

Laura Ingalls Wilder's Autobiography

PIONEER GIRL

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Notes d'édition

Ce livre contient le texte original anglais de l'édition *Pioneer Girl: The Annotated Autobiography*, mais sans les annotations. L'autobiographie de Laura Ingalls Wilder vous est ainsi proposée sans informations superflues. La lecture s'en trouve grandement facilitée. Ainsi ce livre s'adresse particulièrement aux fans de *La Petite Maison dans la Prairie*.

Cette version électronique a été créée à l'aide d'un programme de reconnaissance des caractères (OCR). Il se peut donc que des erreurs se soient glissées entre les lignes malgré notre vigilance. Le cas échéant n'hésitez pas à les signaler sur la page d'accueil du site (<http://littlehouse.kif.fr>).

Notez que le texte anglais a été repris tel qu'écrit par Laura Ingalls Wilder. Certains mots sont ainsi orthographiés différemment, et certains mots ont été inventés par l'auteur. Ces écarts ne constituent pas des erreurs de reconnaissance et ont été conservés pour une fidélité maximale avec le texte original.

-R.F

Pioneer Girl

Lite

Laura Ingalls Wilder's Autobiography

CHAPTER 1

Kansas and Missouri, 1869-1871

Once upon a time years and years ago, Pa stopped the horses and the wagon they were hauling away out on the prairie in Indian Territory.

“Well Caroline,” he said “here’s the place we’ve been looking for. Might as well camp.”

So Pa and Ma got down from the wagon. Pa unhitched the horses and picketed them, tied them to long ropes fastened to wooden pegs driven in the ground, so they could eat the grass. Then he made the campfire out of bits of willow twigs from the creek nearby.

Ma cooked supper over the fire and after we had eaten, sister Mary and I were put to bed in the wagon and Pa and Ma sat awhile by the fire. Pa would bring the horses and tie them to the wagon before he and Ma came to sleep in the wagon too.

I lay and looked through the opening in the wagon cover at the campfire and Pa and Ma sitting there. It was lonesome and so still with the stars shining down on the great,

flat land where no one lived.

There was a long, scared sound off in the night and Pa said it was a wolf howling.

It frightened me a little, but we were safe in the wagon with its nice tight cover to keep out the wind and the rain. The wagon was home, we had lived in it so long and Pa's rifle was hanging at the side where he could get it quickly to shoot the wolf. He wouldn't let wolves nor anything hurt us and Jack the brindle bull dog was lying under the wagon guarding us too and so we fell asleep.

Pa built a house of logs from the trees in the nearby creek bot-tom and when we moved into it, there was only a hole in the wall where the window was to be and a quilt hung over the doorway to keep the weather out.

At night Jack always lay across the doorway inside and when I was waked by the wolves howling, I would hear Jack growling and Pa would say, "Go back to sleep! Jack won't let them in."

One night Pa picked me up out of bed and carried me to the window so I could see the wolves. There were so many of them all sitting in a ring around the house, with their noses pointed up at the big, bright moon, howling as loud and long as they could, while Jack paced before the door and growled.

Pa went to the town forty miles away and brought back a cook stove a window to put in the window hole and some lumber to make a door.

Some other people had come to live along the creek so we had neighbors. Some of them had broken the land and planted some crops for next winter.

When summer came everyone was sick with chills and fever so when the beautiful large watermelons were ripe we were not allowed to eat them. No one could eat them for to do so made their chills much worse.

We were all sick in bed at the same time except Pa. I think he was as sick as any of us but he staggered around and waited on the rest. When I waked and cried for a drink of water Pa would bring it to me but his hand shook so he would spill some of the water out of the cup when I drank.

One time I waked and there was a great, big, black man looking at me. He raised my head and poured some awfully bitter medicine down my throat from a spoon. He was the doctor but I was afraid of him for I had never seen a colored person before. Some time later we were all well again.

Our house was on the cattle trail where so many cattle were driven north and when one great herd was driven by, Pa got a black cow with great long white horns; and her little black calf.

We had such an exciting time with that cow, for she did not want to let us have any milk and would kick Pa over whenever he tried to milk her. Finally he built a pen, against the fence, that was so small she could not turn around in it. He would drive her in and put up the bars behind her so close she couldn't kick. Then he would milk her through the fence and she couldn't kick him.

Not to be used.

XX This story would be called "nature faking" if anyone read it, but it is true.

One day when Pa was riding Patty, the pony, across the prairie he went down into a little wash and found himself surrounded by a pack of wolves. The wolves must have just eaten well for they paid no attention to him. Patty was terrified and wanted to run but Pa held her down. He knew she could not run so fast as the wolves; that if she started the wolves would chase her and after chasing would surely kill them, for Pa couldn't kill a whole pack of wolves with just one muzzel loading gun.

Patty trembled with fear, but Pa made her walk and the wolves carelessly ran on by.

When they had passed Patty was shaking and actually sweating with fear and Pa wasn't much better. It took some nerve I'd say!

He came on home as fast as he could and told us about it.

Indians often came to the house and asked for anything they liked. Pa or Ma always gave them what they wanted to keep them good natured. Jack hated them and was kept chained so he could not hurt anyone.

The neighbors were afraid of him too and used to climb up on the wood pile quite a ways from the house and call, "Is the dog chained?" before they would come on to the house.

When the Indians took the notion of hanging around the barn and looking at Pet and Patty the black horses, Pa left Jack chained at the barn door to keep the Indians from stealing them.

As Mary and I were playing with Jack at the barn we saw two Indians go into the house. They looked awful. Their faces were painted, their heads were shaved, except for a bunch of hair on top that was tied so it stood straight up, and they were all naked except for a skin around the middle.

We were frightened and cuddled close to Jack with our arms around his neck for we felt safe with him. We said we would stay

with him and then we thought that Ma was all alone in the house with the Indians.

We did not dare turn Jack loose for we had been told we must never, never do that. If we went to help Ma we must leave Jack and he couldn't take care of us then.

We hesitated and swallowed hard and then we left Jack and ran as fast as we could to the house to help Ma if she needed us.

My! But we were two scared little mites when we got there. I was two years the littlest and I hid behind the stove. Mary clung to Ma's skirt. Ma was cooking food for the Indians and I knew she was afraid too. The Indians were looking at everything and taking all Pa's tobacco. The room smelled awful for the skins the Indians were wearing were skunk skins and they were fresh.

After a long time when the Indians had eaten all the food and taken Pa's pipe and all the meat we had they went away.

A great many Indians came and camped by the creek not far away and in the night we would hear the most frightful shouting and screaming. It sounded much worse than the wolves. Pa said the Indians were having their war dances and to go back to sleep for they were afraid of Jack and wouldn't come but whenever I opened my eyes, I would see Pa all dressed and walking around. Once I thought he was carrying his gun.

At last we didn't hear them any more at night and Pa said they had all gone away.

It was very dark outside. I could not see even one star through the window, the night I was waked by hearing Pa say "But Caroline I must go. I'm sure it was someone calling for help. Sounded like a woman and came from down the creek toward Robertson's. I must go and see what's the trouble." Then Pa went out into the dark and shut the door.

I didn't know when he came back, but in the morning he was there and he told Mary and I we must stay in the house because there was a panther in the creek bottom.

"Last night," said he "I thought I heard Mrs Robertson calling and I went down there to see if anything was wrong. But the house was dark, everyone asleep and everything quiet. I started back wondering what it could have been I had heard and just as I got near the place where the trees are thickest by the creek, I heard a panther scream down there. My hair stood straight up! It fairly lifted my hat and I made time getting home. Run! I should say I did run! I'm sure no panther could have caught me, but you girls can't run that fast, so you stay in the house until I say you may go out." But we heard no more of the panther.

