

A VIEW OF THE MORNING

by Irmengarde Eberle Koehler

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3. The Relatives

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4. Girl Friends, and Boys

Adolescence. Margaret and I at School. "Playing out" and the Denny incident. (We move to Beacon Hill when I am going on ten. It was like a break with young childhood) A party goes wrong. Aunt Lina's progress to Dean of a college. She puts us three girls into the college. I major in art, but writing is most important to me.

5. Growing Up

College years briefly covered. My cat dies of a broken heart when I leave home. My two weeks of unwilling teaching. One of my college art teachers invites me to her home in Connecticut for the summer. It's the doorstep to New York for me. I write poetry, and sell the first one I send out to H.L. Menken.

6. Foothold in New York

I get a job designing drapery fabrics. My work is shown at a trade exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. I look for an editorial job, however. Get a \$15. a week associate editorship on the old Brooklyn Eagle's children's magazine Section. Can't live on that, and so go into editing in the adult magazine field. Meanwhile have been writing children's stories for my own satisfaction. I illustrate them and then sell the book to Stokes. Under protest I sell it outright for \$150! It's successful, but no more money for me. I write only for my own pleasure for some years then. I do quite well in adult magazine editing. Become editor of a women's magazine, joined by Pictorial Review. Literary

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I

A Mixed Blessing

"Don't waste your time thinking about becoming a writer," my Aunt Lina told me. "The chances that you'll succeed are just about nil."

I was eight years old. I had a good deal of respect for her, but I didn't believe her.

A few months earlier I had been planning to have a horse ranch. My oldest sister had laughed at me and said I couldn't because I didn't have the money. And what would I do with the horses I raised she wanted to know. I explained reasonably enough that I would ride and pet them, and that I would sell some if I had to.

Now my Aunt Lina wanted an equally good response from me. But I didn't have anything to say. I was determined to be a writer when I grew up -- especially for children. I didn't want to discuss it with her and be discouraged. I knew her verbal capacity -- she could outargue me any time -- and her high position as an adult was in her favor too.

I had given up the plan to have a horse ranch without a struggle some weeks ago. But the idea of writing which had started earlier, persisted then and long after. A great many years later it did become a very important part of my life.

Aunt Lina made her firm remarks that distant day because she wanted me to make a good living in the future. She didn't want me to fool around with the arts, which were known to be uncertain in that respect. She admired all the arts, wanted my two sisters and me to know as much about them as possible for our enjoyment, and because of their educational and cultural value. But there it should stop. When one knows the family situation as it was then, and even a little about the generations before, one can well understand her point of view, even if one may not fully agree with it.

My family came from a long line of teachers, ministers and physicians in Europe. A great-great-grandfather was a companion to a prince in one of the small kingdoms of which Germany was composed in his time. He attended Heidelberg University with the prince and helped him along enough so that he was able to pass. ^{was} These facts were mentioned in the family. I thought of ^{it} ~~it~~ almost as part of a fairy tale. I liked to imagine the two boys playing together in the King's castle, or perhaps at dinner with a whole roast deer on the table.

My great-grandparents had come here in 1848, idealists in search of freedom of mind and intellect. They wanted to live in a young, growing democracy rather than under the militaristic, imperialistic government of their old homeland. They settled in Texas with their shipments of books and pianos taking precedence over the plows

and hay rakes.

My maternal grandfather, William Perlitz, did not like farming. It did not give him the sense of freedom his parents and grandparents had dreamed of. But he saw no way out of it since his family had settled on this rich earth of the Texas prairies. When as a young man he married my grandmother, he bought land of his own some fifty miles from San Antonio which was then Texas' biggest city. He was determined to make the land pay so that he could at least send his children to city schools, colleges or universities, and help them rise in the professions, and regain positions in life such as his forefathers had held.

He needed only a little luck to carry this out -- a few sons at the beginning, boys who would grow up to help him in the years before they would go off to get their higher education. So he and my grandmother hoped ardently for a son as a first child.

Instead, they had my mother, Louise, and she was followed by six other daughters, one after the other. Only at the very last, when my mother was almost grown up, did they have a son. My grandfather battled the land alone; and he died in his late forties, probably from exhaustion combined with a winter illness.

Grandmother adored him and was devastated. But she had to gather herself together for she was the sole head of the family now.

My mother, Louise, and the next oldest sister, Marie, were already married at the time. But there were five girls still at home, as well as the young son then about twelve years old. It was clear that grandmother could not run the farm with them, so she quickly decided to move to the city. It gave her comfort to know that in doing

this she would be carrying out her husband's most intense wish. There her daughters, with hard work and serious application, would be able to achieve something worthwhile.

Fortunately Grandmother was able to sell the neat, prosperous farm at a good price. The family immediately packed up and moved, using the rather new railroad that stopped at the nearby country station. In San Antonio she rented a house while she looked things over, then bought a beautiful acre of land. It was far out on Maine Avenue at the very edge of the city, yet only about three blocks from the final loop of the streetcar line. She had a two story house built, gray and white with a little gingerbread trim. And here the real struggle of my three young middle aunts, in their upper teens and early twenties, went forward full force.

It was just before the turn of the century -- a time when respectable or interesting jobs for women were hard to come by. Teaching was the one profession open to them. My aunts decided they would not stand still at the elementary school level, but would become college and university professors.

Very bright young Aunt Lina was the most ambitious, the most endowed with physical and nervous energy. Aunt Anna did not take part in the struggle. She was delicate, shy and often did not feel well. The rest made quite a plan for themselves -- a plan for which they needed money -- the one thing they didn't have. So they decided to take turns, two of them teaching while the third attended college or a school. Another year they would change parts. And whoever worked must send some to the student sister and some home for grandmother. As it looked to them they would be able to manage this way.

but just barely.

Meanwhile my mother and father had been living near San Antonio with their two little girls who were two and three and a half years old. My mother was the favorite of the family. Being the eldest, she had helped bring up all the rest, and apparently she had done it with gayety, fairness, and fondness. She came back to her mother's house when I was about to come into the world, and was happily welcomed. The attitude of all her sisters was, "For heaven's sake, have a boy." I was born in a hospital in the city on a night in mid-November -- another girl. A birth is often spoken of as a blessed event. Mine was a mixed blessing indeed.

My mother did not recover well, and I was frail and would not drink the milk mixtures the family doctor devised for me. Aunt Anna took me to her heart and, helping my mother, watched me and cared for me day and night. I was to be called Louise for my mother, but everyone just called me Baby because that is what I was then.

When I was only a few months old my mother died. And about six months later my father was killed in an accident. It was a complete tragedy for us children, and a disaster for all concerned.

We, Louise's three children, were now homeless. My Aunt Anna claimed me as hers. And my grandmother hurried to our dead father's home and brought the other two children back with her. She was going to keep us all three and raise us.

I have been told the details of all this many times. The aunts reacted intensely. Gentle Aunt Julia who had rushed home from a teaching job near San Antonio, burst into tears at the specter of more helpless young to support. Not that she was untouched by our

plight, but the undertaking seemed absolutely impossible to her. Letters soon came from the other two working, studying aunts in response to the news. They were equally appalled. Aunt Elsie said only a few words -- but in a hopeless and resigned way. Aunt Lina's letter was like a cry of indignation. She, Elsie and Julia were already breaking their necks to get ahead, she **wrote**, and grandmother must not expect them to take on this additional load. No! Definitely, no!

Grandmother answered calmly, firmly, that she would not give us up. Where we went, she would go. Aunt Anna agreed completely.

"You!" Aunt Lina wrote to her stay-at-home-sister, "You're not doing anything to pull the family out of its slump! So who cares what you think." And dismissing her with this, she turned her correspondence to her mother again with renewed energy. The family could not keep us, she reiterated. The argument went on when she came home for Christmas and again for her summer vacation. She would not give in.

In a way she never did. Nor did Grandmother, for that matter. She kept us. Aunt Lina fought on about it, but she almost continually sent the most money, hard-earned and really needed by herself, to keep us all going. It set her back considerably in precious studying time, and so in achieving her goal.

Meanwhile, I, the infant, had been barely managing to stay alive. Aunt Anna did everything she could to save me. She cuddled me, she held me close to her own body at night to keep me warm. Finally she tried a different food from what the doctor had suggested. She gave me some sweet condensed milk well diluted with boiled and then cooled water. To this I took like a bee to honey and pollen,

and from then on I began to thrive.

At first my sisters and I were not too aware of the troubles around us. Our unhappy studying, teaching aunts were away from home a large part of the year, and we were often alone with the two people who wanted us, loved us, and were intensely protective of us. And as they were the center of our lives, there was peace and tranquility. I seem to be leaving out our youngest aunt, Meta, and the adolescent uncle, Eric. But they were rather colorless, and neither friendly nor unfriendly to us children. ~~So~~ they did not count greatly.

As I was so very small when I lost my mother, I of course have no memory of her at all. No one was closer to me than my Aunt Anna. Elizabeth, the middle sister, also very young then, attached herself to Grandmother. My eldest sister, Hulda, was old enough to remember her parents; and from the beginning she was therefore a little withdrawn from her new, adopted family. A little of that remained in her all her life.

