THE MAJORITY OF FARMERS in the area showed a preference for general-purpose horses, big and strong enough for effective work, yet not too heavy or clumsy for other uses. A few were proud owners of heavy draft animals to which they gave painstaking care. Occasionally, an individual or a well-matched team was specially groomed for exhibition at the county fair. The heavy breeds most favored were Percherons, Belgians, and Clydesdales. One saw rather often light, fleet-footed steeds used for carriage work or for the saddle. The best of them were classified as Morgans, Thoroughbreds, or Hambletonians, probably few, if any, being purebred. A number of farmers kept breeding stock and counted on the sale of colts for a part of their yearly incomes. Few showed much interest in pedigrees; but no doubt there were some horses, principally in the heavy draft class, that were eligible for registration. Most of the horses in regular use were mongrels, carrying blood strains of several different breeds. Practically all farm ponies were half-breeds. No farmer we knew kept mules.

For many years nearly all sons of farmers regularly became farmers; the path to other occupations was rather
difficult and restricted. Naturally, a few, lacking natural aptitudes, found much of the work they had to do bore­some, and they fell short of real success. Often, one could spot these fellows by noting the way they got along with horses. If they feared the animals and failed to understand them, they had to worry along with awkward, ill-trained nags that were hard to handle and caused them much vexatious trouble. Consequently, a considerable part of the work they had to do was, for them, highly bugbearish. One farmer we knew was so lacking in ability with horses that he was seriously handicapped. They worried him, and he was afraid of them. He came along one day, an appre­hensive look on his face, driving a clumsy young horse that he was “breaking.” When he stopped, the stolid crea­ture stood listlessly, as if half-asleep. Someone remarked that the colt appeared tame and quiet. “He’s not foolin’ me,” replied the uneasy owner. “Don’t trust him at all. Right now, I’m sure, he’s a-meditatin’ some low-down deviltry.”

Horses have mannerisms, tricks, and habits that give to each a distinct individuality. Some handle their feet grace­fully and briskly; others move clumsily and lazily. A pronounced lazy streak is by no means unusual. Some resort to clever tricks to gain time for resting or loafing or to make things easier for themselves. Bonnie, a little mare we owned, had an ideal disposition and was very dependable; but, hitched to a buggy on the road, she was much given to goldbricking; instead of trotting along at a good clip, of which she was easily capable, she chose, if the driver permitted, to drop into a jogging dogtrot, a pace that could be maintained with a minimum of exertion.

No matter what work might be under way, a sturdy team that we used a long time would walk back and forth
across the field at their own mutually satisfactory plodding gait. But at the first sound of the dinner bell both would prick up their ears and, with one accord, they would start “on the double.” In spite of anything the driver might do, they would maintain that pace until they reached the side of the field nearest the barn. Unhitched, they would head straight and fast for a hearty drink and their midday meal. After dinner they would settle into their easy-going pace and hold it until the bell pealed the hour for supper. All of our horses learned that the bell meant a break in their labors, but none responded quite so eagerly as this pair.

We had horses that displayed a real sense of humor. Two or three, for instance, delighted in taking a playful nip at an ear or finger of a person who happened to stand unwarily near their mangers. One of these equine jokers would occasionally pretend to bite the seat of one’s pants as he bent over while currying him or adjusting the harness. These were all gentle, harmless gestures, plainly intended in fun.

I once bridled a gentle, fleet-footed old mare and led her to the pasture gate, meaning to ride. She stood quietly while I climbed the bars; but the instant I sprang for her back, she leaped forward and I, greatly surprised and chagrined, landed on the ground. Her expression when I approached her after that spill was unquestionably one of amusement at having tricked an upstart young rider.