Indians often stopped for a while by the creek, living there in their tents while they fished & hunted. One morn-

ing early Pa put me on Jack's back to ride and with Mary walking beside him took us to one of these old camps to see what we could see. We stayed there all morning hunting around finding a great many pretty beads that the Indian women had lost from their bead work. There were white beads and blue beads and yellow beads and a great many red ones.

When finally we went back to the house, the black Dr. was there and Mrs Robertson and Baby Carrie had come. Ma hadn't got up yet and Carrie was lying beside her. Such a tiny, tiny baby but Ma said she would soon be big enough to play with us. We were very busy then for a while putting all the pretty beads we had found on thread to make a string of beads for Carrie to wear.

So we had a baby sister to watch and laugh at.

It did not rain for a long time. The creek got low and the tall prairie grass turned dry and brown.

For days it looked smokey all around the edge of the sky and Pa said it was Indian summer.

One day the smoke seemed thicker at one side of the sky and Ma often looked that way.

Pa came to the door and said something to her, then went hurry-ing to where Pet and Patty were on their picket ropes. He hitched them to the plow and began to break a

furrow in the sod, a little way from the house, on the side where the smoke cloud was. He made the horses go as fast as they could, back and forth turning up the black ground. When there was a strip of plowed ground on that side, he made some furrows clear around the house and stable. Then he drove the horses inside the furrows and tied them tightly to a corner of the house. Patty's little mule colt had been following her, but now it seemed afraid and kept running around and whinnying, so Pa caught it by the little halter, it always wore, and tied it to the end of another log of the house. The cow was already on her picket rope inside the furrows.

Mary and I were much excited, though I didn't understand what it was all about. But just as the colt was tied a cloud of smoke blew around us and then I saw the prairie fire coming. The wind was blowing hard and the dead grass burned quickly. The flames came running across the prairie, leaping high and the smoke rolled above them. After that it was over in a few moments. The fire went roaring past, leaving us and our house and barn safe inside the ring of plowed ground, while all around as far as we could see the prairie was burned black.

Indians didn't come any more after the fire and we were all very happy and quiet until before Christmas it began to

rain. It rained so much that Pa couldn't go to town to tell Santa Clause what we wanted for Christmas.

He said the creek was up so high he was afraid Santa Clause couldn't get across it to bring us anything.

But when we waked on Christmas morning our stockings were hanging on the back of a chair by our bed and out of the top of each showed a bright shining new tin cup. Farther down was a long, flat stick of red and white striped peppermint candy all beautifully notched along each edge.

Mr Brown the neighbor from across the creek stood looking at us. He said Santa Clause couldn't cross the creek the night before so left the presents with him and he swam over that morning.

We all had the whooping cough that winter, even Baby Carrie, but spring came at last and we played out doors with Jack again.

Then the Indians came back. I sat on the doorstep one day and watched them pass on their path that went right by the door. As far as I could see, looking one way, they were coming, riding their ponies. First came the big Indians. On black ponies, and gray ponies, and spotted ponies and yellow ponies and red ponies they rode past. Then came the women and children riding too, and then

as far as I could see in both directions were Indians rid-

ing one be-hind the other.

Some of the women had babies in baskets fastened on their ponies and some had little babies tied on their backs.

When a woman rode by with a baby in a basket on each side of her pony and they looked at me with their bright, black eyes, I could keep still no longer. I wanted those babies and when Pa said “no”: I cried and was very naughty so that Pa picked me up and set me down in the house. “We have a baby,” said he. [“]I don’t see what you [want] those papooses for.”

But I did want them their eyes were so bright.

Soon after this Pa put the cover on the wagon again and hitched Pet and Patty to it. Then he and Ma took everything out of the house and put it in the wagon. Then we all got in the wagon and with Jack running under it we drove away leaving our little house standing empty and lonely on the prairie. The soldiers were taking all the white people off the Indian’s land.

On this journey out of Indian territory, before we got to Independence Kansas, we passed a covered wagon standing beside the trail.

A man and woman and some children were sitting on the wagon tongue but there were no horses.

Pa stopped to find out what was the trouble and see if

he could help.

They told him their horses had been stolen in the night.

Pa offered to take them to Independence, but they would not leave their wagon and things, so there was nothing he could do.

We drove away and left them sitting stolidly on the wagon tongue, looking off across the empty prairie.

Pa told some men in Independence about them, but we never knew if help was sent them or not.

All the neighbors went with us for awhile, then they scattered but we went on into Missouri. It was bad going for it rained making the roads muddy and the creeks and rivers high.

As we drove into one river to cross it Ma dropped baby Carrie down on the bed in the bottom of the wagon where Mary and I were and covered us over head and all with a blanket. "Lie still," she said.

I heard the horses making a great splashing in the water and the wagon went sort of funny. Then I heard Pa say, "Take the reins Caroline!"

Things seemed strange and Pa's voice sounded queer so I stuck my head out from under the blanket. I saw the horses splashing in the water and Pa was most all covered with water. He was at the side of Pet's head pulling at her. Ma

was driving but she saw me and said in a very firm voice, “Get back under the blanket and be still!”

‘What makes the horses walk so funny?’ I whimpered as I covered my head and Ma said they were swimming.

It was hard to stay covered and hear the horses splashing and once in awhile Pa’s voice talking to them.

Presently I felt the wagon move differently and dared to peep. Ma looked funny and white and there was Pa all dripping wet leading the horses up the steep bank of the river.

The water was behind us.

“Whew!” said Pa as he and the horses stopped to rest, “They’d never have made it without help!”

We waited then for the weather to settle and the waters to go down. We stayed for awhile in a log house with a big fireplace. Pa worked for the man who owned the house so we were alone with Ma all day.

Once when we were sitting by the fireplace we heard a great crackling up the chimney. Ma put baby Carrie in Mary’s arms and ran outdoors to see. She found the chimney on fire at the top. It was made of sticks and mud and the top sticks had caught on fire from a spark.

Ma took a long pole and knocked the blazing sticks off the top of the chimney. Some of the pieces of fire fell down

the chimney inside and dropped right at Mary's feet. She was so frightened she could not move, but I grabbed the back of the chair and jerked chair, Mary, baby and all clear across the room. Ma said I did well for a four year old.

Soon the water in the creeks went down and the weather was warmer. Pa traded the horses Pet and Patty for some larger horses and because Jack wanted to stay with Pet and Patty as he always did Pa gave him to the man who had them.

Then we went on our way in the covered wagon. After driving for days and days, sleeping in the wagon at night, until we were all very tired we came at last to the place we had left when we went west. The land was Pa's again because the man who bought it from him had not paid for it.

CHAPTER 2

Wisconsin, 1871-1874

Uncle Henry and Aunt Polly lived close by and we were so glad to drive into their yard and go into a house again. We lived with them until the people who were in our house moved away.

Uncle Henry was Ma's brother; Aunt Polly was Pa's sister and we learned that the cousins were double cousins almost like sisters and brothers. There were Louisa and Charley, then Albert and Lottie the baby a little older than Baby Carrie.

We had great times playing together, but after all we were glad when we could go home.

The house was larger than the one we left on the prairie. It was made of logs, but there were three rooms besides the attic. There were lots of windows and the house was very comfortable and cozy set down among the hills in the Wisconsin woods.

There were trees all around the house outside the yard and in the front yard were two great, beautiful oak trees.

One morning as soon as I was up I ran to look out of the window and there was a deer hang[ing] from a branch of each tree.

Father had shot the deer and didn't get them home until after I went to bed the night before. He had hung them up in the tree so that nothing could reach them in the night. They were so pretty I felt badly because they could not run around any more.

We ate some of the venison but most of the meat was salted and put away to eat in the winter, for winter was coming.

The days were shorter and frost came in the night.

Father Pa went away one morning with the horses and wagon and came back at night with a load of fish. The wagon box was full and some of them were so long the [y] more than reached across the wagon box. Father had been to Lake Pepin, seven miles away and caught them with a net. There were so many fish and so few people, in those days, that it was not wrong to do so.

