Osborn is the English corruption for polar bear or godbear in Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian, whether spelled Isbjorn, Esbjerne or otherwise. Our family story, is that our ancestor was one of two jarls, who got into England at the invasion of 800. The other was promptly killed, and sometimes I fear I have made certain persons wish both had been. George the Settler brought one wing of our family to America and others came during the Hugenot hegira to Massachusetts. The fact that there was much titled nobility in the family did not keep some of my forbears from being rebels. They fought with Cromwell in the Black Watch and with the Irish kings. For so long had they lived in the British Isles that they were scattered throughout England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. To this day a royal château on the Isle of Wight bears our family name and the favorite yacht of King Edward VII bore it also. A lot of us must have been naturally democratic despite those of the family who courted royal favor. Every movement of reform from the time of King John and the affair at Runnymede and on through the religious wars has been participated in by my kinsfolk. The American Revolution found most of the family in New Jersey and New York. As usual, a split occurred. Some became rebels under Washington and others were Tories; later these mostly went back to England or moved to Canada. To make a distinction the rebels dropped the final "e" and spelled their name "Osborn." The Tories retained the "e" and so ashamed were they of my grandsires that many of them made even greater changes in spelling, such as Osbourne, and even Gisborne. Some of the Gisbornes got as far away from us as they easily could by going to New Zealand, where they
founded a flourishing town. During a visit to Gisborne I had many talks about our common ancestors with my distant relatives, and much wholesome laughter.

My twice great grandfather, John Osborn, was a revolutionary chaplain and an uncle was a captain. Several others served as privates. The record of all is good without being especially dramatic.

My grandfather, Isaac Osborn, was born in a fishing village on the northwest coast of Long Island, in 1795. He carried a musket as a private in the War of 1812, and was slightly wounded at Lundy Lane. In 1818 he was married to Sarah Pardee at Guilford, Connecticut. One of my grandmother’s uncles had a private French school at New Haven, in the vicinity of where Yale College was afterward located. The fact that she was a refined young woman only made her more eager to help make powder and mold bullets during the War of 1812. The same heroic tendency inspired to abet my grandfather in his pioneering dreams. Finally they started to cross the Alleghenies with an ox team. Following the trail of westward emigration my grandfather located on the Ohio River at Madison, Indiana. He had been a fisherman and it was not such a big change to become a riverman. It was not long before he owned a flat boat and soon afterwards we find him trading as far down river as New Orleans. He would steer his laden boats down the current and sell his cargo and also his scows wherever the best trade could be made. Then he would return home overland.

There came a day when he did not return. Grandmother told me when I was a little boy that grandfather had a fleet of five flat boats on his last trip, laden with a miscellaneous assortment of hogs, cattle, wheat, corn, maple sugar, furs, beans, and so forth. He expected to realize between four and five thousand dollars for his outfit. He was last heard of after selling out at New Orleans and starting for home. Years afterward a lot of skeletons were found in a hole in a cellar underneath a tavern that was a kind of a backwoods, halfway house, near where Memphis now stands, where river traders horsebacking north were accommodated. It
turned out to be a worse murder trap than the Benders had in Kansas. So far as ever could be learned my grandfather was one of the many murdered at that place. He had had all of his capital invested in the outfit. It left my grandmother almost destitute. She just waited long enough for my father, George Augustus Osborn, to be born, a posthumous child, February 28, 1823, and then moved up to Cincinnati and, as she was fitted for the profession, became a school teacher until she married Amos Davis as her second husband.

My father was twelve years old at the time. He had learned to chew tobacco and swear on the river levee by the time he was three years old. I remember now with what needless chagrin he would discuss his boyhood with me—after he had become a man of as much probity of character as I have ever known, and a total abstainer from all forms of tobacco and liquor. He rebelled at once against the new step-daddy and very soon afterward ran away from home. By the time he was eighteen he had acquired quite some education, and owned a little water-power saw mill in the backwoods of Ohio, where only the best walnut logs were ripped up, the rest going into rails or wood or brush fires.