A little half-pony we had seemed to delight in playing repeatedly a little trick all her own. One might be riding her at a brisk gallop when suddenly, without warning or any discernible reason, she would leap to one side. The rider’s inertia of course carried him on in the direction he had been going, and he suffered a rude, unplanned-for landing.
One summer night I was driving a young lady home when a violent storm arose. The wind blew a terrific gale. Rain poured down in torrents, and menacing stabs of lightning streaked across the sky. It became so dark that my horse Jack, the road—all surroundings—were blotted from sight. I gave Jack his head, feeling sure that he could keep to the road better without my help than with it. Far less scared than I, he walked ahead confidently, keeping the buggy squarely on the road, safely away from the deep, water-filled ditches on either side. We had covered a mile or more when Jack stopped suddenly and stood motionless. I clambered out, groped forward in the inky darkness and found that a big tree, blown over by the wind, lay across the pavement. When the storm subsided, I discovered that the tree lay diagonally so that it did not fully block the way. Leading Jack, we squeezed safely through the narrow space between the top of the tree and the ditch and proceeded on our way.

Most horses like to be curried and brushed. Wise horsemen regard this as essential, but many farmers tended to neglect it, especially in cold weather. In spring their horses resembled crustaceans, a thick, hard shell of manure clinging tenaciously to the hair over large areas of their anatomies.

One of our horses somehow got the name Bum, which he by no means deserved. We never named a horse Joe because we knew that horses mistake the sound for “whoa”—at least they pretend to—and stop when no stop is wanted. Dad one day brought home a husky young gray that he had bought. We boys at once named him Ephriam—Eph for short—after an odd character who a short time before had helped us in the harvest field. Eph’s I.Q. was not the highest, but he became a valuable worker on the farm.
His back was broad and well cushioned, but he had a habit of setting down his feet so solidly that anyone riding him got a hard jolt at each step. Once, two cousins from town were vacationing at the farm. As both boys were fond of horses and eager to ride, the four of us decided one day to go riding. We mounted and set out, each on a horse of his own choosing, all riding bareback. After our steeds had covered three or four miles at a slow walk, the boy on Eph began to think that maybe he had been wrong in regarding horseback-riding as such a pleasant diversion. By the time we got back to the farm, after a jaunt of about ten miles, his hankering for riding had faded out completely. For several days he was more comfortable standing than sitting.

In summer we watered and fed our horses at the end of their work day, then turned them into the pasture. It was fun to watch them as, lying on the ground, head and legs extended, they stretched and rolled in great evident enjoyment. Some easily flipped themselves over repeatedly from side to side; others were much less successful. Naively, we youngsters long believed an old saying that each turn from one side to the other registered $100 in the animal's value. When we went to the pasture in the morning to get the horses, we always carried with their halters a bit of corn for each. This paid important dividends because at the first whistle all unfailingly came to the gate, and each, munching his corn, would co-operatively stick his head into the halter.

Dad taught us that in very cold weather the steel bit of a horse's bridle should either be warmed or dipped in water to coat it well with ice before it was inserted in the animal's mouth. Otherwise, mouth membranes would freeze to the cold bit and be torn off. I easily understood
the good sense and the humaneness of this procedure because, in an ill-advised moment when I was quite small, I had applied my tongue to a steel door hook in zero weather with extremely unpleasant results.

Because he liked and understood horses, Dad generally got along well with them. He had effective treatments for colic and other common horse ailments. But if a splint, a ringbone, a curb, or a spavin developed, he was helpless. For that matter, professional veterinarians were too. He was quick to recognize desirable qualities and could spot most blemishes at a glance. Windsuckers and heavers rarely got by him. He was not easily fooled as to an animal’s age, even by a gyp trader’s “doctoring” of the teeth. I suspect that much that he knew about horses had been learned the hard way; a large number of professional traders and dealers were rascals and crooks of the first water, and some of the tricks they resorted to for cheating the unwary were diabolically clever.