Actually Aunt Anna was the only one whose life was improved when we three little girls fell into the joint family lap. Now at last there was a real need for her at home, for Grandmother, alone, could not manage us children, as well as her garden and the household. Her son helped her a little with the grounds, but that was not enough. Aunt Anna, a delicate, small slender person with blue eyes, light, brown hair and an infinitely sweet expression on her face when she was happy, looked after all three of us children and it kept her busy, especially as she also sewed our clothes and her sisters' and mother's too. She treated us three girls with equal fairness, and a great deal

of devotion.

It has been said many times that to write well for children one must have an unusually vivid memory of one's own childhood and growing-up years. It is also true, of course, that many people with such clear recollections have not become writers at all, and again a certain number are among those comparatively few who do not wish to.

For me many large and small incidents going very far back have left their lasting imprint, and many have become parts of my children's books, or adult short stories. Other memories I recognize well as having colored my work in one way or another.

For my earliest recollection, I am indebted to a cow. From my description of the area, the animal and other details, my family is certain that it happened when I was only about a year and a half old. The cow was grazing in a fenced-in lot across the street from some people my aunt was visiting with us. My sisters must have decided to investigate this animal who was not unlike others we had probably seen, but who was a stranger to us. So they took me between them, each taking one of my hands, and pulled me along with them. We went to the barbwire fence, lifted the lowest wire and crawled under. We walked a few steps, then stood and gazed at her. We had never been so close to a cow before with nothing between her and us, and this made her look unusually huge. I also noted the natural weapons on her head and found them alarming. Puzzled at our intrusion, the cow looked at us in some surprise and took a step toward us. We fled immediately. My sisters having longer legs could run faster, and they dragged me with them so that

I lost my footing. Under the wire we went and, safely on the other side, felt exhilarated at having saved ourselves. I am inclined to think too that we admired ourselves for having risked an adventure so dangerous.

Other, somewhat later memories come to my mind even more clearly, and more importantly, of course. The cow is of interest because she goes so ~~very~~ far back in time. I remember that my awakening years -- years of early childhood -- were superb. To me our house and grounds on Laurel Heights seemed the most desirable on earth. Everything was fascinating and beauty could be found in a hundred places. Everywhere there were things that needed investigation, places for letting out one's imagination, and also for inventing and making things, for playing, running and jumping.

Our grounds immediately around the house were covered thickly with Bermuda grass, wonderful to run across, shod or barefooted, or to lie ~~in~~ on one's back, and look up into the blue sky, and sometimes the stars at night. Along the walk and around the sides of the house, handsomely leafed shrubs and many flowers bloomed in their seasons, for Grandmother had very green thumbs indeed. Two rather low, broad Chinaberry trees stood on the sides of the white picket gate, all of great value to small children. The gate we used for swinging back and forth, the Chinaberry trees to climb.

Toward the back of the grounds lay a vegetable garden where beans, peas, tomatoes and ochra grew. Asparagus stalks pushed themselves up through the rich black earth along the back path. All fine to look at and very good to eat.

And we had domestic animals, as almost everyone in the

Texas towns and cities had in those days, except the people living in the most densely built up central parts of a town. Far back on our large lot there was a fenced-in barn with a stall for a horse -- our beautiful bay, Hansie. And there was room for the surrey he took us to town in; in the next stall was our Jersey cow. A flock of chickens dwelt back there too, some of them with delightfully individual personalities. A gray and white cat came from some distant family that did not want him, and attached himself to us, as we did to him.

Ours was a corner lot, and our house faced Main Avenue and the east where I often saw the sun rise so magnificently. To the south of us a few houses stood here and there with many undeveloped, overgrown, lots in between. We could see none of the neighbors' places except when we looked out of our upstairs windows above the trees and shrubs.

Along the north side ran Summit Avenue and on the far side of it lay miles and miles of wild brush land. Mesquite, huisatche, wild laurel and persimmon trees, white brush and agarita berry bushes grew there, and there were ~~some~~ patches of tall, broad-leafed cactus. Many of the bushes and low trees bloomed profusely in spring and some with great fragrance. The best of these to look at were the blue-purple laurel flowers, and histache trees covered with bright yellow fluffs. And there were wildflowers in profusion close to the ground -- bluebonnets, and a dainty scattering of pink wild flox, winecups and buttercups. Later in summer and autumn all kinds of yellow flowers bloomed. We were always picking flowers and putting them in vases or glasses to set on tables or on a windowsill. Even

the big beautiful flowers of the low pin cushion type of ground cactuses, were picked and set in bowls of water.

But the brushland's beauty was not its only charm. It was also a place throbbing with mysterious life the year round. Wild creatures lived there -- jack rabbits, cottontails, coyotes, opossums, and long legged birds called road runners. Of course there were flying birds of many kinds -- mocking birds, sparrows, cardinals, besides the millions of insects. The coyotes we seldom saw, but their howls or barks often carried far over the land in the stillness of the night, filling me with wonder at the strange sadness and longing in their voices.

The wild creatures had the whole place to themselves. For no one had cause to go into such a dense, low wilderness. We children had been especially warned against going in more than a few feet. We knew one could get lost there easily, and we had no intention of doing that. In any case when playing alone I always stayed within sight of my intensely loved home.

When other children were with my sisters and me we ran around the neighborhood, playing ~~the~~ the open greenery of the lots between houses, and along the weed grown edge of the streets where the only traffic consisted of a vegetable man's wagon three times a week, the daily postman, and a passing buggy, or surrey or hack once or twice a day. It was a great area for playing. But the other children never went into the brush to the north.

We avoided Aunt Lina as much as possible in the summer, ^{as she was not here} Whenever she looked up at us, from the pages of a book, she was apt to make some critical remark or other. It might be about our hair,

in disaray because of getting brushed by branches while we played our various games; or she decried the way we walked or ran. Again she might remark that our hands needed washing, and worst of all that our feet were too big. We often got some children to let us measure our feet against theirs, and felt good when the other child's feet were the same size or bigger. But Aunt Lina's comments had a way of digging sharply into one and making one uncomfortable anyway. About the only thing she didn't criticize was our singing around the piano, with Aunt Anna playing for us.

Aunt Anna taught us a lot of songs, and she let us take different parts: Hulda was the soprano, I the mezzo-soprano, and Elizabeth sang alto. That Aunt lina liked -- that, and our reading.

II

Fact and Fantasy

It is invaluable for anyone to be brought up in a bookish family, but especially for a child with a bent toward becoming a writer.

Aunt Anna continually got books from the public library for herself and us. My sisters, being older, of course could read before I could. But I was very eager to learn. Many a sunny morning I sat at a little table under a tree after my sisters had left for school. Here I learned from Aunt Anna about words and the beginnings of what one can do with them, and I felt a thrill.

Among the things my aunt read aloud to us were bits from various nature studies and observations, and all kinds of children's fiction such as Hans Brinker or The Silver Skates, the Peterkin Papers, Alice In Wonderland, and many fairy tales -- Grimms, Andersen's and others. And I had a subscription to a magazine called Little Folks which was not outstandingly good, but it was very satisfying to get it in the mail every month, addressed to me. Sometimes one of the several other aunts read a work by Dickens, Shakespeare, Goethe or perhaps Hawthorne or Flaubert to Aunt Anna while she sewed for them. And I listened to that too. Even when I did not understand the story at all, the beautiful,

and girl living three or four blocks south, and the older of the six Murphy children who lived some distance to the east. There was a good game I invented at six while the others were at school. It was about a witch who, when she caught you, stung you and put you in a trunk molded of mud. I got the fearsome idea from watching mud-dauber wasps make their nests and stock them with numbed insects for their young to eat. It became a very popular game. We had a home base, or safe circle, drawn in the road or a clear spot in a lot. And there was so much vying for the position of witch that we had to draw lots the first time around.

With my middle sister, Elizabeth, I also played with dolls a great deal in between everything else we did. We were extremely good parents, keeping them freshly dressed, and regularly well-fed, and giving them the same kind of warmly affectionate attention we got from our Aunt Anna and Grandmother. Missing a father ourselves, we felt we could at least invent good ones for our dolls. We worked at it, but the fathers never turned out to be very real. Nebulous men, without definite characteristics, they were fuzzy and unsatisfactory. I was continually looking for something better for my dolls and myself.

It was always good to be outdoors -- except in the middle of the day. Then the Texas summer sun was too hot even for children who are accustomed to it. It was a glaring, stinging heat, and usually absolutely breathless. We were glad enough to stay indoors for a while.

In July and August there were thunderstorms almost every afternoon. Billowing black clouds pushed up over the horizon,

growing larger and more threatening moment by moment. The birds would stop singing and take shelter. In the silence I watched fearfully from our windows as jagged lightning crackled and splintered sharply through the purple blackness. And the clouds, with the rain already beginning to fall, moved upward until they were directly over our heads. Then the full force of the rain would break upon us. ~~It~~ Often^{it} was almost like a cloudburst; and again and again came the noise of the thunder -- a vast cacophony of explosive crashes and angry rumbles.