Amos Davis was a leading spiritualist, and was said to have possessed the most numerous library of books upon spiritualism west of the Allegheny Mountains. My father, who had become a Wesleyan, grew to hate his stepfather, and in seeking afterwards for a reason was inclined to attribute this to the spiritualism exci-
tant. He confessed to me that he burned his stepfather's books every chance he got, and was encouraged to do so by his Wes-
leyan Sunday school teacher, which glimpses the pioneer Buck-
eye intolerance of the day. In this way, to my deep regret, most of the great Davis library disappeared. I inherited a few of the books, and strange enough are they. One is an “Epic of the Starry Heavens,” presumed to have been written by disembodied poets, but proving that a poet can be no worse while in the body. An-
other is a mysterious work devoted to the subject of “Spiritual Transference of Thought,” and even of more substantial things.
As a boy I used to devour this ghost book until I could not sleep of nights. But none of it would my father have.

He sawed walnut lumber, built houses, hunted catamounts, deer, coons and squirrels, wrestled and studied medicine with an old doctor of the horse-syringe school. It was while in the backwoods of Piqua County, Ohio, at the village of Circleville, that he met and married Margaret Ann Fannon, my sainted mother. She was the most superb woman I have ever known, and I try to think of her apart from being my mother so that I can be certain she was most wonderful as all mothers are wonderful. I do not know much about her family because both of her parents died of a mysterious sickness within two days, when my mother was a babe in arms. The disease was called “milk sickness.” Nobody knew anything about it or how to cure it, nor do they to this time. During a critical epoch in Ohio and Indiana, hundreds of pioneers died from it. It was more deadly than the Indians and beside it “fever and agur” were just nothing at all. It was supposed to be caused by poisoned milk because it occurred at a certain time when the cows ranged in the woods and pastured, feeding upon many strange herbs. Dr. Victor Vaughan, dean of the medical school of the University of Michigan, than whom there is not a more earnest devotee of medical research in the world, writes to me that the “milk sickness” so-called of the pioneer days in the Ohio and Wabash basin, was and is yet a medical mystery. Happily it disappeared when the land was cultivated.

My mother was born at Circleville, Piqua County, Ohio, April 30, 1827. She was of immediate Protestant Irish descent, although her grandfather on her mother’s side was a McGrath and a great grandfather was a McKenna. When her parents died, leaving her a homeless, helpless baby, a big-hearted neighboring family named Hoblett took her to “raise.” The Hobletts had numerous children of their own but, as it was with most of the pioneers, there was plenty of room around the warm hearth stone of their hearts. Children were always being desolated by one tragedy or another and in belief that theirs might be next, a feeling developed that insurance for the future could only be had by acts
of kindness on all sides. It is not a bad investment to-day and can be depended upon right now to pay royal dividends of happiness.

The Hobletts saw to it that the eagerness my mother showed for learning did not go unappeased. They gave her as good a chance as their own youngsters had, and she took advantage of it, with the result that, although schools were crude and teachers equally so, my mother had a better education in her girlhood than most young women of the time. This she improved every day of her long and useful life. Of course she could cook, and knit, and weave, and on a pinch she was a good rifle shot, albeit she did not like wantonly to kill things. In this sentiment as in all things she was truly womanly.

The supernal matrix of life has an instinctive respect for all sentient things.

One evening in the Autumn a fat young buck joined the homestead herd of cattle that was foraging near the log cabin. There was no one at home except my mother. The deer would make the very best jerked venison for winter use. My mother took the big rifle down from its deer horn rack, softly opened the little window enough to admit the barrel, poked it through and shot the deer. I think this story fevered my boyish blood more than any other.

My mother was almost twenty years old when she was married to my father. This occurred in April, 1847. My father was twenty-four. It was getting to be too tame around Circleville for my father, so they soon made up their minds to trek to Indiana. Their first child, Eugene, was born in Ohio and then the little family in 1848 started off through the woods for the West. From that moment their lives were filled with work and unrest. They entered government land in Blackford County, Indiana, and fought malaria there. It was deadly. Two children died its victims. Other little ones came to take their place. Three more were born in Blackford, two daughters and a son—Emma, Georgiana and Stephen Pardee, named for my paternal grandmother’s brother, who had entered lands in what is now the heart of Chicago. On the land occupied there by my parents oil and gas wells
of great value were found later. In 1858 the moved to Huntington County, Indiana, where prospects for health and life seemed better. My father had become a doctor and my mother had been studying medicine with him. They had some practice but not enough to afford a living. To eke out, my father kept a little store, bought walnut timber, which was coming to have a small market value, and industriously traded.