In spite of his knowledge of horseflesh, I recall two times when he was taken in. The first was when a professional buyer and trader came along with a sleek little nag that he offered for sale or trade. At the time Dad had a horse that he disliked, so, after some parleying, they swapped. Within a few hours we discovered that the new mare had the heaves, a horse disease in which the air vesicles of the lungs are permanently distended, causing a persistent cough and a characteristic heaving of the flanks. The animal had been doped enough to cause a temporary subsidence of all symptoms. This deal, embarrassing enough to Dad as it stood, was made even more so a day or two later. My brother, driving another horse hitched to the family carriage, ran into the dealer. “Why,” said the brazen
fellow, "not driving your new horse? How come?" "Aw," replied the guileless lad, "she's got the heaves."

Another time a band of gypsies stopped and offered for trade a handsome young sorrel built for speed and free from blemishes. Dad led out a horse he wanted to unload, and a trade was made. Our suspicions were aroused that night when we led the new horse to water. He made a sudden lunge and dashed through the door like a bullet from a gun. The following morning, my brother, warily currying the horse, stopped suddenly, stared a moment, then called out: "Dad, come and look at the readin' on this horse." Sure enough, high on his right hind leg was a brand that identified him unmistakably as a "Western." Somehow the nomad traders had hidden the characters burned into his skin and had done the job so skilfully that they were not noticeable at a casual glance. (To horsemen and farmers of the region all horses imported from ranges of the West were "Westerns." Almost invariably they were so wild, so nervous, so intractable, and so utterly unpredictable that it was impossible to tame or train them to a point where they could be used with any degree of satisfaction or safety. Doubtless a good rider of rodeo caliber could eventually have converted them into pretty fair saddle horses, but no one thereabouts was willing to risk his neck in such an enterprise.) Gingerly we hitched our Western to the wagon beside a steady, trustworthy horse. He leaped and reared time after time; he kicked, plunged forward, then suddenly fell back. Without the restraining influence of his well-trained mate he doubtless would have staged a devastating runaway, kicked someone to death, or broken his own neck. At length he balked and stood as stubbornly in his tracks as if he had been rooted
to the ground. We coaxed and wheedled, we urged him gently, and we used force. Aided by the other horse, we got him going again, by crazy leaps and lunges. Then he stopped in another dead balk. We tried everything in the book but got nowhere. Realizing that even if it were actually possible to break and train him to work the process would be too costly in time and effort, we returned him to his stall, and the next dealer who called took him away.

One evening all of us were riding homeward in the family carriage behind Dick, a big sorrel that Dad had just bought. At the sight of someone riding a bicycle, the horse, in wild panic, suddenly leaped sideways and, in spite of Dad’s skillful maneuvering, almost dumped us all into a roadside ditch. Thereafter, we scrupulously avoided using Dick as a carriage horse. Many horses at that time panicked at the sight of a bicycle. The machines were used in considerable numbers on the roads, but most riders courteously stopped when horses showed fright and aided drivers in controlling them.

An odd wagon-like contraption “whizzed” by our farm one day at about two miles per hour. Seated near the forward end, the driver propelled it by turning a crank vigorously with both hands. This vagrant fellow, traveling with bed and cooking equipment in his canvas-covered vehicle, was the first of the tourist tribe in those parts. His machine, the first horseless carriage on the local scene, could have been considered the forerunner of the engine-powered automobile that was to come a few years later and frighten most horses out of what wits they had.

The first automobile to appear in our community was brought in as a main accessory of a traveling medicine show. It was so big and so ugly that no one could justly
blame a horse for fearing it. Soon, other machines came, in motley array and in ever-increasing numbers. Our horses, like horses everywhere else, seemed to regard them as malevolent monsters with the most sinister designs against them. At the sight of one, even the most sensible and trusted of steeds became instantly obsessed by a mad desire to get away quickly, in any direction, by any means. It was practically impossible to control them. This made the use of horses on the roads exciting and, in many instances, hazardous.