I was always terrified, certain that the lightning would strike us as we sat there helplessly in our dear house. In the afternoons, at the first violent crack of thunder, I ran to my Aunt Anna and clung to her. Yet even in my fear, I saw a stunning, elemental beauty in the storm.

Afterward there was always the good time. The bright sun broke out dramatically from behind the receding blue-black clouds, making a great contrast of light and dark. It set the billions of raindrops on trees and bushes and grass to sparkling. We took off our shoes and ran out to wade in pools on our grounds and in the quiet, empty street. We saw the summer-dry earth revive, white brush flowers and rain lilies suddenly opened, wide, lovely and fragrant. The air, washed clear of heat, was exciting in one's lungs. The birds were out again, flitting, bathing in the pools, twittering and warbling. It was a glorious time.

My fear of the storms, however, was not lessened by the memory of these pleasant aftermaths when next our area was threatened by one. All through the summer days, there was this happiness and this fear.

We had been reading Pope's *Odyssey* every Saturday for some time now. As the story moved along I had become more interested than ever before in the very human gods of the ancient people of Greece.

On one particularly hot, still afternoon, Aunt Anna again called us children to bring chairs out to the porch. She would read to us again. She sat in a rocking chair, dressed in a thin, cool, dimity dress, her hair neatly knotted on top of her head, a pompadour in front. Curly wisps escaped and lay lightly on her forehead and against her cheeks. We drew close around her. The air was still. Not a leaf in the rose vine stirred.

My aunt read: "The saffron morn with early blushes spread, Now rose refulgent from Tithonus bed; With new born day to gladden mortal sight, And guild the courts of heaven with sacred light."

I liked that...She read on and came to parts about Zeus' thunder-hurling propensities. He was both alarming and exciting. For a moment I thought of making him my husband and the father of my doll children. Maybe then I could influence him to stop throwing his thunder. But I quickly decided he was too overwhelming a personality. I would ^{not} be comfortable with Zeus.

We came to the part where Zeus was appealed to by other lesser gods and finally agreed that Ulysses, who was being prevented from going home by various mythological persons, should be rescued and returned to his home -- a thing I felt Zeus might have thought of by himself, and a little earlier.

"The patient man shall view his old abodes," Aunt Anna

read of Ulysses, "In twice ten days shall fertile Scheria find,
Alone and floating to the wave and wind." Zeus, having made up
his mind about this, Aunt Anna read on, sent for Hermes, the messen-
ger of the gods, and told him to go to the island of the nymph Galy-
pso who was holding Ulysses captive with her charms. Hermes was to
give her Zeus' message that she should set Ulysses free. Hermes had
a pair of small wings on each of his heels. With this uncertain
equipment he set forth through the skies.

Now my Aunt Anna got up and brought out a book on Greek
art, and showed us Praxiteles' statue of Hermes carrying his brother,
Dyonisus. I became very much interested in Hermes. He looked beau-
tiful, strong, noble and kind. I began to think he was the one who
would be a good father for my dolls, and husband for me. Hermes
had a very worthwhile position with the powerful Zeus. It was clear
that he was more like a Secretary of State for Zeus than an ordin-
ary messenger. And though those little wings on his heels did look
inadequate, they worked, and that was what counted. His ability to
fly was nice, and made him exceptionally desirable in an age when
there were as yet no commercial airplanes. Upon questioning my aunt
further, I found that he was also in charge of commerce, invention
and athletics, and that he was concerned with music. There really
couldn't be a better choice of a husband. I took him on.

Only a few minutes after I made this arrangement the
afternoon's thunderstorm began with a low, distant rumble. Then
came the usual loud and sharp crack, and the flash of lightning.
Silently I called on my husband Hermes, now, asking him please to go
and ask Zeus not to keep on throwing thunderbolts around our neigh-

borhood. And truly the storm seemed less violent that day, and passed sooner. For this I fully credited Hermes.

Now that I had him, there no longer was anything fuzzy or uncertain about my husband, and my dolls' father. He became tremendously real to me as the days went on. I let him become a nice combination of a Greek god and a modern man attending to his own small business in San Antonio. I made him the owner of a grocery store, locating it somewhere to the south of us among the trees and bushes at the side of Main Avenue. With this enterprise, and no doubt some salary from Zeus, he supported my doll family and me well.

He became life-like to my sister Elizabeth too, and she quite envied me him. I loved this responsible, good man who loved me and his children. It turned out that he was a little bossy at times, but this seemed natural in one of such stature, and so well connected. Actually I rather liked that quality in him, it was a measure of his importance and also seemed to establish his paternal qualities more firmly.

The few neighbor children soon got to know Hermes, of course. None of them knew anything about Greek mythology, however, and they were somewhat at sea about him and his remarkable habits and powers. But they accepted him, and were impressed with his idiosyncrasies.

In a way my Hermes was a father figure who helped me fill a void. Aunt Anna and Grandmother, jointly, took the place of my mother pretty well, but there was no man in the family to fill in for my lost father.

Aunt Anna found my Hermes quite acceptable, but when Aunt

Lina heard about my marriage to him she laughed until there were tears in her eyes. One of the nice things about her was that, with all the hardships she went through, she had a basic enjoyment of life, and was often quick to laugh. Though during those hard years her laughter was always brief.

Aunts Julia and Elsie never read to us, but when they were home they were quite affectionate, though in a rather stiff, withdrawn way. Aunt Lina had practically ignored us in the earliest days, but about the time of Homer's importance to us, she showed interest in our progress in reading and writing, and in our general education. After a while she quite often read parts of Pope's poetry to us too, or, when she wanted to be amused, Kipling's Just So Stories.

On the whole, Aunt Lina was almost continuously absorbed in her studies. She would study for endless hours. But often, as if seeking a sudden change, she would put her books aside and go out into the garden where Grandmother was contentedly at work. There Aunt Lina would start an argument. You could hear her voice ring out, not loud but clear, and very dramatically. Grandmother's voice would come only at long intervals, and in a low conciliatory tone. What the subject was, I did not want to know, for I ^{would} ~~did~~ not ~~want to~~ admit to myself that I feared they might be talking about the undesirability of keeping us children.

Sometimes such family arguments would start among the Aunts when they were studying at night while we children were upstairs in bed. I would be happily listening to the wind in the leaves of a tree outside my window, and I was happy when I heard

the scampering of a mouse in the walls of my bedroom or under the floor boards. I loved the tiny, delicately formed creatures, and was glad when they were in such a safe place where neither people nor the cat could get them. Then the arguing would begin downstairs, the voices full of frustration and anger. The tone frightened me, ^{so} I would cry out for my Aunt Anna. She would say to the others that they were waking us children, and should keep their voices down; and she would come upstairs to my bed and sing songs to me till I grew calm and fell asleep.

Our Uncle Eric might have taken the place of our father to some extent if he had just been a little older, and if he had not been so cut off from us. He was in his upper teens by now and had finished high school. He worked with an architect and builder, hoping to be one himself one day. Aunt Lina and Grandmother wanted him to save his money and go to the University but he didn't want to go.

Grandmother took special care of him. She was so afraid that he would be overwhelmed and weakened by his swarm of sisters, all older than he, that she carefully kept him as separate from the family as possible. He had a room upstairs, without an entrance to a hall or another bedroom. He got to his place by going through a door in a corner of the dining room, and up his private staircase. He was like a little king in his own domain. Strongly feeling the imbalance of too many women, he gladly kept himself aloof and apart. He paid no attention to us children and was never very affectionate with anyone but his mother. His sisters treasured their only brother in a way, but willingly left him alone much of the time. He never had the zest for learning that Aunts Lina, Julia, Elsie and

Anna had.

Aunt Lina's progress always made exciting news in our house. Once when she had been away from home many months, she wrote Grandmother a triumphant letter. She had graduated from the University of Texas *summa cum laude*, and she had a Phi Beta Kappa key. Grandmother and all of us were very proud of her. Grandmother said she was a remarkable young woman to have achieved that, considering all that was against her in overwork and lack of money. She also said that her dear husband would have been proud of his daughter had he lived to see this day.

When Aunt Lina came home for the summer a few days later, she was tired but happy. She carried her head a little higher. She had always looked poised, but now that quality in her ripened. ^{That} ~~She had a~~ keen sense of humor, which had sometimes briefly shown itself. Now ~~it~~ came to the surface more often, especially at the supper table when we were all gathered together. She would tell bits she had read about great humorists. She told jokes she had heard, stories that depended on some amusing twist of the mind or of human characteristics.

