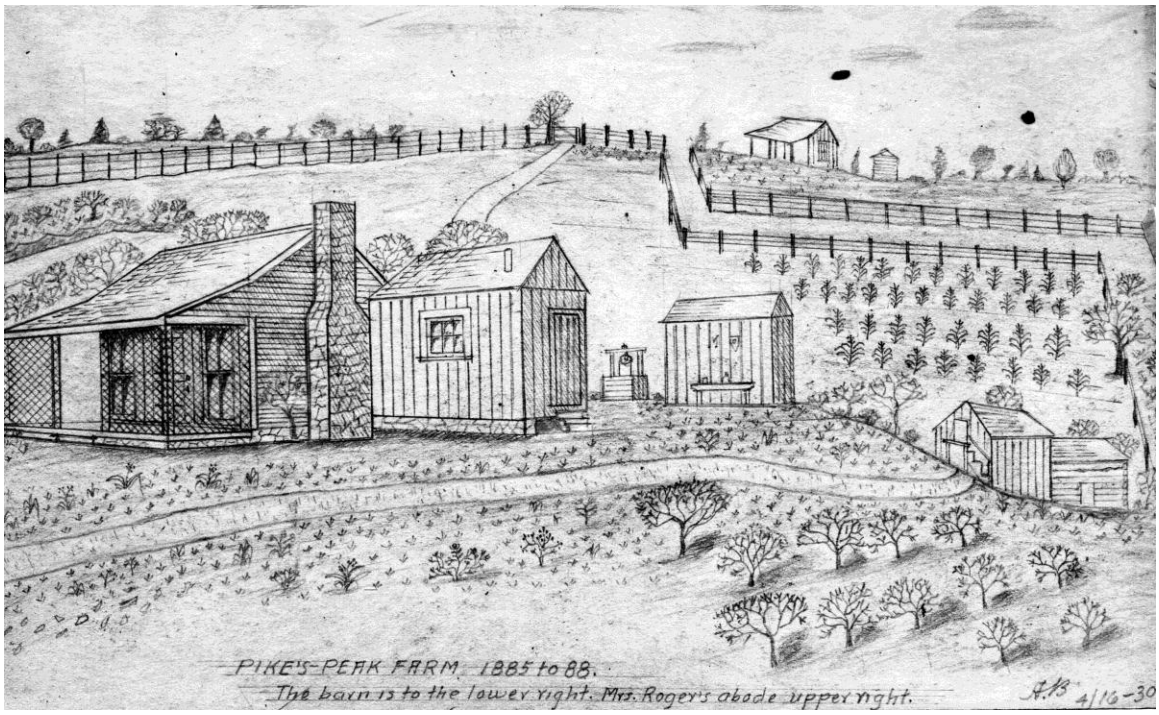
The house was situated on the brow of a big hill which sloped rapidly to north, east, and west. At the foot of the hill a little spring creek wound its way, separating the

[87] Arthur's sister Ella had married an English immigrant, Charles Heason. After leaving her husband in 1883, his mother, Lucy Ann Babb, went to Denison to live with Ella and Charles.

[88] Denison was founded after the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad crossed the Red River from Indian Territory (now Oklahoma) in 1872. In 1873, the new town became the northernmost terminus for the Houston & Texas Central Railroad. A lively description of Denison during its early days can be found in King's and Champney's Texas: 1874 (Houston: Cordovan Press, 1974), pp. 136-154. When Arthur first saw it, only thirteen years after its founding, Denison was still a rough and tumble frontier town.

[89] The sale of this property by Moses A. Rogers and his wife Sarah L. Rogers, to Lucy Ann Babb, occurred on August 3, 1885. It was recorded two days later in the county deed records of Grayson County, Texas, at the courthouse in Sherman. The record confirms the sale of 60 acres in exchange for $800. Arthur doesn't mention it but the deed records of Grayson County also reveal that less than nine years later his mother lost this same farm for failure to pay property taxes in the amount of $3.72! On 7 March 1894, Lucy Ann Babb's land was sold at auction to one W. R. Brents for the incredible sum of $8.22 (back taxes plus $4.50 costs). Arthur, who was suffering with a severe bout of pneumonia at the time (see pp. 51-52) can be excused but how and why other members of the family allowed such an injustice to occur is unknown.

field. In the sketch you can see the barn just under the hill to the right or east. The scene is looking north. The landscape sloped gradually to the front, with no trees, but to the back along the little stream there were a thick undergrowth mingled with trees of considerable size (which you can not see from the viewpoint of the sketch).