Most of the cars in the early days were driven by doctors and local businessmen. Practically all showed utmost consideration for those who went on the highways with horses. A relatively small number of smart-alecky, cocky auto drivers made most of the trouble for other users of public roads and streets. They seemed to take an insane delight in scaring horses, splashing mud on pedestrians and forcing them to leap or run to escape from the juggernauts. Due to the behavior of these fellows, public hostility against the automobile was aroused everywhere. In this connection may be mentioned the “invention” of a local genius. His ire had been aroused to such a pitch that he considered attaching an extra-long scythe blade to the rear of his buggy. This was to be so arranged that it could be quickly swung to a horizontal position at either side of the vehicle for the purpose of “mowing down” discourteous road hogs when he encountered them.

A few horses had a mortal fear of threshing engines and locomotives. The sight of an unfamiliar animal, especially a large one, was terrifying to many. According to a family story, my grandfather, homeward bound one day with a heavy load of drain tiles, met in the road an
itinerant showman with two bears on leashes. His horses immediately bolted in wild panic. Unmindful of his sawing on their bits, they ran at top speed, the wagon bouncing and clattering behind them. Finally, after their mad flight had covered several miles, he managed to steer them, head on, into a rugged fence. That stopped them, panting and trembling, one on either side of the fence. He had to act quickly, slashing harness straps with his knife, to save them from strangulation. Man and horses were unscathed; it is questionable whether the tiles fared as well.

There was always a market for horses; one could sell or buy one whenever he wished. Few kept an unsatisfactory animal long. We always had an affectionate regard for a sensible, faithful horse and never saw one quit the farm without a twinge of sorrow and a fervent hope that he would fall into the hands of a kind, considerate person.

The principal objective in keeping cattle was the production of good beef animals. Average herds numbered perhaps ten or twelve head. Favored breeds were the Shorthorn and the Red Polled. Often there was a Jersey or two—in some cases Guernseys—in the herd for the purpose of insuring a richer milk output and butter of a higher quality. For a long time butter was the only dairy product that had any market value.

Sheep were kept somewhat sporadically—rarely did one see them regularly, year after year, on any farm. Flocks generally were kept rather small, mainly, it appeared, because of marauding dogs. We had sheep on the farm only about half of the time, ordinarily not more than fifteen ewes. Breeds most common were Shropshires and Merinos. Shearing was done with hand shears (usually by a man who specialized in that work), and the fleeces, unwashed
and tied with a special twine, were sold soon after. Few lambs were marketed until they had grown almost to full maturity.

Considerable caution was exercised in growing hogs because of the danger of hog cholera. Before the development of an anti-cholera serum in 1905, the disease occasionally wiped out entire herds within a short time. Generally, we had about three brood sows. We kept our hogs healthy by sanitary measures that included frequent changes of feeding pens and grounds. Breeds most often seen were Berkshires, Poland Chinas, and Chester Whites. Most farmers gave careful attention to the selection of all breeding stock, but there were few purebred animals.

Nearly all livestock was sold to professional buyers, most of whom were expert judges of quality, and could estimate weights with surprising accuracy. They assembled the animals in pens adjacent to railroad sidings and shipped them out to city markets.

Several of the horses and a few of the cows with amiable dispositions, exceptional intelligence, and tricks that we thought cute became special friends and pets of the family. Among them was a Jersey cow, so friendly and gentle that she was long a favorite. To the delight of visiting children, she allowed them to ride comfortably upon her back by the hour. A few bottle-fed orphan lambs became pets—and eventually nuisances. Like the lamb in the nursery rhyme, they delighted in following us wherever we went, though never to school.

My brother once bought from a neighbor a scrawny runt pig, which he installed in a pen specially built for him. Recalling the story of the handwriting on the wall, as recorded in the Book of Daniel; he named the pig Tekel
because, he said, if weighed in the balances, he would be found wanting. Tekel got the best possible care and an abundance of the choicest pig foods. He slept, snug and warm, in a little house provided exclusively for his personal use. Soon, a curl formed in his tail to become a permanent feature, and he began to grow thriftily. He became a conversation piece, an object of prime interest to visitors, nearly all of whom called him “Tekiel.” Tekel endeared himself to his owner and to all in the family. So much so, indeed, that by the time he had grown to mature hoghood and it became necessary to sell him to the butcher in town, we all felt sorrow and remorse, as if, in a way, we had become accessories to the murder of a friend.