We feasted on fish. Mother could cut large slices from the backs, of some of them, that would not have a bone, so Mary and I could eat it safely.

The fish we did not eat were salted down in barrels to be eaten later.

Father Pa had bought a pig from Uncle Henry. They caught it out in the woods; where everyones hogs ran, nearly wild; and put it in a pen to fatten. Pa would butcher it when the weather was cold enough to keep the meat frozen.

One night we heard the pig squealing terribly and Pa snatched his gun and ran out to see what was hurting it. A big bear stood by the pig pen as just as Pa got there it reached in to grab the pig. Pa saw him in the starlight and shot at him so quickly he missed.

The bear ran away in the woods so we lost the bear meat, but Pa said he had saved our bacon anyway.

We had the garden that had been raised by the people who moved away and now the potatoes and carrots, the beets and turnips and cabbage were gathered and stored in the cellar for the winter for freezing nights had come. Onions were strung in long ropes and hung in the attic. Pumpkin and squash were stored where they would not freeze. Mary and I played in the house now for it was cold out doors and the leaves were all brown and falling off the trees.

One day the sun was nearly hidden by smoke all day and when dark came the sky was reddened by fire. We stood in the door watching it and soon we could see fire run up to the tops of some trees on a hill and then the trees stood

there burning like great candles.

We heard gunshots off in the woods and Pa said, "Somebody's lost." He took down his rifle and fired it up at the sky several times and after awhile a man came to the door. He was a stranger and lost in the woods. Pa told him, if he had gone on the way he was headed, there was nothing but woods between him and the North Pole, whatever that was, but he turned and came in the direction of the shots Pa had fired. It seemed the "Big Woods" as Pa called them were just north of us a ways and they went on and on into the north. I thought our woods were big enough and was going to ask questions about the bigger one when Pa and the strange man went

out to fight the fire and Ma put Mary and me to bed in the trundle bed, the little bed that in the daytime was pushed out of the way under the big bed.

Father took his gun and went hunting one day and was not home when it began to get dark. Mother fed the horses and the pigs and wanted to do the milking, but black Sukey the cow did not come home. Sukey still ran loose in the woods finding a little grass here and there and Ma was afraid something had hurt her.

Ma was watching out of the window for Sukey, ready to go, when she did come, and let down the bars so she

could go into the barn yard. At last Ma thought she saw her standing by the bars that opened into the house yard. It looked like Sukey standing by the bars in the dusk, but she stood so still that her bell did not ring and she did not call as she usually did when she came home at night. Ma hurried down to let her in before it got any darker, but when she came near the bars, she turned around and ran as fast as she could back into the house and shut the door tight. She was scared and shaking for it had not been Sukey at all but a big black bear standing there looking through the bars into the yard at Ma.

After awhile Pa came home bringing Sukey from where he had found her hiding in the woods. The bear was gone!

The first snow came and the cold. Pa took his gun and traps and was gone all day setting the traps for muskrats and mink along the creek and for wolves and foxes and the big bear trap hoping to get a fat bear before they all went into their dens to sleep all winter.

One morning he came back took the horses and sled and hurried away again. Ma said he had shot a bear and came for the team to haul it home. Mary liked best to eat the drumstick of a chicken and, never thinking how much larger a bears leg would be, she jumped up and down saying, "I want the drumstick! I want the drumstick!"

When Pa came he had both a bear and a pig in the wagon. He had come on the bear just as he killed the pig and began to eat it, standing up on his hind legs and holding the pig in his forepaws just as though they were hands.

Pa shot the bear and as there was no way to learn whose pig it was, he had them both.

There was plenty of fresh meat now to last a long time but when Mary saw the great bear she did not want the drumstick.

The snow kept coming until it was drifted and banked against the house.

When the work was done, Ma would cut out paper dolls for us and let us cook on the stove for our play house dinners.

She taught Mary to knit, I was too little, she said, but sitting by watching I caught the trick first. Then with some bits of yarn she helped me start knitting a mitten for Baby Carrie. Taking great pains, with much hard work for days I finished one mitten. I wanted to stop then, but Ma said, one must always finish what she began and besides Carrie could not go with only one mitten, the other little hand would be so cold. So I began the second mitten and kept on knitting though it was much harder to do than the first, for I wanted so much to be doing something else.

At last after days and days I finished the mitten and put

it on Carrie's hand. And then I couldn't find the first one!

We all hunted and at last we found it. Wolf, the black and white spotted puppy had it under the bed and was chewing it. It was all in bits, completely ruined, so after all my work, Baby Carrie had only one mitten at the last. I cried some but Ma said, never mind I had learned to knit and had done wonderfully well for a little girl not quite four years old.

I stopped crying then because I didn't have to knit any more so it wasn't so very bad after all.

Pa went to his traps every day and came back with the skins of the animals he caught in the traps or shot. The trapping was good he said and he would have a lot of furs to sell later.

He would come in from his tramp to his traps, with icles [icicles] on the ends of his whiskers, hang his gun over the door, throw off his coat and cap and mittens and call "Where's my little half pint of cider half drank up?" That was me because I was so small. Mary and I would climb on his knees while he warmed a bit, then he would put on his coat and cap again and do the chores and bring in wood to keep a good fire.

We were very warm and snug and happy in our little log house in the woods, especially at night with the fire shining on the hearth and the dark and the snow and wild beasts

shut out but Wolf and Black Susan, the cat, with us by the fire.

Sometimes Pa would make bullets for the rifle to take with him in his hunting next day. He would melt bits of lead in a large spoon over the coals of fire. While it was hot as hot he would pour it through a little hole into the bullet molds and after a minute he would open the molds and drop out a bright, shiny new bullet onto the hearth. When he had made enough he would let them cool, then trim off with his jackknife, the little lump where he had poured the lead into the mold. When they were all finished he would put them in his bullet pouch. The pouch was a bag made of buckskin.

It was fun for us to watch Pa load his gun. He would pour some powder down into the barrel from his powder horn. Then he would pull the ramrod from its place at the side of the gun, drop it into the barrel and pound the powder down hard. Next he would take a little patch of greased cloth from the small tin box he carried them in, lay it over the mouth of the gun barrel put the bullet on it and with the ramrod push it down the gun barrel pounding it hard against the patch and the powder. He would put the ramrod back in its place on the gun, then take his box of gun caps from his pocket, take one out, raise the hammer of

the gun slip the little bright cap over the pin that was under the hammer and let the hammer down over it carefully. When the hammer went down hard as it did when Pa raised it, cocking the gun, and then pulled the trigger with his finger, the gun would go off and kill anything that was in front of it. When the gun was at home, it hung over the door. When Pa went hunting, he carried his bullet pouch full of bullets, his patches and box of caps in his pockets. The horn filled with powder and a small hatchet were hung at his waist and he carried his gun all loaded on his shoulder. Every time he shot at anything he had to stop and load his gun before he could shoot again.

Sometimes Pa would come home early from his day with the traps and guns. Then we would have great fun playing. One game we liked to play we called 'mad-dog.'

Pa would run his fingers through his hair standing it all on end; then he'd get down on all fours and growling would chase us around the room, trying to corner us so we couldn't get away. We were quick at dodging him but once he caught us by the woodbox behind the stove. Then Pa growled so terribly, his hair looked so wild and his eyes so fierce, that it all seemed real to us instead of just play.

Mary was so frightened she could not move, but I gave a scream as he started to come nearer and with a wild leap

I went over the woodbox dragging Mary after me.

Then there was no dog at all, only Pa standing there with his blue eyes so bright and shining looking at me.

“Well,” he said, “you may be only a half pint of cider half drank up, but by jinks you’re strong as a little French horse!”