The little shack in the upper right is that which was allotted to Mrs. Rogers—with her 20 acres. It is where she took up her abode with a young son by a former husband. Her son's name was Jim Corinth. He was about sixteen years old and not very bright. As I heard a man one time express a similar case, "The Lord did not do very much for Jim." His mind gave way one day, about a year later, and I had an awful struggle with him right at the end of the little shack. The occurrence was in my mind as I was making the sketch. But I am getting off the subject.

There was no cultivation this side of the little stream, except the orchard and a little garden space. The rest of the hillside was a natural lawn down to the woods along the stream. In the winter, when it was covered with snow, I would make a sled and put my little brother and sister aboard and turn it loose at the top of the hill. The sled would start off with a wonderful momentum, but the valley was just right to check it without

doing damage—though it would strike a rock and spill them off sometimes. This hill being so high and steep, my brother-in-law Charley Heason called it "Pike's Peak," and we always spoke of it by that name.

Now I will have to take a few steps backward. Yes, the place was decided upon and the papers drawn up. There were some oats in the shack that we had bought with the place, that I had to go out and put in the barn before returning to my home at Mexia, to dispose of my crop that I had left there. I equipped myself with a blanket, as I had to remain overnight. I stayed with the old man but preferred my own bedding. We worked all day and came in a little late. We had our snack rather than supper and afterward, he proceeded to interest me by telling many of his escapades in life (some of which I thought he should not be proud). Then I spread my pallet on the floor and laid down. Mr. Rogers put out the light but I did not go immediately to sleep. I was listening to the most wonderful "serenade" that I had ever heard. The whipperwhill was making his shrill calls regularly, the screetch-owl was shivering in his lonesome little notes now and then, and then the voice of the hoot-owl not so far away—and an answer a-w-a-y down in the woods. The cricket was chirping his merry accompaniment. Then for no reason at all came the discordant shriek of a night-hawk. This all kept up far into the night. But this was not the last time that I was to listen to this merriment of the night-birds. Many nights of the following two or three years they lulled me to sleep—and I learned to like them. I am sure that Thoreau on the banks of Walden pond never enjoyed his "night friends" more than I at the old "Pike's Peak" farm.

At the end of three weeks, having accomplished our purpose, our visit came to an end. I was to go back and dispose of my crop as before stated, and Mother would take the three children, Sister Ione—older than myself (I would not so state this fact if I thought she would ever see it; for she was as touchy about her age as a sore-backed horse—and always wanted to make believe that she was younger than me instead of older), Sister Annie—ten years old, and Hugh—a little boy of eight. They were to go out and occupy the farm and await my return.

I could not dispose of the crop in the field as I had hoped to, so it was December

before I was ready to start my horseback ride from Mexia to Denison[90]—168 miles by railroad, say 200 miles by country road. You could not ship stock in those days except by the car-load, and that was too expensive. So I had to ride and lead my horses this long distance.

Now perhaps my reader is thinking that 200 miles is not far. No, to you it is not. You ride in a car over good roads. But this was in winter and the roads were often knee-deep in mud, and some days one did well to make 15 miles. And it was hard on the rider as well as the horse.

I remember that on this trip one night I had to ride late before finding a place to stay. It was raining and freezing. My slicker had frozen stiff on me. When I finally came to a place where they would take me in, a man had to help me off my horse—and it was some time before I could take a step.

Before starting I bought a new saddle and slicker. My horses, Lucy and Mollie, were in good condition. Lucy had been with me through many shifts and changes and many a hardship. Now she was to share my new home with me and have a pasture all her own—but of course she must share it with Mollie. There was a long muddy road ahead of us.

I think the first night out I stopped at Corsicana. It was there that I saw my first electric lights. A steel tower was erected near the center of the town with lights placed at the top forming a flood-light.[91] It was after dark when I arrived. I could see the lights several miles before entering the town. After putting my horses up at a wagon yard, I went to inspect the light tower. I thought it a wonderful thing—and it was at the time. I believe Corsicana was the first electrically-lighted town in Texas, but am not sure. I was cautioned not to look directly at the light because it would injure my eyes. But I took a pretty good squint regardless.