That summer after a little period of rest, she began to look for a teaching job in a good school with the hope of better pay. She wrote many letters, and after a week or so began to watch the mail for replies. She found a satisfactory job and now concentrated largely on studying her French still more thoroughly the rest of the summer months. She had made up her mind that this language, in which she was very good, would be her main subject. She had conquered Greek, Latin and German as much as she thought necessary, and she continued to read in those languages

too. But she spoke of French as being the most melodious and beautiful of the modern languages. She also told us it was the most necessary for a cultivated person to know. She was determined to get an authentic accent. Then she could teach it properly, she said, and would be able to work her way up to a college position. From there she intended to rise until eventually, she would become the head of a language department. Those were her plans. But to learn to speak French with the proper accent she must live in France for a while, she said, and in any case she wanted to attend the Sorbonne. How could she possibly manage that, with us to support she asked the family? Going abroad not only would keep her from working for the next year, but would cost a lot of money. There would be the journey and room and board and books to pay for.

Grandmother and her other daughters repeatedly said they doubted that she could carry out such a plan, much as they wished it for her. It seemed far beyond the possible. Aunt Lina agreed. Soberly she went on studying and reading at home -- and thinking about how to get ahead.

Meanwhile life went on in its usual exciting way for us three children. Where children have the advantage is that almost everything is keenly felt because to a degree everything is still new and fresh to them. Every day brought new excitement in what we saw and played.

Aunt Anna and Grandmother were always trying to keep down the mouse population of our house, and succeeding more than we children liked. To me mice were not only charming to look at but I was always having fairies and dwarfs mixing with them socially

in my imagination.

Once we found two alive mice in a cage-type trap upstairs in one of the bedrooms. We brought the trap to Grandmother and pleaded for their lives so eloquently that she yielded, and told us we could set them free if we took them three blocks from home and opened the cage at the edge of the thick brushland. We carried this out exactly as agreed upon.

Another day my middle sister and I overheard my Aunt Anna say to Grandmother that she thought there might be a mouse nest in the closet where she kept extra blankets. She had seen a mouse go in and out of there several times through a crack under the door. She had some sewing to do first, but then she would get at it.

Elizabeth and I knew of that nest. We immediately looked at each other, and as our eyes met we signaled an agreement that we must do something to save the baby mice.

We soon slipped away, cautiously drew a chair up to the closet door and then took turns lifting the blankets and looking. The baby mice small and pink, with their eyes still closed, lay snugly in their nest of finely nibbled paper. We decided the only way to save them was to take them away for a while. But where would we keep them? In the two pockets of my dress of course! So we put them there and then went out to play. I played very carefully because of my mouse responsibility. As soon as Aunt Anna was through with her shelf cleaning, we put them back.

When we climbed down from our chair we saw a mouse run into the closet, and we were sure that was the mother and that she was going back to look for her young. How glad she would be

to find them safe and sound. We were sorry to cross up Aunt Anna's housecleaning, but when young lives were at stake one could not do otherwise. This is one of the many incidents of my childhood that I used ~~many~~ years later, when I had grown up, in a children's book, I called it A Good House For a Mouse.

An earlier writing success of mine was perhaps just as exciting. When I was about six or seven, my Aunt Anna showed me an advertisement by a company that made children's shoes. It stated that three prizes of \$1 each were offered to the winners in a story contest they were running, and five 50¢ prizes for the next best ones. The only rules were that the stories must be short -- not over a page -- and that they must feature a shoe of the company. I was instantly eager to try, and so set to work. I made several starts in the next few days, then came out with something I thought really good. In my story I had someone throw away an old worn out shoe. It got caught in the branches of a tree, and after a while a mother bird found it and made her nest in it. Aunt Anna addressed and stamped an envelope for me. I put my story into it and took it out to the mail box that was attached to the picket fence beside the gate.

A couple of months later I received a letter from the company saying I had won one of the top prizes, and enclosing what, in those days, was vast wealth to a child -- a one dollar bill.

I wrote more stories from time to time, but did not try to market them, fortunately; so at this point in my career I suffered no disappointments.

CHAPTER III

The Relatives

We children were playing ~~along~~ ^{at the end of} Main Avenue ~~outside our~~
~~grounds~~ one morning, when a telegraph boy came along and went to our
house. Telegrams then, far more than now, signified that something
important was under way, so we immediately ran home to ~~see what it~~ ^{investigate}
~~was~~. We found that a message ^{had come} from our wealthy Cousin Martha ~~had~~
~~come~~. ^{Then a great message to her} It was addressed to Aunt Anna and stated that Cousin Martha
~~was coming~~ ^{she would come} for a brief visit to San Antonio to see a dentist; and ~~she~~
would stay with us.

~~When~~ T'Anna ~~had read the telegram aloud to Grandmother and~~
~~us~~, she showed a small but lively indignation. Some of our rela-
tives ~~certainly~~ took us and our house ^{for granted}, she exclaimed.
If she had Martha's money, she would stay at a hotel, and just come
out some afternoon ^{to visit us}.

Grandmother listened quietly with a bemused look, and then
said that Anna should not work herself up so, since she must admit
that she liked her cousin's company. T'Anna agreed that this was
true, but said it was just the principle of the thing. She stuck in
one more needle: In all these years that this wealthy woman had
come to visit us ~~at least once a year~~, she had not once brought a
single gift. Then she put it all behind her and rather cheerfully

began to get ready for the guest. She made up a bed in the room of ^{two} ~~one~~ of her sisters who ^{was} ~~was~~ absent from home at the time, and did some extra dusting so that the house would look particularly nice.

We children remembered Cousin Martha well from other visits. We ~~did not~~ ^{her} envy her wealth for we recalled that she had a ~~rather~~ morose face, and so figured that she was not as happy as we were. Besides, her conversation was never very interesting. We preferred that of our aunts with their discussions of politics, literature, votes for women, music and the graphic arts, even if the tone of their talk sometimes grew tense, heated and a little opinionated.

The day Cousin Martha was expected we children ran about in anticipation of the company. In the morning we dressed our dolls in their best clothes, and we talked about the visitor to ^a ~~some of the~~ neighbor children who happened along.

About eleven o'clock ^{we heard the monotonous but musical call of} the vegetable man, ~~came by in his creaking~~ ^{came to a stop in front of our house.} wagon and we went out with Grandmother and watched while she ^{carefully selected} ~~bought~~ what she needed. The man, a short, lean, square shouldered Mexican gave us children a peach that was very ripe and might soon spoil. He called his gift "palone" -- a present in appreciation of our buying ~~some things~~ from him. was

It was a freestone peach and my sister, Hulda, as the eldest, had the privilege of breaking it ^{in half} ~~open~~. Then we each took a bite, avoiding the fuzzy skin as best we could. It was delicious.

This Mexican was altogether a good man. It was from him that Grandmother bought a barrel of apples each winter, and sometimes in autumn a whole big stem of bananas with its dozens of hands of the yellow and green fruit on it. Grandmother found it more

economical to buy in quantity like that. The apples were crisp and juicy, the plump bananas tasted almost floral when you did not let them ripen too much. And we seldom gave any but the last few a chance to reach that state. Grandmother kept her bounty of good fruit in the cooling room behind the laundry, and all winter long we had as much of one or both as we liked. Now in summer she could not buy in such quantity. In hot months ^{fruit} it would spoil too quickly. Today Grandmother bought such things as potatoes and corn, ^{and} ~~as well as six~~ yellow plump bananas, ^{to eat for a week or two.}

In the afternoon ^{T. Anna} ~~we put on fresh dresses, and were reminded by T. Anna to keep them and our hands and faces somewhat clean till Cousin Martha arrived.~~ She also helped the two older girls comb and freshly braid their hair, and as ^{my hair} ~~my hair~~ was slightly curly, wound the strands around her finger ^{as usual} ~~as usual to make my head look neat and pretty.~~ She wanted ^{our guest} ~~her cousin~~ to see us at our best. We were careful ^{as we went outdoors and played,}

After a while, when we were ^{in one of the lots,} ~~in one of the lots,~~ we saw a black hack drawn by ~~one~~ horse coming along the street. It passed us, and as our eyes followed it ~~along the street,~~ stopped in front of our house. Cousin Martha got out. We hurried home, went around the house and came in at the back door, ^{by our} ~~in order to wash our hands again.~~ Then, ^{calmly, and with a certain air of self-possession} ~~after a few moments more of hesitation,~~ made our entrance into the living room to become a part of the event of the day.

Cousin Martha's ~~valise~~ stood by the stairs ready to be taken up ~~to the room that had been arranged for her,~~ and she sat in the living room dressed in a dark blue silk dress that touched the floor all around. Her long, irregularly shaped face was solemn.

without a smile
 She looked at us ~~children~~ and said to T'Anna and Grandmother that they had certainly done a fine job with Louise's children. At this we were all pleased.

We sisters were urged forward, and politely shook her somewhat flabby hand. Then we stood back watching and listening while Grandmother and T'Anna asked about her dental problems, and about her husband, son and daughter.