Exciting times had brewed. Even before leaving Ohio my father had become a devoted abolitionist and was so earnest that he often aided negroes running away to Canada by driving Allen's "underground" railway, an inclosed night wagon that was used for spiriting negroes northward. In the "Tippecanoe and Tyler too," log-cabin campaign he had marched and carried a torch and a coon-skin banner and had riotously sung songs, and even tried to vote although he was only a slip of a boy. His open endeavor to vote before of age was a joke in the neighborhood for years. All this insured that he would have part in the inflammatory drama that was enacted in Indiana just before and during the war. No one who is not familiar with those border social conflagrations can understand them at all. Bitterness was not common in the far South until actual war was translated there. Nor did the furnace of passions reach such a great incandescence farther north. It was where the north and south came together along that line of frictional contact run by Mason and Dixon, that the feeling assumed a fierce rancor that made for monomania and homicidal obsession. There were more Copperheads than Union men in our part of Huntington County, but they came very far from having their own way. A Union flag was hoisted at the log school house, and a bloody fight in which bowie knives and rifles were used came off when the Copperheads tried to pull it down but failed. The Southern sympathizers wore butternuts as insignias of their sentiments. Their women were especially violent. More than once a riot broke out on Sunday at the services in the log meeting house. Men would generally go for the open, but the women would pull each other over
the benches, tear and scratch and pummel and drag each other around by the hair.

It is difficult to adjust the mind to a realization that these things happened such a short time ago. We have made advances on our way but the trail we must travel is still a long one and so often very dim.

In such an atmosphere I was born January 22, 1860, in Huntington County, Indiana, in a little log house of two rooms with one real glass window and two others of greased paper. Wabash, in an enjoining county fourteen miles away, was our big town. It had a population of over two hundred. There were meeting houses at Ætna, Lagro, Dora and New Holland, all near by, and about equidistant in various directions. Not far away were the Wabash, the Salimonie and the Mississiniwa rivers, beautiful streams full of channel cats and silver bass, now stealing quietly along some bepooled dark bank only to burst over a limestone ledge with golden transparency and jolly gurglings, just like the complexion and laughter of a Hoosier girl.

Judging from what I have been told by my parents and sisters and older brothers, I was one of those puny babies that modern eugenics would condemn to infantile death, indeed a peaceful issue of life compared with running the gauntlet of American politics and business, but not nearly so enjoyable. I could digest nothing and had, among other things, a bloody flux that drained my body of almost the last vital spark. But my mother was in advance of her time in baby raising. She made gruel for me of the germ scrapings near the cob of green sweet corn. This, with the delicate pulp just inside the skin of the grape, supplied nutrition. Outdoors in the air night and day, with rides on old “Snip,” held on a pillow, and walks in the same fashion won me strength slowly. Once they lost me off a pillow. It took a fight every minute for three years to save my life. Even then the first words I spoke as a babe were “Solly me”—sorry me.