It began raining the next day and when I arrived at Dallas several days later, the streets were muddy. There was no paving in those days. I crossed the river on the toll

[90] Arthur probably set out on this journey, which he also describes in his "Life Book" (see pp. 44-46) two or three days after Christmas, 1885.

[91] I have seen a picture postcard of this tower. It probably seemed like a good idea at the time but it was later taken down, I would guess, because it illuminated too wide an area.

bridge at the foot of Commerce Street.[92] The keeper stayed at the east end. I do not remember what the fare was, but I paid and he withdrew a long pole and I passed through. I was bearing northward and came on to Elm Street somewhere and turned East. Ahead of me, I noticed a milk wagon drawn by four horses. At times it was all they could do to budge, and just before they got to the H. & T. C. tracks the axle was dragging in the mud. When the wagon stuck, the driver struck the wheel horses and out came the wagon tongue! The last time I saw him he was taking his milk-cans off the wagon and putting them on the wooden sidewalk. I got directions and turned north some place and struck the McKinney Road. It was about 4:30 P.M. A slow drizzling rain was falling and it was beginning to freeze. After getting out a few miles into the country I decided to begin looking for a place to put up for the night. Presently, I saw to my left a two-story brick residence, sitting some distance back from the road. It had a white picket fence in front. I rode up to the gate and called out. A young man came out and I asked if I could get lodging for the night. He replied, "I'll see Ma." He returned and told me to get down and come in. The hired man came for my horses and the young man showed me in. An old gentleman sat by the fire reading the paper. He spoke pleasantly and motioned me to a chair. That fire sure felt comfortable after a hard day's ride in a cold rain. I was hungry too, and smelled supper cooking. Another young man came in and sat by the fire. He seemed to be in ill health. Presently, when supper was announced, two young ladies came in. I learned they were the daughters of the old gentleman and sisters to the two young men. The table was well supplied and I was prepared to do justice to it. During the meal the lady of the house (Ma) made inquiries concerning myself, the purpose of my journey, etc. That night I shared a room with the hired man and took advantage of the opportunity to find out something concerning my host. I had only to ask a question or two and my roommate gave all the information desired. I asked if the old gentleman that sat reading was the landlord. And what was his name? "Yes," the hired man replied, "That old man is Jack Cole.[93] He's a surveyor. He laid out most of Dallas and does nearly all the surveying in this part of the country." I asked if the young men were his sons. "Yes they are his boys." he said, adding,

[92] This iron toll-bridge, erected in 1872 by Sarah Cockrell (widow of Alexander Cockrell) crossed the Trinity about where Dealy Plaza is today. It replaced the wooden bridge her husband had built in 1855. See A. C. Greene, Dallas: The Deciding Years - A Historical Portrait (Austin: Encino Press, 1973), p. 57.

"That one that sat by the fire, he's sick. They are going to send him out West. And the two big gals, they are his daughters, and you heard `em call the old lady Ma—well she rules the roost. What she says goes! Good ol' woman though."

The next morning, when I had finished breakfast and went in the living room, I asked one of the young men for my bill. He replied, "Ask Ma." I stepped back to the dining room and inquired of the good lady the charge for my keep. She said, "Nothing whatever."

I thanked her for the gracious hospitality and bade them all goodbye. My horses were saddled and waiting at the hitch-rack in front. I mounted and looked back at the brick house in the oak grove. The cow lot and barn stood north of the house with some more oak trees about it—a home like place indeed. I rode away never expecting to see it again.

In the month of May 1926, a little more than 40 years later, my daughter Evalyn, was graduated from North Dallas High School. As I stood looking as she received her diploma, I said to my self, "We are now standing in the lot where the hired man cared for my horses so many years before." But where was my good host? Did the son get well? The home, the barn and lots were gone. Even the grand old oaks had been hewn down to give way to modern improvements. Then came to a verse from Omar Khyam:

How said it seems, this common thought. All things that are, must eer be nought."

After about a week more of hard riding I reached the end of my journey. There, I unsaddled Lucy and Mollie at the Pike's Peak farm that was to be our home for the next few years. (See sketch.) I put them in the barn at the foot of the hill, seen to the right. Mother and the children were awaiting me and we were all comfortably installed in our new home.

[93] See footnote p. 46.