Cousin Martha said she just didn't see how our family managed, with Lina and the others still studying much of the time. She said she admired our adults, and so did *our brother-in-law* ~~another cousin~~ Charles Perlitz. *Now my parents felt better.*

Aunt Lina came home from town now, and Cousin Martha, after greeting her, told her that she was *his cousin* Charles Perlitz's favorite. He *thought* ~~thought~~ her intelligence and ambition remarkable. *she said.*

Aunt Lina flushed with pleasure, ~~and thanked her for the compliment,~~ and said that she was just using her good mind as best she could. *She* gave a discouraged shrug ~~with~~ *at* her shoulders, and her pert face grew serious.

All this time Cousin Martha had been holding a small brown paper bag in her hands. Now she beckoned to us children to come to her and, as we stepped forward she gave Elizabeth, who was nearest her, the bag.

"Here," she said, "something nice for you children. I don't expect you get many such little luxuries."

T'Anna's face brightened. So Cousin Martha had at last brought a present after all. How very nice of her. We children did not quite know how to take generosity on *the cousin's* ~~her~~ part, but were eager to see what the wondrous gift was. Elizabeth opened the bag, and Hulda

and I crowded close around. Three small, brownish, overripe bananas lay there. ^{2 - a bunch of 3 bananas on a dish} We were embarrassed, but T'Anna nudged us, and we murmured our thanks.

Our grown people now asked us to show them what our gift was, and looked into the bag too. T'Anna quickly murmured something tactfully appreciative. ^{Just} ~~But at the sight of those awful bananas my~~ Grandmother ^{being directly to} couldn't respond. She looked upset, her brow wrinkled slightly, and she quickly turned the conversation to other things. Cousin Martha did not notice. She smiled briefly, still entirely pleased with herself.

We children slipped out of the room, and the house, and ~~dis-~~ ^{clutching the bag} ~~covered the bananas~~ behind the curtain of foliage of our weeping willow tree. ^{can't do a thing} Reaching an agreement on what to do with them, we went far down to the back part of the grounds where Cousin Martha could not see us, and started to bury them. Then we thought better of it, ^{from the house} and fed them to the chickens through the wire fence, ^{Charles' idea} with one of us watching the house to make sure no one was coming from there.

Aunt Lina had a ^{rather new} ~~bright new~~ look on her face all that afternoon and the next day. Cousins Martha's remarks about ~~her~~ Cousin Charles' admiration of her had set an old idea stirring anew in her head. He was ~~either~~ ^{this kind of} a millionaire, or well on the way to ~~being one~~, and she had decided to gather her courage together and ask him to lend her enough money to go to Paris and attend the Sorbonne. She thought he was no doubt too good a businessman to ~~do it if he thought~~ ^{stand money to her} her a poor risk. ^{names such as} ~~She also knew~~ that that was exactly what she was under the conditions of her life. Yet she made up her mind to try him anyway. Posting her letter, she began to wait a little nervously

~~for a reply.~~

We ~~also~~ had relatives ^{who} ~~were much more warmly friendly~~
~~but had far less wealth than Cousins Martha and Charles Perlitz.~~
~~These others were therefore quite naturally found more interesting,~~
~~and enjoyable, and we got to know them better.~~ Some of them were peo-
ple who had not yet left the farm ~~land~~ on which their European fore-
fathers had settled. ~~In these families too, most of the sons and~~
~~daughters were attending colleges and universities.~~ With some of
these relatives my family made arrangements to pay a little board,
and have T'Anna and us children stay at their places for our summer
vacations, ~~once in a while~~. My earliest recollections are of a summer
at Great Aunt Caroline and Great Uncle Bernard's farm near the small
town of Blackjack. Others whom we often visited later on lived at
Cypress Mill and Marble Falls. ~~Both~~ were in lovely country.

The vacation trips were always something to look forward to. Our excitement began to grow to a boiling point when T'Anna started packing a trunk and two valises. On the morning of the day we were to leave, Grandmother packed a lunch with several small sandwiches for each of us, and some cookies that she had baked for the occasion. Elizabeth carried this package, while Hulda and T'Anna each carried a valise. Our trunk had gone to the station the day before by express. Most of our dolls had been packed in ~~the trunk~~, but we two younger ones each carried one.

Boarding the train was an earth-shaking event. First we passed the engine which was going to hurtle us along the tracks. It looked overwhelming standing there in all its power and glory making hissing noises with its steam, while a workman oiled it and tinkered

with its amazing wealth of machine parts. A little farther on we came to the railroad cars, and climbed aboard one of them with the help of a polite but reserved conductor. At last the train moved out of the station, and now we saw new, strange sights -- the backs of business buildings, shacks in which Mexicans and negroes lived. Often the children playing around these houses waved at the train, and so we waved back. Finally the city was left behind and we saw the spreading, fertile plains. ^{South} Most of the land was farmed, ~~and so~~ planted to cotton and corn. But vast areas were left to grow their natural grass for ^{grazing} ~~cattle to graze on~~. The flatness of the Texas land, showed here far more than in San Antonio. In some areas the grassland and fields reached from horizon to horizon. The figure of a man plowing alone far down a furrow, looked like a tiny speck. --

At far intervals we passed or crossed streams where tall trees grew along the banks.

Our railroad car smelled smoky, musty, but good. On the window sills where we rested our arms or hands that supported our eager heads, there was always a layer of fine, black, granular coal dust. Some of this inevitably wafted in on our sandwiches when we ate our lunch. But we accepted that as a part of what the journey offered.

In the ~~Blackjack~~ ^{Blackjack} family of relatives, there was Great Uncle Bernard who was our Grandmother's brother. He was a philosopher, and his shelves were stocked with almost every book on the subject then known. Some he had bought himself and had had almost all his life. Others his mature children had brought him. There were four of these ~~big~~ ^{big} sons, and one daughter. We knew the daughter,

Cousin Helene, best because she taught in a San Antonio elementary school, and often visited at our house. Our favorite of all was the son, Arnold, then in his early twenties. He had a wry sense of humor, and he treated us little girls like ~~quite~~ ^{very} important people. I was still called Baby, and Cousin Arnold called me Mrs. Baby because I was the mother of dolls. Because of both mine and Elizabeth's dolls he felt he must have one too, and so adopted a feminine figure cast in metal and attached decoratively to a clock in his room. He called her Adeline. We visited him there once every day, but stayed only briefly because he was ~~always~~ very concentratedly studying his engineering books and we knew we must not disturb him long.

I was ~~going on five~~ ^{about 2 years and a half} the first summer we went to Blackj^{ack} and was getting a little restive about not really having a regular name that people ^{called} ~~called~~ me by, like other children.

Great Aunt Caroline had studied music in her youth and always found time in her busy day to play the piano for a while. She often sang too, ~~having a good voice~~. One day as I was playing in the breezeway with ~~one of~~ my dolls, Aunt Caroline sang something from an old Norse cycle of songs. The words had to do with the ~~tragic~~ ^{hopeless} love of a young man for a beautiful nun. As Aunt Caroline sang, "Oh, Irmengarde, how fair thou art," something clicked in my mind. I turned to ~~my~~ T'Anna and asked if I could have that name. She looked at me in some surprise, thought it over, and then said yes. She knew the family would never bring itself around to calling me Louise, ~~and it was clear that I did need a name they would use.~~ She promised always to call me Irmengarde ~~now~~. I was mightily pleased.

~~It had taken me such a long time to get this name that I~~

clung to it with far more than average tenacity. From that day on I answered to no other name but Irmengarde, not even a nickname.

Members of the family at home were notified by my aunt. Everyone honored my new name here in Blackjack, too. Arrangements were made so that it was mine the rest of my life.

It was in Blackjack, walking through deep grass in a hay field, that I saw my first family of quail -- a mother and four young. The little ones and mother, round and plump, were all beautifully marked with the design of their feathers. They ran ahead of us to escape in case we spelled danger, and as we stopped to give them a chance, they swerved off and disappeared among the grass stems and blades.

Often after supper when our world had grown dark, we would all go outdoors, and lying on old blankets look up into the sky. Here too the land was so flat and there were so few trees that the sky was a mighty dome from horizon to horizon on every side. And as we lay there, awed by the beauty of it, and by the thought of the vast and perhaps endless space where those stars were, the various adults, who knew a good deal about them, pointed out the constellations, and named them and the more prominent stars for us.

The next summer we went to relatives at Marble Falls, or perhaps it was Cypress Mill. I remember that toward the end of the journey, late in the afternoon, the train raced under black clouds that suddenly broke into a heavy downpour. The windows were awash with the rivers and waterfalls of rain.

But then the train stopped and there was a long wait. The conductor said there was trouble on the track ahead of us, a washout

because of the rain. Men were working on it. It was more than an hour before we rolled on.

Evening came and as the sun dropped below the horizon, scattered clouds all over the sky caught color and bloomed. Leaning my head out of the window ~~as far as I could~~ while my aunt held on to me, I was a part of this high, far-flung glory, so often seen, but never the same, and never too familiar. The light and the color faded. And now we were hungry and T'Anna gave us the last of our sandwiches, ~~made of~~ home-made bread, with jelly.

We arrived at our station in the late dusk. A man cousin was at the small ~~country~~ depot waiting for us in his surrey. He had brought his farm helper along with the wagon to take our trunks. We greeted each other moderately enthusiastically, for this cousin never was highly expressive. Then we got under way.