My earliest recollection is of seeing soldiers in blue uniforms and of telling a lie to my mother. There is no connection between them. My mother to get rid of me and amuse me made a
fishing outfit for me by tying a thread to a gad on which she fas-
tened a pin hook baited with a little piece of plantain leaf. With
this she said I might go to a little nearby ditch and fish for frogs.
I do not even know whether there were frogs or fish but I think
none. However I returned with a famous story. I told my mother
that I caught so many frogs that I could not carry them and that
then I stopped catching frogs and caught fish and also caught so
many of them that I could not carry them. She did not ask me
why I had not brought all I could carry, but with much sober
concern quietly took me by the hand and carrying a large, home-
made bag in the other, started down to the ditch. My alarm was
terrible. I had not looked ahead at all and, as I was not yet four
years old, this did not betoken abnormal stupidity. On the way I
tried to convince my mother that the frogs and fish might all
have jumped back in; that in fact most of them had before I left.
She asked me why I didn’t bring home such as were left. After
much deep thought I replied that they were jumping around so
fast and were so slick that I couldn’t pick them up. On we went
to the scene of the big catch. My mother looked the ground over
and we marched back even more soberly than our going. When
we got to the house she talked to me about the sin of lying. Then
she made a lather of soft soap and thoroughly washed out my
mouth. I thought it the nastiest dose I had ever taken, although
children of that time and in that part of Indiana were dosed all
the time with all sorts of horrible stuff. After soaping my mouth
my mother made me kneel at her knee and ask God to forgive
me. That touched my little heart, and made an impression, with
many tears, that is as vivid now as it was at the moment.

My father enlisted for the war. He was promised an assistant
surgeon’s position. On his way on horseback to Indianapolis the
beast stumbled and dragged my father for a long distance through
the woods. His head was hurt, several ribs were broken, his spine
was injured and there were internal bruises. After that he was an
invalid for the remainder of his life. He was six feet tall, weighed
two hundred pounds, and had been a powerful man. His life had
been filled with energy that drove him to many deeds. Once he
had gone for a time, west of Iowa, among the Indians then wild, for study and exploration. On his way home from the trip he had been the house guest of Joseph Smith, the Mormon prophet at Nauvoo. Father told me that eight women sat at the table with the prophet and himself, and he understood all of them were wives. Joseph Smith was gentle in his household, father said, and although he greatly detested Mormonism, he always spoke kindly of Smith and regretted his assassination.

Two more children were born in Huntington County—Horace Edwin in 1862 and Charles Russell in 1864. My mother began to take the lead as a doctor. She had learned much from my father. Both had strong intellects. My father was impetuous and extreme. My mother was calm and lovely. Both had by now developed lofty characters. In 1857 my father had gone to Cleveland to study hydropathy at a sanitarium. The great water cure discoveries of Vincenz Priessnitz were taking hold of America, fostered by such English and American hydropathic propagandists as Gully and Shew. Heavy dosing was the order of the day until the average patient measured his prospects for recovery by the quantity of nauseous drugs he swallowed. To pretend to cure anybody of anything with just simple pure water seemed a grotesquery if not an insanity. But my parents were courageous and would not fool anybody even with a placebo. They compounded their own prescriptions and carried their own medicine as did most practitioners of the time.

The older children were growing up. Grandmother had been a school teacher. My parents realized the advantages of schooling. The opportunities in the backwoods were slight. So they decided to move by wagon to LaFayette. I had passed my sixth year, had helped to carry in wild turkeys my older brother Eugene had shot just back of our brush fence, and had heard the story in eager tones of the bear tracks in our deadening. I had tried to ride a bull calf with the willing help of my brothers and had done a lot of things that attached me to the place. The watermelon patch was a luscious place, and the melons grew almost large enough for me to hide behind. So I cried when they talked of
moving away. That did not postpone proceedings. One day the
things had all been loaded into three wagons, one of them cov-
ered for the family like a prairie schooner, and we started. We
had three teams and were regarded as rich. I remember father
and my older brothers marching beside their teams, and they
would let me walk as far as I could. Our two dogs, Carlo and
Rover, would dart off the road after rabbits, or bark as they treed
black and gray squirrels. Not infrequently they flushed wild tur-
keys. The meals we had on that trek were taken from boxes in
the wagon and cylinder receptacles of hollow logs with the ends
closed with skins. The elders shot game enroute, and we got fruit
that was mostly wild.

The rough road followed near the canal along the Wabash
River. Everybody called it the canawl. Swift packets, making as
much as six miles an hour, carried passengers and mail, and
drove a swash along the banks that looked to my boyish eyes like
a big ever-running water snake. We had plenty of snakes, too,
and I knew their motion—blue racers, black snakes and rattlers.
Mules and bony horses, driven tandem, plodded along the tow-
path driven by ragged, barefoot and often hatless boys. It was in-
teresting to see them pass the locks.