We never went in for caged pets. I did one time make a wire-barred wooden cage with a large glass window in which I imprisoned a mouse taken uninjured from a trap, meaning to study it and learn something of its habits. A little later I caught a brownish, white-bellied, long-tailed wood mouse. I put him into the cage with the first specimen, one of the species commonly found in barns and houses. This, I soon learned, was a tragic mistake; the larger, more aggressive wood mouse attacked and slew his fellow prisoner. A day or two later he gnawed a hole in the wooden wall and made off for parts unknown.

We had no goats, but we had abundant opportunity to observe and study them. A man who lived near the school kept half a dozen, and we saw them twice daily as we went back and forth. At times we found one or two, like circus performers, walking nonchalantly along the top rails of the fence. All liked to climb to the top of the strawstack and stand there, like Barbary sheep on a mountain peak,
placidly gazing over the landscape. Often, an old billy would climb to the roof of the low barn. He seemed to derive a world of satisfaction from standing at the very peak, his long white whiskers waving rhythmically up and down as he chewed his cud and meditated.

Cats serve a useful purpose on the farm, preying night and day upon mice and rats; but for us it was always a case of too much of a good thing. The natural fecundity of these animals alone would have assured a cat population several times as large as we actually needed, but the number was artificially augmented with a fair degree of regularity by the foisting upon us of surplus cats from other farms. It was a common practice for a family, finding its current stock of cats too large, to collect a gunny sack full, load the bagged tabbies into the family carriage, and turn them loose miles from home. It was nothing to see a new cat or two appear among our regulars almost every week and settle down contentedly, adopting us without reservations, particularly after they learned that they could count on being well fed every day. Although direct evidence was lacking, we were certain that all those cats had arrived via gunny sack. From time to time we found ourselves with so many cats that they were a bothersome nuisance. Then we borrowed a leaf from the neighbors' book, weeded out the least desirable ones, bagged them up, and carted them away to find new homes.

We were all too chicken-hearted to kill any except in the case of one now and then that appeared incurably sick and therefore better dead than alive. Some of the boys we knew had no qualms whatever about using direct action for riddling themselves of unwanted cats. They thought nothing of shooting them in cold blood. Seemingly, how-
ever, they preferred to execute them by hanging. They took them to the woods, tied a cord about the neck of each condemned feline in turn and attached the other end of the cord to the top of a springy sapling that they had bent over. When they released the sapling, it snapped back to the upright position, hanging the cat as effectively as from a gibbet.

Our cats were given a pan of milk, warm from the cow, at milking time. They looked forward to this in happy anticipation and were always at hand to lap up all in the pan. There was a wise old tom who would sit, purring contentedly in a corner, as a sort of self-satisfied supervisor when we were milking. He learned the trick of opening his mouth widely as an invitation for someone to squirt it full of milk. He never minded in the least if, due to incorrect aim, the milk spattered over his face; he just swabbed it well with a paw, licked the paw, and got set for another shot.

I was a toddler, too young to remember the first dog that came into my life; but I heard the story told a good many times. My parents had come home from an afternoon visit somewhere. Just as they lifted me from the carriage and set me on the ground, Dad’s bulldog, an animal of which he was very fond and that up to that time had been perfectly gentle and friendly, suddenly set his teeth into my throat (the scars have been there ever since). Seizing a stick of stovewood, Dad slew the dog on the spot.

Penny was a rather large dog, gentle and safe as a playmate for small boys. He was intelligent, alert, a good stock dog, a marvelous rat catcher, and as fleet of foot as a greyhound. We were strolling through a field one day,
when Penny's sharp eyes fell upon a weasel running along the rails of a "snake" fence. A few long leaps brought him abreast of the weasel, and, when it sprang across a corner, Penny seized it in mid-air. His sharp teeth ended in a twinkling the career of that destructive animal. For weeks afterward the dog was embarrassed by a skunk-like odor that clung to him—in the momentary encounter the weasel had got in a shot from its artillery.