The road to our relatives' farm took us first through the small speck of a town, with its single general store and five or six houses, then turned down toward ~~the~~ Colorado River, ~~with its reddish waters.~~ The last light of day was fading and ~~then~~ as the road swung down close to the river bank, we were among tall pecan, cypress, cottonwood ~~and oak~~ trees, ~~and~~ in their shadows it grew suddenly even darker. Before we had gone a quarter of a mile, surrey and wagon ~~were halted~~ and their lanterns were lit. Then we drove on with the horses' hoofs striking an irregular rhythm as they ~~struck~~ the soft wet earth and the rocks of the road, and splashed through pools left by the rain. The leather, wood and iron of our conveyances creaked and rattled lightly. There was the smell of the water of the broad river and of wet soil and plants, ~~and~~ the now pitch black woods were filled

with quiet sounds of scampering small animals, the note of a dreaming bird.

T'Anna said to her cousin that the river looked very swollen, and he explained that there had been a ~~real~~ cloudburst in this area.

~~Then~~ For a long time no one spoke. By the lantern light we saw now that the horses were taking us through a place where the river had overflowed its banks and was lapping far over the road.

But it was shallow and at first we did not stop.

Our cousin spoke again in a worried voice. It was bad, he said. We might have to turn off somewhere.

T'Anna grew nervous. Elizabeth and Hulda were excited. At first I was too. But it was late, and it had been a long journey. I was growing drowsy and put my bobbing head into the soft safety of my aunt's lap, and fell asleep.

I awoke the next morning in a room bright with sunshine, a light so glorious that it seemed supernatural. I lay there quietly, slowly pushing back the remaining mists of sleep, and looking at the ceiling. A green insect with gossamer wings, sat up there. A very pleasant creature.

Then I became aware that there was something strange about my surroundings. I looked around the room and realized with a start that I was in a place I had never seen before, and that I was alone. Neither T'Anna, nor Grandmother, nor my sisters were anywhere in sight. And all was curiously still. I thought for a moment that I must be in heaven. That the odd, interesting insect

should be there too did not seem at all incongruous. I didn't know how ~~old~~ ^{young} Zeus would feel about insects, but I was sure that the real God, the God we recognized ~~today~~, was kind to all creatures large and small and that He welcomed all in His abode.

I did ~~not mind paying this visit to heaven~~ ^{know the idea of being in heaven rather pleasantly}, (for, feeling quite well, I was sure I would get sent back to earth and my family. You only stayed in heaven long if you got sick and died, and I felt anything but dead.

Then I noticed that there was furniture in the room and that it was not divine looking. In a washbowl stood a water pitcher with a crack in it. ^{See page} God would have a better one than that. There was also a yellowish water stain on the pale blue, faded wallpaper. I felt sure angels would have repapered such a wall. This could not be heaven after all.

Another possibility came ^{into my} to mind, and with it fear. Because I had obviously been brought to this strange place without knowing it, I thought now that my family must have given me away. ~~That meant they -- all of them -- capitulated to Aunt Lina. Perhaps they had given us children to strangers or, even worse, to an orphan asylum.~~ I got out of bed fast, my heart constricted in my chest cavity. ~~But~~ ^{wherever} wherever I was, I would try to get back to my family. I threw open the door, and yelled with all my might for my Aunt. ~~Aunt.~~

No sooner had I let out the first cry than she appeared, half-running, her concern large on her delicate pink and white face, and in her wide blue eyes. She crouched on the floor and took me in her arms, and I threw mine around her neck and clung.

She asked me what the trouble was, and I told her what I had thought. She was horrified that I could think for a moment that she would let me be given away. Then she shook me a little, very affectionately, and said she was surprised that I did not know where I was. We went back into the bedroom and while she helped me dress, she reminded me of what had happened the night before.

As she talked I began to remember. We had been on our way to our cousins' farm in the surrey and found the road flooded by the river. I had ~~fallen asleep, and did not hear it when~~ our cousin ~~said~~ we must not try to get through the road that night. ~~I had heard little~~ ~~or nothing of~~ his and my aunt's discussion of what they would do. And only faintly did I recall ~~now~~ how the wagon and surrey had turned up a side road to a farm, and that the friendly people there had plenty of room and had taken us in for the night. I was aware of nothing after I was put down on a bed -- nothing until the next morning -- the morning of the strange room, the bright sunlight, ~~and~~ the green insect.

Now that it was all cleared up a great joy spread through me.

The day was glorious, and the river was retreating to its bed. After breakfast and thanks and goodbyes to the farm family who had taken us in, we drove on to my cousin's farm. The river still lapped over the road ~~a little here and there~~ but there was no longer any danger.

That too ~~was~~ a good summer. There were angora goats to watch as they climbed ~~every~~ rocky outcropping. Our cousin took us fishing, and he caught a big thick-headed catfish. ~~Our cousin~~ told us almost as many fairy tales and other good stories as our T'Anna. And there were horses and cows and calves to watch. But nothing left

so strong and dramatic an impression as the night ~~and day~~ of the flooded river road.

When we returned to San Antonio, ~~late that summer, we~~ found that a remarkable thing had happened. Cousin Charles had not turned Aunt Lina down ~~about the requested loan~~. He thought she was worth taking a chance on. She had a check from him, and she was in a feverish hurry to get off to France. So, no sooner were we unpacked from our summer's outing, than Aunt Anna began to help her sister get her clothes ready for her tremendously important undertaking. A week later Aunt Lina took a train and then a boat, and sailed for Paris and a year at the Sorbonne.

About this time (T'Anna and Cousin Helene inaugurated dawn picnics. We would arise long before sunrise on a Saturday morning and take the trolley to San Pedro Park with breakfast-lunch in two baskets. Here we would walk along paths empty of people in the serene light of dawn, and I would feel an intimacy with the living creatures that began to bestir themselves. The squirrels came down from the trees, rabbits nibbled ~~on the grass~~ of the lawns. On the lake the swans and ducks swam about and ducked for food. And all the birds awoke. Some sang or chirped, others quietly skimmed about in the air, or flew from place to place in their work of nest building, or eating, or feeding their young.

Altogether there was something about dawn outdoors that made one feel very close to the creator of all ~~this beauty of trees, water, grass, and of the living creatures, of which we were a part.~~

When we first came into the park we walked quietly, and talked only in subdued voices so as not to disturb the silence.

It was cousin Helene, too, started the old stunt of reading a story to us but stopping just as the most exciting part was about to begin. Then we were asked to finish the story, each in our own way. We liked this and I worked on mine with ~~enormous concentration~~ great enthusiasm.

We had other relatives in San Antonio. There was cousin Walter who in time became one of Texas well known musicians. And there was the already mentioned cousin Ella and her family. Ella was luckier than we because she had both parents; and there was no question as to whether she belonged or not. Her mother was a dedicated amateur painter. Her father a botanist who taught in the San Antonio high school. ~~Not only did we and our~~ ^{at one or the other of} cousin visited often. And on holidays ~~we were usually at each~~ ^{celebrated} others houses. Christmas the Mackensens always ~~spent with us~~ ^{also} Christmas eve, and Christmas day dinner, when Grandmother outdid herself in fine cooking.

All together Christmas as a remarkable production at our house. Our family made the story of the Christ child so serenely beautiful to us both in religion and as history; and the Santa Clause part they made into a full sized fairytale kind of game--a game that lasted for days and ~~marked up~~ in a wonderfully ~~exciting~~ crescendo. ~~Aside from~~ ^{there was} the usual talk about Santa Clause, our T'Anna and the nuns who had come home from their teaching jobs for the holidays, ~~would be~~ ^{they} making presents for us. Aunt Lina was the only one who kept out of this. ~~And this~~ ^{the} present production was handled so that every moment of the day was exciting with preliminary whispers to each other, in our presence, and sometimes ^{little} leading remarks made especially to keep our interest high, they started the day. Then, after breakfast they locked

themselves in the living room, and we were made to understand that Santa Clause was going to put in an appearance ^{during the} ~~some time during~~ ~~they time they worked in there,~~ and would bring secret things and help with the work. ~~briefly until he had gone on to his other duties~~ We figured out that Santa Clause, being fat, could not come down the narrow chimneys of our house, ~~and~~ so figured that he must climb into ^a ~~the~~ livingroom window. We spent much time ~~try~~ running arou^d outdoor trying to ~~catch~~ ^{find} him at it, ~~and how hard it was~~ ~~ing to catch him at it.~~

Inside the house we could not keep away from the profoundly closed livingroom door. And artfully our aunts led us on to peeking through the key-hole. ^{And} ~~And~~ when we did, ^{just} one of the blew at us throught that ~~door~~ ^{hole}--at which we ran off screaming with delight. Sometimes our dolls disappeared about this time and there was a great to-do among us children. ^{Santa had taken them.}

I am not sure that I ever actually believed in Santa clause in those years f om about three to seven, but I definitely wanted to because it was a terrifically good game.