“You shouldn’t frighten the children so Charl[e]s,” Ma said. But Pa took his fiddle and began to play “Yankee Doodle.” When he began to sing, “Yankee Doodle went to town he wore his striped trousers,” we were so interested we forgot all about the mad dog and leaned against his knee to listen as he sang on. “And there he saw some great big guns big as a log of maple and every time they turned [em] round it took 2 yoke of cattle & every time they fired [em off] it took a horn of powder. It made a noise like fathers gun only a nation louder.”

The day before Christmas, Aunt Eliza and Uncle Peter with the cousins Peter and Alice and Ella came over the snow to spend Christmas. Uncle Peter was Pa’s brother and Aunt Eliza was Ma’s sister, so these were double cousins too. The little log house was full and running over. Black Susan ran out of the cat hole in the door and hid in the stable and Wolf was very much excited and ran and barked in the door yard.

We played so hard that when night came we were too excited to sleep and a little afraid to go to bed after Pa told about Grandpa and the panther.

Grandpa lived in the Big Woods in a log house like ours. He went to town one day and was late starting home. It was dark as he rode his horse through the woods and when he heard a panther scream behind him he was frightened for he didn't have his gun. "How did a pa[n]ther scream?" we asked. "Oh like a woman," Pa said, "just like this." Then he screamed and we all shivered.

Well the horse, with Grandpa on him, ran and ran for it was scared too and the panther kept following and once in awhile would scream. It sounded first from one side of the road and then from the other. At last Grandpa had a glimpse of it as it crossed the road behind him, but he was almost home then. As the horse ran up to the house, Grandpa jumped off against the door fell through into the house and slammed the door shut behind him.

Grandpa grabbed his rifle from over the door and jumped to the window just as the panther sprang on the horse. The horse screamed awfully and started to run with the panther on his back and Grandpa shot the panther dead. He said he'd never go in the woods again without his gun.

We huddled closer together and Ma said, "you shouldn't

frighten the children so just before bed time Charles. Look how big their eyes are.”

But Pa said, “Oh well, I’ll play the fiddle to them and it will be all right. [”] So we hung our stockings by the fire and were put to bed, Mary and Alice and Ella and I all in one big bed on the floor and Pa played Old Zip Coon and Money Musk, The Red Hieber, the Arkansas Traveler and we went to sleep with the fiddle and Pa both singing My Darling Nellie Gray.

In the morning we found candy and red mittens in all our stockings. We ate good things and played all morning. Mary played out doors in the snow with the cousins, sliding down the drifts and making snowballs, but because I was so small, I could be out only a little while.

After the Christmas dinner Aunt Eliza and Uncle Peter bundled the cousins into the big sled among the blankets and they all went home.

After Christmas we began to be tired of staying in the house an[d] especially on Sundays the day seemed long. We were dressed all in clean clothes with fresh ribbons in our hair and were not allowed to knit or sew or be noisy in our play.

Ma read us stories out of the Bible or about lions and tigers and white bears out of Pa’s big, green book “ The

Polar and Tropical Worlds.”

We liked best to look at the pictures in the big paper covered Bible and there were two we always lingered over. One was Adam naming the animals. Adam was sitting on a big rock and all the animals big and little were standing or sitting around him. Adam looked so comfortable. He didn't have to be careful of his clothes for he had none on except a skin around his waist and the animals wouldn't get that dirty even if they did put their paws on him as Wolf was always doing to me. It must have been fun naming the animals for we had so much trying to tell Ma the names of them all.

The other picture we liked was of the Flood with people and animals all mixed together climbing out of the water onto a big rock.

But Sunday at best was a long, tiresome day.

One Sunday afternoon I was naughty and made such a disturbance playing with Wolf that I was told to sit in a chair and keep quiet for awhile. Then I was naughtier still and cried and kicked until Pa had to speak to me.

After supper he said “Come here Laura and I'll tell you about one Sunday when Grandpa was a boy.[”] So he lifted me up on his knee and with Mary sitting close began—

“When your Grandpa was a boy, Sunday began at sun-

down on Saturday night, then everyone stopped working and playing. Your Grandpa and his brothers James and George didn't mind stopping work but sometimes they did not want to stop playing. When bed time came, your Grandpa's father read aloud a chapter from the Bible while everyone sat very still and straight, then they all knelt down by their chairs and their father said a long prayer. When he said Amen': everyone got up from their knees and went to bed.

Sunday morning after breakfast, they all dressed in their best clothes and went to church.

In the church while the preacher preached for an hour or maybe two hours, your Grandpa and his brothers must sit very still on their bench. They dare not whisper nor swing their feet; but sat still with their eyes on the preacher. It was much longer than you had to be still Laura.

When preaching was over, they went home and ate dinner that had been cooked the day before. Then all afternoon your Grandpa and his brothers could not play but sat quiet and studied their catechism until the sun went down and Sunday was over.

Your Grandpa's fathers house was about half way down the side of a steep hill. The road went from the top of the hill right down past the front door and on to the bottom of

the hill. It was a wonderful place to slide down hill in the winter.

One week you[r] Grandpa and his brothers James and George worked hard all their play time making a wonderful new hand sled, long enough so all three could ride it at once down the hill. They tried their best to have it ready to play with Saturday but their father kept them working longer in the woods, so that they finished their sled just as the sun went down and Sunday began.

Of course they couldn't slide down the hill even once for that would be breaking the Sabbath and their father wouldn't allow that. So they put the sled in the shed behind the house to stay until Sunday was over.

But all the time they were sitting in church next day, keeping their feet still and their eyes on the preacher, they were thinking about the new sled.

At home after dinner their father sat and read the Bible while your Grandpa and James and George sat as quiet as mice on their bench and studied their catechism. The sun shone brightly outside and the snow was smooth and glistening on the road, they could see out of the window. They kept thinking of the new sled instead of learning their lesson and it seemed as though sundown would never come.

After awhile they heard their father snore and looking

at him they saw that his head had fallen against the back of his chair and he was fast asleep.

Then James looked at George and tiptoed out of the room through the back door. George looked at your Grandpa and tiptoed after James and your Grandpa looked fearfully at their father but on tiptoe followed George and left him snoring.

The boys got their new sled and went quietly up to the top of the hill. They thought they could coast down just once, walk back up, put the sled away and slip back into the house before their father waked.

James sat first on the sled, then George and then your Grandpa because he was the littlest, like you Laura.

The sled went beautifully, but they dare not shout. Instead they kept quiet as mice to slip by the house without waking their father.

Then just before they got to the house an old sow, you know, a mother hog, walked out of the woods at one side and into the road. They couldn't stop and the sled slipped under her. She sat down on the front of it with an awful squeal and rode on past the house screaming "Squ-e-e Squ-e-e[""] as loud as she could.

Just as they flashed by the door, the hog sitting in front, then James, then George, then your Grandpa, they saw

their father standing in the door looking at them. Then on down to the bottom of the hill they went, the hog squealing all the way.

Back up the hill they walked while the hog ran off into the woods still squealing.

They put the sled away, slipped quietly in at the back door and sat down on their bench. Their father was reading his Bible. He looked up at them never saying a word, but when the sun set and the Sabbath day was over, he took them out into the woodshed and tanned their jackets good, first James, then George, then your Grandpa.

Now run along and let Ma put you to bed and be glad you don't have to be still as long as children did on Sunday when your Grandpa was a boy."

Then Pa took up his fiddle and we went to bed and to sleep while he played and sang, "There is a Fountain," and Rock of Ages.

Uncle Tom Quiner, Ma's brother, came to make us a visit. I liked Uncle Tom, he was always so pleasant and he dressed so nicely. He brought Ma a book called "Millbank." Ma said it was a novel and not for little girls but she read it aloud to Pa at night by the light of the glass lamp and Ma read it aloud to us all in the evenings.