After he had been with us five or six years, Penny fell into the evil habit of prowling away from home at night. The habit grew until at last he spent nearly all of the daylight hours, when he was at home, sleeping. Thus he became practically worthless. Dad was very suspicious of the dog's nocturnal wanderings, feeling certain that if he were not already a sheep-killer he soon would become one. Prowling dogs often gather in packs. The marauding habits of their wild ancestors then tend to assert themselves. They begin to chase sheep, at first in fun. If one dies or is killed, they tear and rend the carcass, eating parts of it. The excitement and the taste of blood confirm them as killers. There was then, as now, a county fund from which owners were paid compensation for sheep killed by dogs. Nevertheless, farmers regarded sheep-killing dogs with bitter dislike, and the man who harbored one sooner or later found himself in bad grace with his neighbors. To be on the safe side, Dad took Penny away and had him shot. Very early the following morning, after a night of rain, a man who lived on a farm four or five miles away knocked at our door. "Bill," he said, "that dog of yours was chasing my sheep last night. Just tracked him in the mud right here to your house." When Dad protested that our dog had been shot the day before, the man stammered shame-
facedly that some mistake must have been made. We were all sure of that, and were glad that we hadn’t made the mistake of keeping Penny a single day longer.

The smartest and best dog we ever had was Kelly, a small Scotch collie. My brother bought him when he was a tiny pup. The first night he was with us was a painfully wild and restless one. No sooner did we get to bed than that homesick pup set up the most heart-rending wailing and yelping imaginable. Never, I suspect, has canine heartbreak been so vociferously articulate. There was no comforting him; nothing that could be done served to assuage his sorrow or quiet his distressful cries. Much sharp criticism and many ill-natured looks were directed at the dog’s master but, undaunted and undismayed, he stood up loyally for his grieving charge. Gradually, as the days wore on, the dog became accustomed to his new home and was able to sleep quietly at night. He early developed an astonishing talent for wallowing down and uprooting Mother’s flowers; but, luckily for all concerned, he soon gave that up for the exciting sport of stalking crickets. Next, he acquired the art of digging out and killing mice; he became a relentless foe of rats as well. He learned to be very useful in driving livestock. He was an exceptionally alert watchdog, loved to join in rough tussles, and was unexcelled at hunting rabbits.

The first independent carpenter work we boys tackled was the construction of a dog house. We wasted some good material and displayed a shocking lack of skill, but we finally got the thing assembled and nailed together. There was no denying that, from an artistic and architectural standpoint, it left a great deal to be desired; yet none of our dogs seemed to mind its deficiencies much or
to find other ground for serious criticism. With plenty of straw on the floor, they curled up in it and spent their nights in comfortable slumber.

Once an aunt gave us a pair of guineas. Wild and skittish birds, we had a hard time getting used to them; no doubt the difficulty was mutual. Their sharp eyes, like those of plane-spotters of early cold-war days, seemed ever to be scanning the skies. At the sight of any kind of hawk or other big bird they would set up a series of dreadfully raucous squawks—“Pot-rack! Pot-rack! Pot-rack!” If these cries didn’t actually scare away the hawks, they at least served to warn all the other fowl on the place to take cover. They were powerful fliers; soaring high above the tall barn was child’s play for them. They seemed to derive enormous satisfaction from perching at the very pinnacle of the roof. We gathered two dark-shelled eggs from the guineas’ nests every day. We enjoyed no end eating them—our very own eggs. We liked especially to take them, hard-boiled, in school lunches; they had very hard shells and it was fun to crack them against the heads of unsuspecting schoolmates. In a short time we found that there were more eggs than we could eat. Why not, we asked ourselves, set the eggs and go into the guinea business in a big way? Accordingly, we selected what we considered a trustworthy hen chicken with a strong determination to do some incubating. A full clutch of eggs was placed under her and we withdrew to let nature take its course. Three weeks went by, and not an egg pipped. The fourth week passed without results. Vainly, we waited and watched a few more days. The patient hen was all for going ahead with the venture, but we were convinced that proceeding further with those eggs would be a sheer waste of time.
for all parties concerned. We now began putting the obvi­
ous two and two together: since two guineas were laying
two eggs per day, and not an egg had hatched, both
guineas, we concluded, just had to be hens.