Ofcourse we made presents too--those everlasting pot holders and hand hemmed towels that one fods ones self the grown ups like. Or we framed ~~a~~ small pictures we painted, using black tape to paste ~~on~~ ^{around} in place of ~~a~~ frames.

Every evening about supper time the living room. About two days before Christmas Grandmother began to ^{a special} bake Christmas cookies, and the house was filled with/fragrance. A day or so before ~~And the afternoon morning before~~ Christmas ^{a cedar} ~~we~~ our Uncle Eric brought ~~in~~ would ~~bring~~ a Christmas tree ~~and~~ ^{only} ~~with this.~~ into the living room, under the guise of/helping Santa. ~~the~~ From then on the living room was completely out of bound to us children, and the door was kept constastly locked. Aunts and Grandmother let themselves in an out as they worked mysteriously insie, off and on. Secrecy was the watchword around our house--a secrecy which was

(4)

made wonderfully suspenseful. And by Christmas Eve we consequently were in a great state of delight and anticipation.

As ~~darken~~ the winter dusk turned to darkness, we would have our supper. Afterward Ella and her family arrived. Then one of the adults, usually Anna or Aunt Julia would take us children to a room to wait. The lamp would be blown out (there was no electricity so far out at the edge of the city until a couple of years later) and we would huddle together in the darkness whispering and ^{the glowing} wriggling with excitement.

In a few minutes, when our eyes were thoroughly used to the dark, a silvery bell tinkled, and our aunt would escort us out of the room. As we reached the living room door, it was thrown open--and there stood the Christmas tree before us in all its shining candle and tinsel beauty--the lights the more brilliant because of our stay in the dark. It always looked simply superb, and out of this world!

~~And~~ now, after we had admired the tree for a moment, Grandfather Mackensen in his deep, rich voice led us in singing Christmas songs. "Silent night, holy night," always came first, ~~and with~~ a song I loved deeply. ~~And~~ with the words "Christ the savior is born, ^{and} the joy in the world flooded my heart. Words and music had such a lift of triumph. Finally, the singing over, we were each led to our little arrangement of presents, ~~and~~ with everything that had gone before, almost anything would have seemed glorious. What we found there was not extravagant gifts, of course, but ^{at all} always terrific. Our vanished dolls would be there, some in new wigs of lovely shining hair, all in new clothes. Sometimes there was new doll furniture bought at ^{big} a store like Joskeys, and sometimes a little table or chair made by our uncle. Finally ~~we~~

after showing everything to everybody present, and we settled down to playing with our things and eating cookies, raisins and nuts. From little gold and silver cornucopias hanging on the tree. It never occurred to me that anyone could have a better Christmas than we had, and I doubt it even now. Our people were true Christmas spirit intrapreneurs.

The cousin and family who spent Christmas with us were the relatives who were closest to us, not only in friendliness but because their house was nearby, and they played an important part in our lives. In that family there was not only Alice, but also and a much younger sister and brother--really babies in our opinion--but a whole balanced family--a mother, father and even a grandfather with not only a father, which we so missed, but the grandfather. Her father, named Bernard just like the Blackjack great uncle, was a botonist and taught his subject in the San Antonio ~~High School~~.

I did inquire of my cousin ^{ella} whether she ever went with her father. She was almost shocked at the idea, and said anybody could tell that he didn't want any children with him when he worked and studied plants. After that I was still more shy about asking him myself. But whenever we were visiting my cousin, I kept standing around watching him work in his own backyard. Sometimes he would stop his soft whistling and tell me something about cross-pollination and grafting, and that he was trying to see what changes he could make in a cactus plant in these ways. ~~And~~ ^{3/4} gradually, as I so often stood around silently and patiently watching him, while the other children went off to play, he began to talk to me a little more. Being a well-rounded naturalist, he had read a great deal about insects, birds and ^{various} ~~other~~ creatures ^{as well as plants} ~~in which he knew I was especially interested, and sometimes~~ ^{once} he went indoors with me and looked ~~something up in his encyclopedia,~~ ^{at my} ~~or one of his books, that specifically treated the subject he was talk-~~ ^{ing} ~~ing about.~~ But these interludes were brief. He was soon absorbed in his own work again in the backyard, ^{at his} ~~or at his desk, where he frequently~~ wrote down notes about his studies. And I would leave satisfied, ^{long} ~~feeling~~ ^{the companion - if we had shared} ~~that I had been let in on enough of his interesting and important~~ ~~thoughts, his knowledge.~~

One morning I was in our front yard, seeing how high I could get into one of our Chinaberry trees. My sister Hulda was competing with me in the other one, and Elizabeth was busy with some matter of her own in the grass below. We were chattering away ~~at a great rate~~ when we saw Uncle Bernard coming along stony, ~~dusty~~ Main Avenue toward our house. ⁹ He was carrying his specimen bag, and ~~his~~ big camera. He was going on one of his expeditions. But instead of passing on by ~~our~~

^{getting in}
~~house,~~ he turned in at the gate and went up the path and into our house.

In a minute or two he came out again with T'Anna. I heard him say, "Irmengarde," and climbed down from my tree to see why they were discussing me. He gave me a smile and asked if I would honor him with my company on a brief field trip.

I was proud that this important, scholarly, withdrawn uncle, who ~~never~~ ^{had never} took anyone along should want me with him. I stared up at him in amazement and ^{happily} ~~pleasure~~. My aunt delayed us another few minutes to take me inside and brush my hair. She made me a sandwich too. Uncle Bernard had his lunch in his as yet empty specimen bag, she said. She put ~~a peach~~ ^{some fruit} in the small paper bag too. Then Uncle Bernard and I set out together.

We went along ^{the} Summit Avenue. ~~We~~ passed the Murphy's house and saw that two of the boys and one of the girls were in their yard. I waved to them. Then, turning north on a mostly ^{used} road, we passed a monastery. Soon we left that behind and were entirely out of sight of any buildings or people. The sun was quite high above the horizon by now. The road invited us onward. A gawky bird, a road-runner, ~~ran~~ ^{hunted} excitedly ahead of us, then went in among the weeds at the side. We left the road and turned into an open stretch of pasture land where there was a scant covering brush, and where grass, weeds and various kinds of cacti grew in greater ~~profusion~~ ^{profusion}.

My uncle had been silent all this time, except for a little of his tuneless, peaceful whistling, and so I had kept quiet too.

When we got to a place that suited him he set down his

specimen satchel, camera and lunch, and went about examining plants. ~~Again he whistled softly, contentedly, as he worked.~~ After a while he photographed some cacti. He dug up a small young one, too, and put it into his satchel. And he went on looking about, studying every growing thing around him with keen, steady eyes.

I did not pay attention to him for long, for I found interests of my own. A lizard slithered by, and then stopped and watched me with bright eyes, its tongue darting in and out. A horned toad, fierce looking, but mild of temperament, moved slowly away as I came near, and then, as I touched it, played dead. From years past I was alert to the possibility of coming upon rattlesnakes and the necessity of avoiding them. There were ~~more~~ cottontails, ^{and some jackrabbits} ~~and again~~ ~~a road runner~~. I stood still and tried not to scare these creatures, but most were gone in a moment.

Now and then I joined my uncle ~~again~~ and watched him for a while, and he would tell me the botanical names of the various plants that grew around us. The latin syllables touched my ears lightly and vanished. But they had sounded fine in passing.

At noon we sat in the shade of a wide-spreading huisache tree and ~~ot~~ out our lunch. He shared the water from his bottle with me. I watched his serene face and the distinctive shape of his short, neatly trimmed beard which bobbed up and down as he chewed, and I was entirely satisfied with the day.

A ladybug settled on my dress, and he explained that it belonged, as did all insects, to the large group known as Anthrapoda. "It's a ceratomagilla fucilabris of the family coccinellidae."

It sounded good. I pointed out a spider drifting on his almost invisible thread, as a light breath of air stirred. And he explained that spiders were not insects, but belonged to another classification -- Arachnids.

This too was good to know -- and of course soon to forget largely.

He explained that naturalists had divided all animal life on our earth including people into classes, or you might say primary groups, and that every group had many subdivisions.

It gave me something of a feeling of the complexity of ^{and its order too} life on earth, and its order too. ^{and it} filled me with a sense of dignity that ~~he~~ would talk to me about such profound and learned things.

We had finished eating. Arising he commented on how hot it was, and suggested that we start for home. But now he saw another plant he must photograph; and then a variation in a familiar plant interested him. The afternoon was half over when we set out for home. The dark clouds fluffing up in the northwest were beginning their threat. He said goodbye and turned me into our front walk. I ran to the door and watched him walk away toward his own home.

That was the only time I went on a field trip with him. And though I remained a little shy with him, a small bond existed between us, -- a degree of real understanding between two people.

I have seen - a very fine one at the

It was a ~~theoretic~~ ^{theoretic} ~~exercise~~, and I
~~first~~ began to try with two fingers - trying to see what
~~effect~~ ^{effect} it had. I hope the others I would
 try to create from this on.

aware of our embarrassment.