Pa's brother George came too, but I did not like him so

well. I heard Pa say to Ma that George had been wild ever since he came from the army and any little girl would be afraid of a wild man.

We went to a dance at Grandpa Ingall's house in the Big Woods and Uncle George blew his bugal for us.

Uncle James was there too. He had been in the army the same as Uncle George but he was not wild for I asked him and he said he wasn't. He had a little girl named Laura too.

Aunt Libby and Aunt Docia looked so pretty but they couldn't dance a bit better than Grandma and her dress was as pretty as theirs.

There was a dance at Mr Huleatt's too and we all went, riding all bundled up in the big sled. Mr Huleatt was an Irish gentleman Ma said. His place was called Summer Hill and everyone was proud to be invited there. When the dance began, Carrie was put to sleep on the bed among our wraps while Ma danced with the rest. Mary and I sat at the side of the room and watched and listened to the music. Pa played his fiddle part of the time. Right in the midst of the liveliest dance, I heard Carrie cry. Out I went into the middle of the floor, seized Ma's skirts and pulled. "Carrie is crying," I said. Everyone stopped and it was awful until Ma smiled at me and said "Go stay with her! I'll come in a minute. ["] Then I ran to the bedroom while the dance went on.

After awhile I had a birthday. I didn't know anything about it until when I got up in the morning, Pa played spank me, four spanks, one for each year. Then he gave me a little wooden man he had whittled out of a stick. Ma and Mary gave me a rag doll that Ma had made and Mary helped dress. And I was a great girl 4 years old!

Early one morning Pa tucked us all into the big sled and drove us away to spend a day and a night at Aunt Martha's. Aunt Martha was Ma's sister and Will and Joe, Letty and Nannie and Millie and the twin babies were just cousins, not double.

It was a long drive and only Millie and the babies were at home with Aunt Martha when we got there. The others were in school. All the other boys and girls in the school were Swedes and the cousins could talk in their language as well as English. Mary and I went back to school with them after dinner, the school house was so close.

A crowd of boys and girls were playing in the yard as we came up, snowballing and washing each others faces in the snow. "They are so rough they hurt you" Letty said and then "Run, Laura, Gus will get you!"

I ran, but Gus caught me, held me under one arm and began washing my face with the cold hard snow. He was barehanded and his hands were big and red. I fought but

couldn't get away, then as his hand came up to my face with a fresh handful of snow, his thumb was right before my mouth. I set my teeth in it as hard as ever I could. Gus yelled and let go of me shaking his hand while blood dripped from his thumb, just as cousin Will came running up to help me. He stopped looked at me, then at the thumb and said "Well Gus, I guess you'll learn to leave Laura alone!"

I didn't like school and was glad when it was time to go home. We played up stairs in the big loft while Aunt Martha and Ma got supper. We fought a little and made lots of noise so that Ma opened the stair door to tell us to be still. Nannie was crying because Will had pulled her hair; Joe was chasing me around the room threatening me because I had scratched his face and Mary and Letty were trying to catch Joe. I heard Aunt Martha say to Ma "You go up Caroline and spank them all. I'll go next time." Ma came up and spanked Will and Joe for being rough, Nannie for crying and me for scratching and Mary and Letty for helping make such a noise. Then she went down and we were quiet. Aunt Martha didn't have to come up.

It wasn't long then until one day Pa said it would soon be spring. The snow had begun to thaw and he must go to town with the furs and hides he had got with his hunting and trapping all winter. So early in the morning he made

a big bundle of them, fastened the pack on his back and started out to walk the seven miles to town. There were so many furs to carry he did not take his gun.

He was gone all day and was not back when Mary and I were put to bed so we went to sleep without the music of the violin.

In the morning he was there. Ma gave us some candy he had bought for us and there was some pretty calico he had brought for us each a dress. Ma had calico for a new dress too we were all glad he had got so much money for the furs that he could buy us such nice presents.

That night Pa told us about how he came home from town.

The walking had been hard on the slippery snow and it had taken him a long time to sell his furs and do his trading.

“It was sundown when I got started home,” said Pa, “and then it got dark. I tried to hurry, but the walking was bad and I was tired, so I hadn’t gone far when it got dark.

“It got darker and darker and I wished I had my gun for some of the bears had waked up from their winters sleep and come out of their dens. They were hungry and cross as they always are then and I didn’t know but I might meet one. I had seen some of their tracks beside the road as I went to town in the morning.

[“]It was so dark, it was black as pitch where the woods were thick, but by and by I came to an open place in the woods. I could see the road ahead a little way and there right in the middle of the road stood a big black bear.

[“]He was standing up on his hind legs looking at me. I could even see his eyes shine like Susan’s eyes shine in the night you know.

[“]I thought if I could scare him he would get out of the road and let me go by, so I hollerd and hollerd but he never moved. I was scared! My scalp prickled and my hair stood straight up like this,” and Pa ran his fingers through his thick hair standing it all on end.

“I just had to get past that bear to get home, so I gathered me a good, big club from the woods beside the road. I went straight at that bear yelling and swinging my club as hard as I could I brought it down, Bang! on his head. And there he still stood but he was just a big, black, burned stump that I passed every time I went to town. It wasn’t a bear at all. I had been thinking about bears you see, afraid I would meet one and things look different when you’re scared.

[“]And now, if you’ll climb down off my knee Laura, I’ll let the weasel pop out of the fiddle.”

Then he took the fiddle out of its box and began to play

the tune we knew was “Pop Goes The Weasel.” “Watch close”! Pa said, “there where my fingers are and he’ll pop out pretty soon.[”]

Mary and I drew closer and breathlessly watched Pa’s fingers on the strings. We knew we were going to be startled and loved it. Then the fiddle said plain as plain: ‘Pop’ goes the weasel and we both jumped and screamed and the fun was over.

When spring came Mary and I moved out under the big trees in the front yard. One tree was my house and one was Mary’s. Each of us had her dolls and housekeeping things under her tree and I had besides a swing made of tough bark fastened to one limb of my tree.

One day I wanted so much to be out under my tree for I had the most beautiful china cup with only one crack in it to add to my store of dishes, but Ma would not let me go. She was unrolling my hair from the strings of cloth on which it had been tightly wound and tied to curl. Aunt Lottie was coming to visit and I must be made pretty for her to see. Mary was all ready, with her golden hair hanging in long curls and her pretty blue dress so fresh and clean. I liked my dress better because it was red, but Ma pulled my hair dreadfully and it was brown instead of golden and no one noticed it as they did Mary’s.

“There,” said Ma [“]at last your hair is curled beautifully and Aunt Lottie is coming. Run meet her both of you and ask her which she likes best brown curls or golden curls!”

We ran out the door and down the path for there came Aunt Lottie through the yard from the road. She was a great big girl twelve years old. Her dress was a lovely pink and she was swinging a pink sunbonnet by one string. She took each of us by the hand, and one on either side we danced along to the door where Ma stood.

We went on into the room with the cookstove so bright and shining, the table with the red cover and the sunshine streaming through the windows. I could see into father’s and mother’s room, with the trundle bed showing underneath. The pantry door stood wide open giving us the sight and smell of goodies within and Black Susan came purring down the stairs from the loft where she had been sleeping on the company bed. It was all so pleasant and I felt so gay, you never would have thought I would be so naughty as I was in just a little while.

Aunt Lottie had gone and Mary and I were tired and cross. We were out behind the house getting a pan of chips for Ma to kindle the fire in the morning. I grabbed the biggest chip and Mary said “Aunt Lottie likes my hair the best anyway. Golden hair is lots prettier than brown.” My

throat swelled up and I couldn't answer for I knew golden hair was prettier than brown. I couldn't think of anything to say, so I just reached out quickly and slapped her face. Then I heard Pa's voice, "Come here Laura!" he said and I went dragging my feet to where he sat just inside the door.

"You remember," said he, "I told you girls never to strike each other?"