One afternoon the wagons started a down-hill run to cross a
creek that flowed into the Wabash. It was quite terrifying the way
the wagons swayed, but the worst was to come. When the horses
were midstream we heard a blood-curdling scream. The animals
plunged madly and ran as hard as they could in the water as they
were. I looked out and just ahead and off to the left I saw a mon-
ster coming and the horses saw it too. It was belching white
smoke and sparks, and I was certain we must be near the gateway
of hell and that this was the devil about to catch us and drag us
in. I had never seen or heard of a locomotive and had not seen
an engine of any kind. The fear it caused in me could not be
overdrawn. It was an old wood-burner on what was then the new
Wabash Valley Railroad, afterwards the Toledo, Wabash & West-
ern, and now the Wabash. The young children could not realize
and the older ones knew better, so I had a monopoly of fright.
There were seven of us children on this expedition, the youngest two years and the eldest eighteen.

How many women to-day would dream of starting on a single day’s railroad journey with seven children? However, I think they would if they had to, because women to-day are confronted by more dangers than their mothers were. Social pitfalls are worse than ever were Indian ambushes, and the suffering and death they bring are worse than the scalping wounds, or the tomahawk hacks of the gauntlet that maimed only the body and left the heart purer and the soul more serene than before.

We were over two weeks on the road. On rainy days we mostly camped while the older males hunted and fished for the larder. There was no travel on Sunday, and on Monday we stopped to permit mother and the girls to do our washing.

In this way we moved to LaFayette. Soon we were sumptuously installed in a big, three-story, frame house, with four acres of grounds surrounding, and barns, outbuildings, fruit trees, shrubs, flowers and gardens. Contrast this with the woods and the little log house we had left. We children thought it was a palace and our father a king. Aunt Goldthwaite had come out some time before from Connecticut to visit us and told us fairy stories, just enough to make us wonder and credit to the fairies all the things we could not understand. My present from Aunt Goldthwaite was a toy watch—we called it a “dumb” watch then. No Wal-tham, Patek-Phillippe, or Jurggeson since has been worth a quarter as much! Down below the hill reposed the city, and just then LaFayette was a sleepy place. Nearby were neighbors. Everything was as different as it could be. We had a real lamp with something green in the oil bowl and a ground glass globe and shining chimney. It was kept in the parlor, that holy of holies of the time, and never lighted. Candles made our light, and father used two at a time when he read, and snuffed them with his fingers in a manner that fired all of us with emulation.

The big house had a huge cellar. Soon there were mysterious goings on in it. My eldest brother was the only one of the children permitted the secret. But we learned when the time came
that father was an inventor; that he had devised one of the first stoves with an oven and that now he had designed a washing machine. We did not know that nearly everybody of that period had invented a washing machine, so when father sold out his patents for what seemed a large amount of money we took it as a matter of course. All of us had had plenty to eat and good enough clothing up to that time. But with the sale of the patent came still better days. Mother had two black silk dresses and father, wherever he got the idea, donned a frock coat and plug hat. I had seen a daguerreotype of him as a youth with a beaver on, and I know he was familiar with the advice of Polonius to Laertes. Then he went to Indianapolis and entered the Indiana Medical College, where he received a degree.

Once while father was absent the household was aroused in the night by thunderous knocks and loud calls. Good old Charley Kurtz, a neighbor butcher, called “Old Charley” because he had a son called “Young Charley,” on his way home from the Oddfellows, discovered that our house was on fire. It got a good start in the cellar, that was full of shavings from the washing machine models that were kept for kindling. It gave me one of the big scares of my young life. I escaped from the family circle, and in an obsession of excitement ran wildly about the place in my nightie. I was seven. There was a big patch of gooseberry bushes. Their thorns tore my limbs and body when I repeatedly ran through them as I cried out frantically for help.

The last child, William Douglas, was born in 1867, making ten in all with eight living—three girls and seven boys, with two girls and six boys living as I write these notes in 1916.