Now she turned to Aunt Elaine and went on talking about her brother, Fred. He had recently been promoted to a higher position in the company ~~that~~ the family owned. Aunt Elaine was delighted, and gave Cousin Edwina a message of congratulation to give him when she returned home.

"Oh, do write him yourself," Cousin Edwina said.

Meanwhile we children slipped out of the room and then the house. Far down in the back part of the grounds, where Cousin Edwina couldn't see us, we started to ~~buy~~ the ailing bananas, then thought better of it. It seemed a shame to waste them entirely, so we peeled them, and fed them to the chickens through the wire fence, and then buried ~~only~~ the skins.

Nothing else very important or outstanding happened during Cousin Edwina's ~~brief~~ stay. She got her teeth fixed, and ~~soon~~ went back to Dallas.

My Aunt Rose went to the library every two weeks and came home with a number of books for herself. She brought volumes of ~~the~~ Shakespeare ~~and~~ Goethe, besides her usual books on politics and economics. And each time, too, she brought new books home for us children. We were through with the Illiad now. Sometimes she took one or more of us along so that we could choose books for ourselves. I chose story books and nature studies. The latter ~~usually~~ had photographs of animals, and only a brief and very limited text about the life and habits of the creatures. They stirred my already burgeoning interest ~~further~~, but never satisfied my desire to know how

things really were with them.

Aunt Rose took us to concerts whenever one was announced in the newspaper to which we subscribed. Sometimes there were open air concerts in San Pedro Park. And besides the music, there were for me the swans on the lake, and the squirrels in the trees. Sometimes Aunt Rose and my other aunts bought tickets to a concert in a hall in the city. Often the latter were too difficult for us, Aunt Rose thought, and she went alone, or with one of her sisters. She always seemed aglow with pleasure for several days afterward when it had been a good concert, and the talk in the house would be of Beethoven, Wagner, Bach.

My aunts had a cousin in San Antonio who was quite an able and serious violinist. He had studied abroad and now gave violin lessons to advanced students, and played at clubs and large social affairs. Bringing his sophisticated, well-dressed wife, he sometimes came over to our house after supper and played for us. Aunt Rose especially loved these evenings. I did too, but as much

high school. In his free time he roamed the nearby countryside examining and classifying plants. He was especially interested in the tall, broadleafed cactus. Of these he transplanted some to the grounds of his own house, and tried cross-pollination, and made other experiments. We children liked to be around him because he looked so content, so absorbed in what he was doing. Usually he whistled a low, monotonous tune to himself. He seldom had much to say to us, but that was all right.

Uncle Bernard's pipe-smoking father, a retired ship's officer, lived with his son's family. He was almost the direct opposite of his son -- cheerful, outgoing in personality. We three sisters called him grandfather just as our cousin did, for he seemed to reach out and take us in. He taught us to play chess, thinking that nobody was too young to learn, and he was quite right. He told us many little incidents of his days at sea. There was a robust heartiness about him even though he was quite old.

Uncle Bernard's botanical trips fascinated me, and I wished I could go with him sometime. I didn't quite dare ask him. However,

Place our family
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This aroused Aunt Rose and made her set about cleaning closets-- a job ~~she said~~ she hated and had put off as long as possible.

My sister Emily and I were alarmed when she announced her intention of starting with a certain ^{bed}room closet that day. We knew of a mouse nest in one of them, which held four tiny pink young mice with their eyes still closed. We knew their mother too. Several times we had seen her slip along the shelf as we opened the door. The mother was no doubt always near her children except when she went to look for something to eat. Aunt Rose had no sentiment about mice, and if she found them she would certainly destroy them. This would not do, Emily and I agreed. These creatures, we knew, loved our house as we children did, and depended on it for their safety. We could not let anything happen to them.

Right after breakfast, therefore, we set to work. My sister Emily stationed herself outside the bathroom door to act as look-out. I went inside with a straight chair, climbed up on it, and got out the baby mice from behind the stack of boxes and packages, and put them in the pocket of my dress. Emily and I ran outdoors and waited until Aunt Rose went in, cleaned, and came out again. Then Emily helped me put the mice back so their poor worried mother could find them as soon as possible.

Day by day as the hot weather progressed again, the arguments and discussions between Aunt Elaine and Aunt Rose grew more sharp and intolerant. They could argue equally violently about almost anything these days, it did not matter whether it was about Flaubert, the Federal Government, us children, or a Bach Oratorio.

At last my Grandmother said she had enough of it. She

couldn't stand it, and it was bad for us children. She announced that the trip to Marble Falls would cost very little, as the relatives never charged us much for board, and that she wanted Rose to write immediately and ask if it suited Great Uncle John and Great Aunt Matilda if she and we three children came to them in August.

Aunt Rose attended to this and soon received a letter in reply saying that we were most welcome.—Indeed they were very much in need of some company far out there on the farm. A week later our trunks were packed and sent to the depot by express. The next day, a little past four o'clock, we got into the surrey and Aunt Lillian drove us there.

The train came hooting and clattering up the tracks. It stopped--an iron giant hissing with steam--and we climbed aboard. My oldest sister carried a **paper** bag of lunch. A **snack** on a train trip was a matter of custom with us young ones, and also of pleasure. But today we would need it for supper because we would arrive at our destination quite a while after sunset.

On the train all the marvelous sights, smells, and sounds and motions of traveling touched our eager senses. There were the many people who were strangers to us, sitting in the railroad car--people with many different faces. There was the fine smell of coal smoke from the mighty engine, the grit of coal dust on the window sills, the regular pattern of sound as the train rushed along over the rails and the ties--all these were sublimely attractive and exhilarating. ^{7/100} The sights from the windows were varied and boundlessly interesting. First we passed the poor part of town, the shacks of the people who were called poor white trash by ~~most~~ of the more

comfortable citizens. Then came those of a few Mexicans, and farther on a small settlement of Negroes. Each group was separate from the others, and their shacks utterly miserable. A quick glimpse at these people and places, so unknown to us, and we were gone. But it stayed in my mind--the strangeness that some people on earth were dealt such a shabby, dreadful life.

The train picked up speed as we left the city behind and sped out across open country. Soon there was only wild land. And exquisite feeling of expanse and of loneliness, came over one. What human beings, if any, ever rode or walked there in those endless miles of grassland and mesquite brush? Here and there we would cross a trestle over a dry creek, or a gulch out deep into the earth. Sometimes we crossed a little stream.

In some places there were infinitely large, long fields of cotton or corn, and then a lonely farm house would appear. And often a man on a cultivator would be at work looking as small as an insect in the great expanse about him.

Once the train raced us under black clouds that had broken into a heavy downpour, and the windows were awash with the rivers and waterfalls of rain, so that we could not see out of them. A half hour later we were in bright sunshine again.

The train stopped and there was a long wait. The conductor said there was trouble on the track ahead of us, a wash-out because of the rain. Men were working on it. It was three quarters of an hour before we rolled on again.

Evening came and as the sun dropped below the horizon scattered clouds all over the sky caught color and bloomed. Leaning my head out of the window as far as I could while my aunt held on to me, I was a part of this high, far-flung glory, so often seen, but

never the same, and never too familiar.

And now we were hungry and Aunt Rose gave us our supper sandwiches. Made of home-made bread, with jelly in between, and some with cheese, they tasted all the better because of the peculiarly entrancing smell of train smoke and stale railroad car air, and the inevitable touch of coal grit.

We arrived at Marble Falls in the late dusk. Cousin Alvin who, with his wife and baby son, lived in a house on the same farm as his parents, was at the small red country depot, waiting for us. He had brought his farm helper along with the wagon, to take our trunks. We greeted each other moderately enthusiastically, for Cousin Alvin never was highly expressive. Then we got underway.

The road to our relatives' farm took us first through the small speck of a town, with its single general store and five or six houses, then turned down toward the Colorado River, with its reddish waters. The last light of day was fading and then as the road swung down close to the river bank, we were among tall pecan, cypress, cottonwood and oak trees, and it grew suddenly even darker. Before we had gone a mile, ^{half} s^{urey} and wagon were halted and their lanterns were lit. Then we drove on with the horses hoofs striking an irregular rythm as they ^{hit} ~~struck~~ the soft wet earth and rocks of the road, and splashed through pools left by the rain storm. The leather, wood and iron of our conveyance creaked and rattled lightly. There was the smell of the water of the broad river and ^{of} wet soil and plants; and the now pitch black woods were filled with quiet sounds of scampering small animals, the note of a dreaming bird.

Aunt Rose said to Cousin Alvin, "The river looks very

BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATE



This certifies that Elisabeth Eberle

Child of (Mother's name) Luise Berlitz Eberle

(Father's name) Marcell Eberle

Born in Taylor, Texas

on the 3 day of June 1894

was baptized the 3 day of June 1894.

in St. Mary's Church, Taylor, Texas.

By Reverend M. M. Brown

Sponsors were Engelbert Eberle

his wife Marie Eberle.

Theodore Snee Pastor