"But Mary said" — I began.

"That makes no difference" said Pa and he took down a little strap from the wall, laid me across his knee and spanked me with the strap. Then I sat in a corner and sobbed and sulked for awhile.

At last just when I had noticed that it was getting dark outside, Pa said, "Come here Laura!" and when I went he took me on his knee again but right side up this time. Mary sat on her little chair beside us. (She had to get the whole pan of chips by herself.)

I sat within the crook of Pa's arm with his long, brown whiskers partly covering my eyes and Pa said —

"When I was a little boy, I used to have to go find the cows in the woods and drive them up at night. My father told me never to play by the way but to hurry along and get the cows home before dark for there were bears and wolves and wildcats in the woods.

One evening I started early but there were so many things to look at along the way that I forgot about dark coming. There were red squirrels playing in the trees, chipmunks scurrying through the leaves and rabbits running and playing before they went to bed.

I played I was a mighty hunter stalking the game and fighting Indians until the woods seemed full of wild men and beasts and then all at once I heard the birds twittering good night and saw that it was dusky in the path where I was and quite dark back in the woods.

And then I couldn't find the cows!

I listened but I couldn't hear the bell. I called and called, but they didn't come nor answer. I was afraid of the dark and the Indians and the wild beasts, but I dare not go back without the cows so I ran here and there calling and getting more and more scared.

Then something right over my head cried 'Who-o-o-o.' My hair stood straight on end and then I did run for home. I ran and ran! Once something seemed to reach out and grab me by the foot. Down I went, but I jumped up and ran faster than ever. Not even a wolf could have caught me I'm sure.

Two or three times I heard 'Who-o-o-o' behind me but at last I came out of the woods by the barn and there stood

all the cows waiting to be let through the bars. I let them through into the yard and sneaked into the house. My big toe hurt and I looked down and saw that the nail had been torn clear off, when I snagged it and fell I suppose but I had been so scared I never felt it hurt until that minute.

My father looked up and said [“]Young man what made you so late? Been playing by the way?[”] And then he tanned my jacket because I hadn’t minded. ‘If,’ said he [“]you’d do as you are told you wouldn’t be scared by an owl.’

“Now run along,” said Pa “and let Ma put you to bed. I’ll make the old fiddle sing for you a little. [”]

When we had said our prayers, for Ma, and she had tucked us into the trundle bed I lay awake awhile thinking how much better it was to mind fathers who knew all about owls and things. Then I fell asleep while the fiddle sang ‘Home Sweet Home.’ I knew that tune for Pa had taught me which one it was.

When the warm weather really came Mary went to school for the school house was only a little way down the road. She had a beautiful new book and a bright new dinner pail. I wanted to go too but Ma said I was too little and must wait until I grew more. It was lonesome at home all day without Mary for Carrie was so little. I would run down the road to meet Mary when it was time for her to come

and carry her dinner bucket. Nearly always she had left bits of her dinner for me and always she brought her primmer. While Ma was getting supper Mary would show me the letters and the words she had learned that day, until, to Ma's surprise, I could read as well as Mary.

The book was so pretty with pictures of cats and dogs and birds and trees. I was proud when I could read for Ma, about the tree.

“The sun is up and it is day,
The dew is on the new mown hay,
But it did not wet the old oak.”

But I was horrified when one day I read a little story beginning “Laura was a glutton,” and Ma explained to me what a glutton was. I could hardly be comforted even when she said it did not mean me, and I need not be like that though my name was Laura.

One Friday, when Mary was to speak a piece at school, Ma said I might go with her. She put my dinner in the pail with Mary's and dressed me in a pretty white dress. Mary and I went down the road to the school house, swinging the dinner pail between us. I had a wonderful day. Cousin Louisa and Charley were there and Eva and Clarence Huleatt

whose Grandpa lived at Summer Hill besides lots of boys and girls I didn't know at all.

Ann Berry was the teacher. Her father Captain Berry had brought a Negro boy home with him from the war. Everyone called him Captain Berry's nigger.

This black boy came over to watch us play at the last recess and stood laughing at us with the whites of his eyes and his white teeth shining and then a dreadful thing happened. I ran so fast in my play that I stubbed my toe and fell hard in the soft, green grass and there on my pretty white dress was a great grass stain. Cousin Louisa said it would never come out and I cried, but Mary told me she was sure Ma could fix it and I felt better.

Mary and I saw Eva and Clarence Huealett quite often, because their father and mother and ours were great friends. They called their farm Okland.

Eva was a pretty girl with black hair and dark eyes. Her dresses were always pretty. Clarence' hair was red and his face was freckled, but he was always laughing and great fun to play with. His clothes were pretty too with braid and bright gilt buttons and copper toes on his shoes. When we played house Mary and Eva always kept house together and Clarence and I. I heard Ma say to Mrs Huealett that maybe we would some day. Who knew?

It was a happy summer. We went with Ma to gather berries and brought home buckets full; we found birds nest; we gathered flowers and played out doors all the long bright days.

Sometimes we would go down the hill to see Mrs Peterson, the Swedish woman who showed us pretty things she had brought from Sweden and who always gave us each a cookie when started home.

We nibbled them as we went up the hill but we each always saved half a cookie for Baby Carrie.

We saw that it would not be fair for Mary to save half of hers for Carrie while I ate all mine. Neither would it be fair for me to save half mine while Mary ate all hers, but if we each ate only half and saved the other half for Carrie, it must be right.

When the grain got ripe in the fields Uncle Henry helped Pa cut his and then we all went to spe[n]d the day at Uncle Henry's while he and Pa cut his grain. Ma and Aunt Polly worked in the house but we cousins played in the yard all except Charley. He was a big boy and went to the field with the men in the afternoon to carry the water jug to them when they wanted a drink.

Pa and Uncle Henry were cutting the grain with cradels, a steel blade fastened to a wooden frame with slats that

caught the grain as it was cut and a curved handle to swing it by. It was hard work to cut the grain that way, walking around and around the field, swinging the heavy cradels and dropping the grain in little piles and they were glad it was only a little field.

Charley was a bad boy and made all the trouble he could, getting in the way and hiding the whetstone so they could not sharpen their blades.

Finally he began to follow them around the field talking to them. They were too busy to pay much attention to him, but stopped quickly and ran to him when he screamed. They thought a snake had bitten him, but nothing was wrong and Charley just laughed, at them so They took a drink of water and went back to work.

Three times Charley fooled them and laughed. Then again he screamed louder than ever, hut Pa and Uncle Henry were tired and hurrying to get the cutting finished before night, so when they looked back and saw Charley just jumping up and down screaming as he had before, they went on with their work.

But he kept screaming and at last they went back to him. He was jumping up and down on a yellow jackets nest. The bees were stinging him all over and the more he jumped and screamed and threw his hands around the more they

stung him.

He was pretty badly hurt because Pa and Uncle Henry had been fooled so many times, they didn't run quickly to help him.

Pa was too tired that night to tell us any stories. His hands were tired and he couldn't even make the fiddle sing us to sleep, but we had played so hard we were sleepy anyway.

Only I did wonder how Charley lied. Pa had said "It served the little liar right" but I couldn't understand how Charley could have told a lie when he hadn't said a word.

Mary's tree, out in the yard, with her play things under it, was struck by lightning one day in a storm. The tree wasn't killed but one side of it was made dead and the branches broken off.

Summer was over and Jack Frost came again. The leaves on the trees were all brightly colored. Carrie was old enough now to sleep in our trundle bed and Mary and I slept in the attic with Susan the cat sleeping at the foot of the bed to keep our feet warm.

Pa sold Sukey, the cow, and when I cried, he said we were going to Uncle Peter's to stay and could not take her. He said we could not take Wolf or Susan, but Mrs Peterson was coming to live in our house and she would keep them.