We raised turkeys several summers, but we never liked
them (on the hoof). During their first few weeks of life,
they are so delicate and so easily killed by chilling or by
disease that they require a great deal of care. No matter
how good the roosts and shelters we provided might be,
with mulelike stubbornness they invariably ignored them
completely and flew high into the trees for their nightly
repose. We might have excused that if they could have
been content to remain at home by day; they never were.
Our turkeys preferred to wander all summer long over
neighboring farms, often a mile or two distant, while our
neighbors' turkeys foraged over our farm. Because of their
roaming proclivities we always marked them for identifi­
cation by tying to one leg of each a strip of cloth of a
certain color. When time came to start feeding them for
market in the fall, we had to round them up like cattle on
the range, drive home the birds wearing our bands and
then contrive somehow to keep them there.

Late one summer, we completely lost track of our
turkeys. We hunted far and near and made diligent
inquiries but no trace of them could be found. Since the
flock of 100, almost fully grown, was worth some real
money, I set out to make a thorough search. I came upon
a flock shut up in a pen on a farm some two miles from
home. I noted that they were of a size and color to be
ours; the number tallied exactly, and tied to the right
leg of each bird was a yellow cloth band (all of our turkeys
had been marked that way). At the house I suggested as
tactfully as I could to the young woman who answered my knock that our turkeys seemed somehow to have gotten into their pen. “Oh, no,” she said, a little confusedly, “they’re not yours. Can’t be. Why, we raised ‘em, every one. I’ll swear on a stack of Bibles as high as this house that they’re ours.” I mentioned the yellow cloth markers, the size and number of the birds, their color—all tending, I suggested, to identify them as ours. All that, she declared, proved nothing. Approximately a week later those turkeys, not one missing, came strolling into our feed lot, and there they remained until we caught and crated them for the Thanksgiving market.

We got along better with chickens than with turkeys; they rarely strayed far from the feed lot. A little coop was provided to shelter each mother hen and her brood. Each morning in nice weather each little family was released from its coop to wander at will. A brick was set on end under a corner of the coop so that the hen and chicks could get back at nightfall. As a rule, the coops were let down after all were safely inside.

One evening this was forgotten. Toward midnight the household was awakened by a hen’s terrified squawking and a loud commotion that seemed to come from one of those little coops. Thinking of chicken thieves, we all ran to our windows and peered out in the direction of the sound. It was so dark that nothing could be seen. The hen’s loud cries continuing, Dad fired a shot from his revolver. Immediately there was a resounding crash; then all was still. We went to the coop at daybreak and were astonished to find in one corner a giant horned owl; in the opposite corner, as far from the owl as she could possibly push herself, was the hen. Peeping dejectedly
at a safe distance outside were the chicks. The sequence of the night's events was clear; the owl, inside the coop, had been so startled by the pistol shot that he knocked over the brick and the coop fell, making him a prisoner. One can well imagine the terror of the night for the hen, but she came through unscathed and all the chicks were safe. His hands protected by heavy mittens—probably not needed at all because not a particle of fighting spirit remained in the owl—Dad pulled the marauder from the coop and caged him. He was an unusually fine, large specimen; but no one in town could be interested in taking him to be mounted for display purposes, so Dad carried him to the chopping block and beheaded him.

A few hens in every flock of chickens would hide their nests where no one could get at them. It seemed to afford them inordinate pleasure to stroll out nonchalantly in the fullness of time with a big brood of chicks. There was no particular objection to this, except that in about half of all such cases they brought forth their progeny very late in the fall; then the chicks, scantily feathered, might not survive the low temperatures from that time on.