Then one day Ma put our things in boxes, Pa loaded

them into the wagon we all got in and Pa drove a long time through the woods.

The farther we went the bigger the trees were and nearer together, until at last we came to Uncle Peter's. Uncle Peter lived in the Big Woods. His house was made of logs and stood in a little cleared place with the great, tall, dark trees all around it.

Uncle Peter, Aunt Eliza and the cousins Alice and Peter and Ella were glad to see us. Baby Edith was too small to know us but she laughed at me and held out her little hands. They all called her Dolly Varden because she had a pretty dress of calico that was called that.

Mary and the cousins began going to school the next week. The log schoolhouse was only a little way down the road and sometimes they would take me, drawing me over the snow on their sled. They took lunch in a bright tin pail and ate it with all the other children in the school house.

At home we played out doors in the snow for it was soft and deep. Where the trees had been cut down around the house their stumps were so close together that Mary and Alice and Peter could jump from one to the other.

Ella and I couldn't jump so far, but we would climb up on a stump, spread our arms wide and fall off into the snow face down, then get up carefully not to spoil the marks. We

called it making our pictures.

Then we took the Scarlet Fever. We couldn't go to school nor play out doors but had to lie in bed and take nasty medicine. We were all going west in the spring and this sickness worried the fathers and mothers for we must drive across the lake before the ice got soft and thin. Sometimes people were drowned in the lake by trying to cross to late.

Presently everyone was well but me. There were signs of a thaw so it was decided not to wait any longer.

Pa and Uncle Peter hitched the horses to the big bobsleds and we all got in. I was carried out all rolled up in blankets, even my head covered so I would not take cold. I couldn't see the horses as they took us over the long road to the lake and then across the ice on the lake for a long time. But when we were on the lake I heard the horses feet go 'splash! splash!' in water and I was terrified. I thought we were breaking throug and would all be drowned in the lake under the ice, but Ma put her arm over me, drew me close and said it was all right. It was only a little water on top of the ice, so I went to sleep and waked up when they were putting me to bed in the hotel at Lake City, safely across the lake.

CHAPTER 3

Minnesota, 1874-1876

The next I knew I waked and Pa was standing by the bed. It was late; the lamps were all lighted and I knew Pa was tired, but he had been out in town and bought me the pretty little book of verses called "The Floweret" for it was another birthday and I was five years old.

After a few days we went on into the country and lived in a house on the bank of a creek, so close to the creek that if we had fallen out of the back window we would have dropped in the water. For the thaw did come and the creek raised as the ice went out. The water went foaming and racing past the house! The cellar filled with water and it ran out through a hole on the other side, when the trap door in the floor was raised we could see and hear it running. The house was on rock so it was safe enough, Pa and Uncle Peter said.

It was fun to watch the water and play with the cousins by the creek. One time we found a big fish in a little pool where the water had washed him, then left him there when

it went down a little.

We all plunged into the pool and chased around and around until we caught it, then Alice carried it home in her apron.

Sometimes my ears hurt me so much I couldn't play. Ma and Aunt Eliza said it was because of the scarlet fever, that I must have caught a little cold in the moving.

One morning when my eart [ear hurt] so badly I couldn't keep from crying and Mary and the cousins stood around almost crying from sympathy, Aunt Eliza said if only she had some warm wool fresh from a black sheep to put in my ear and keep the air out, it would cure the ache, but she didn't know how she could get any.

Cousin Ella turned and ran out of the door saying nothing. After some time she came back with both hands full of black sheep's wool. "How!" said Ma and "Where in the world!" said Aunt Eliza.

Ella had seen a black sheep with others in a pasture, so she ran and ran until she found them. She was afraid of the black sheep for he put down his head and stamped his foot at her, but she wanted so much to cure my earache that she ran right at him, grabbed with both hands into his wool, screamed and stood still. The black sheep ran away as fast as he could leaving his black wool in her hands.

Ma put some of it in my ear while I laughed at Ella's story and sure enough my ear stopped aching.

When night came, Mary and I went quickly to sleep in our little bed on the floor. Sometimes we made believe we were in a ship for we could hear the water in the creek running by and the water gurgling in the cellar.

One night Mary lay sleeping beside me, but I lay awake looking through the bedroom door at the firelight flickering and the shadows moving in the room outside. Pa was sitting in the shadows where I couldn't see him, but I could hear his fiddle singing.

It was all so beautiful it made my throat ache. And then I thought again of something I had been trying to forget since we lived in the Big Woods in Uncle Peter's house.

On sunny days, the snow on the roof of that house would melt and dripping off the edge make long icicles. I used to break them down and eat the pieces until Ma said I must not do so any more.

But after that I saw a particularly nice piece—I think I really forgot when I picked it up, but I remembered as I came in the door and put the whole big piece in my mouth to hide it.

Ma suspected for she asked "Laura are you eating ice?" Then I swallowed the whole piece at one gulp to clear my

mouth so I could speak and told my first lie. “No-m,” I said.

The ice felt awfully cold in my tummy! I was frightened to have been so wicked and ashamed when I saw that Ma believed me, so that I was very quiet until I went to sleep. I thought of it next morning and then forgot.

But this night as I lay watching the firelight and the shadows and everything was still but the murmur of the waters and the fiddle singing, it all came back to me. My heart hurt, because everything was so sweet and lovely but me and I was a liar.

Then my throat filled up so that a big sob popped out of my mouth, and then they kept coming.

The fiddle stopped singing and Ma hurried in to see what was the

trouble. It was such a comfort to tell her all about it. She smoothed my hair and said of course she would forgive me, because I had told her I was sorry and that now I must say a little prayer and ask God to forgive me too. She told me to say “Dear God please forgive me for telling a lie?” And when I did, Ma said she was sure I would never be so naughty again, then she tucked me in kissed me and went away. The fiddle was singing again as I went to sleep.

When warm weather came Uncle Peter’s folks moved to

a farm he had rented, but we went west.

The grass along the road was fresh and green in the springtime and it was a delight to camp at night in a little nook somewhere beside the way. Nearly always we stopped by a creek or a small river, where there were plenty of water and sticks to make the campfire.

We'd see the sun go down, hear the birds twitter their sleepy good nights and sleep with David and Sampson (Sam for short) crunching their oats in their feed box at the back of the wagon, with just the thin wagon cover between their heads and ours.

Sometimes Pa would sit awhile by the campfire and play his violin.

We were camped one night in a lovely creek bottom a little way from the road and I had just gone to sleep, when I heard a clear, wonderful call.

“Oh what was that,” I said and Ma answered that it was the whistle of a R. R. engine and if I would look quickly I could see the train. I looked and in the twilight saw the train and the engine, the first I'd ever seen. ‘I thought it was calling me’, I said and Ma laughed.

One day, on the road, we overtook a strange man all alone in a covered wagon. For several days he drove along with us and camped with us at night.

His name was George George.” He was pleasant company and we liked his little dog, who rode all day on the wagon seat with him.

As we neared New Ulm” we came, one day, to a large, square house, with green grounds around it and a large red, white and blue flag flying above it. Pa said it was a beer garden. Mr George went up to the house and brought back a shining pail filled with beer all

foamy over the top. It looked cool and good, but Mary and I did not like it because it was bitter.

It was near here we camped for the night and I went with Pa to a near by house to get some milk. The door yard was full of big white geese and they all stretched their long necks at us and said “hiss-s-s-s[.]”

They kept hissing at us and crowding close around while the woman was getting the milk. One stretched out his long neck, opened his big yellow bill said hiss and bit me on the leg. I yelled and another one bit me. Then Pa picked me up from among them, took the milk from the woman and went away leaving the geese hissing. West of New Ulm we saw some grassy mounds that Pa said were ruins of houses where Indians had killed the settlers in an Indian masacree years before.

We drove on and on until we came to such a pretty place

by the very nicest creek we had seen and were so glad when Pa said it was ours. The creek was named Plum creek because wild plums grew along its banks.

It was a funny little house that we moved into, not much more room than in the wagon, for it had only one room. It was dug in the side of the creek bank near the top. Willows were laid over the top of the hole and grass sods laid on them. Then the grass grew over the roof tall and thick and it looked just like the rest of the creek bank. Once when a herd of cattle came by, a big, old ox couldent tell the difference. He walked right over the top of the house and one foot came down through.

There was a shelf dug in the bank before the door of the house, just wide enough to walk on. From that steps were cut in the bank down to the creek and at the foot of the steps a plank was laid across the creek for a foot bridge.

Mary and I had wonderful times playing in the creek and along its banks, but we couldn't play all the time now. We had to help take care of Carrie and watch her so she wouldn't fall out of the door down into the creek and when the herd boy drove up the herd of neighborhood cattle at night we must go help him drive our cow out from among the others and into her yard.

David and Sam were gone and Pa drove a yoke of cat-

tle, Bright and Broad. Broad was a good ox, but Bright was ugly and would run away whenever he could.

Coming home from town one time, he ran away with while Ma sat in the bottom of the wagon bed and held Carrie tight so they wouldn't be thrown out. Mary and I had been left at home and were sitting on the creek bank near the house watching for them, when they came. Pa was running beside Bright, between him and the creek, beating him over the head with the whip, trying to make him turn so he wouldn't run off the bank and maybe kill Ma and Carrie. Pa couldn't turn him, but good old Broad saw the barnyard and turned toward it pulling bright with him. He stopped by the yard gate so Bright had to stop too and no one was hurt but we were all badly frightened.

Mary and I each had a big flat rock for a play house up on the top of the bank, then down in the creek bottom was a wonderful place to play. There was a perfectly round table land there of about a half acre, Pa said, that rose straight up on the sides about six feet from the lower ground. It was so steep we could not climb straight up but had to go sideways up it. We used to play it was our fort and that Indians were hiding in the willows along the creek.

There had been only a little crop planted in the spring and there was not much work with that but Pa worked hard

all summer, making hay, digging a well where he was going to build a new house in the spring and doing the fall breaking for the crop next summer.

We were very snug in the dug out house through the winter which was mild. The winds blew over above our heads and the snow banked deep along the creek but the shelf before our door was easily kept bare. It was a sight to see when the snow melted and the ice went out of the creek in the spring. Yellow water swirled and foamed before our door; the footbridge was covered and our tableland was a little island with deep water all around it.

The water soon went down and Pa could work on the land. When his crops were planted he built the new house and we moved in.

It was a busy summer, with the building and moving the care of the crops, haying and harvesting and all the rest. Mary and I helped all we could, running errands, washing dishes, driving the cows to and from the herd and watching over Carrie.

Soon it was winter again and, it was a terrible winter. There was blizzard after blizzard when the wind blew the snow in such whirling fury tha[t] one could not see into it at all nor tell where he was going. We learned that a dark cloud lying close to the horizon in the north west meant

that a blizzard was coming and that it moved so swiftly it would be on us soon, sometimes in only a few minutes.

In one of these storms two balls of fire rolled down the stovepipe, onto the floor. We were frightened thinking the house would burn, but the balls though they looked like fire didn't burn anything. They would follow Ma's knitting needle around the floor and soon seemed to melt away and disappeared. Pa said they were electricity.

Pa fastened one end of a long rope to the corner of the house nearest the barn; the other end he fastened at the barn door. In a blizzard he would go from house to barn with one hand on the rope to keep from getting lost. As soon as he saw the cloud in the west, he would hurry to the barn to feed the stock and make everything snug against the storm. Usually he came back to the house with his hand on the rope. People froze to death, in blizzards, within a few feet of their own houses, not able to find them.

One man got lost and wandered until he was tired out. Then he took shelter under the creek bank and the snow drifted over him while he went to sleep. They found him in the spring when the snow went off.

On a nice pleasant day Pa and Ma left us girls at home, comfortably in the house, while they walked to town to do some trading. We enjoyed being by ourselves for awhile, but

after we had played for some time and eaten our lunch, the time seemed long and we wished Pa and Ma would come. Watching for them we saw the long, low cloud in the west and watched it climb up toward the sun, while there still was no sign of Pa and Ma.

Then we remembered a tale of some children freezing to death in the house, while their parents were away, because they had no fire.

There was a big pile of wood a little way outside our door and we decided we wouldn't freeze even if Pa and Ma couldn't get home. So we carried in the wood armload after armload and piled it on the floor around the stove.

Just as the first gust of wind from the blizzard hit us and the snow whirled in our faces we were carrying in the last armfulls of wood. And Oh Joy! Pa and Ma burst out of the storm and in at the door with us. They were all out of breath for they had run most of the way home, trying to beat the storm.

"You are good girls," Pa said, "I wont have to carry in the wood," then he hurried to the stable to care for the stock. After a while he came back with his hand on the rope and we sat by the fire all snug and warm, while the wind howled and howled and the snow blew outside.

When Christmas came, there was a Christmas tree in the

church in town. Walnut Grove was only a tiny town, with two small stores, a blacksmith shop a little school house and a few houses where people lived, but the summer before they had built a church. There was Sunday school every Sunday and a sermon preached by the Home Missionary Rev. Alden.

We loved to go to Sunday school. Our teacher, Mrs Tower, would gather us close around her and tell us Bible stories and every Sunday she taught us a verse from the Bible that we must remember and tell her the next.

Ma would get books from the Sunday school library to read to us through the week. There was one book that we asked her to get again and again, until we nearly knew it by heart. We did learn to repeat from it one whole poem which began, —

“Twenty froggies went to school
Down beside a rushy pool.
Twenty little coats of green
Twenty vests all white and clean.”
“Master Bullfrog grave and stern,
Taught the classes in their turn
Showed them how to leap and dive
Taught them how to nobly strive

Likewise how to dodge the blow
From the stick which bad boys throw.”

We went to Sunday School and church every pleasant Sunday and so we went to the Christmas tree, the first we had ever seen.

It was a beautiful tree, all decorated with colored paper and little bags of candy and candles.

People had given each other presents of things that were needed. There was a washboard on that tree; and new shoes and boots and mittens an[d] calico for dresses and shirts, besides dolls and hand- sleds. Some church in the east had sent a barrel of toys and clothing to our sunday-school and my present from this barrel was a little fur collar or tippet, to keep my throat warm. I was so pleased I could hardly speak and just managed to say ‘Thank You’ to Rev. Alden when Ma told me to.

Pa had trapped some along the creek in the fall and soon after Christmas he took the furs to town to sell. He was going to get him some new boots because his old ones had holes in them, but when he came back there were no new boots. Ma asked him about them and he said they were trying to get money enough to buy a bell for the church and he had given Rev. Alden his boot money to help. Ma looked

so sorry and said “Oh Charles!” But Pa said, he could mend his old boots and they would do.

We were glad when the long cold winter was over and the grass grew green and wild flowers bloomed.

Pa was so busy breaking ground and sowing grain that he did not have time to go fishing, so he made a fish trap of lath and put it in the creek. The lath were fastened together like a box but were far enough apart to let all the smaller fish go through, but the big fish would go in at the top and couldn't go on through. Pa never took more than a few to eat and would let the others go. He said there were so many fish in the creek, it was all right to take some, but it was wicked to kill anything one didn't need.

Ma and I, walking by the creek one day, saw a gray animal as large as a small dog lying in the grass. Its legs were short and it lay very flat to the ground on its stomach. We were all surprised. We looked at it and it looked at us, lying very still until Ma poked at it with a stick to drive it away. Then it snarled fiercely at us, its gray, stiff hairs bristled and it came toward us a little.

We went away and left it there. Pa said it must have been a badger. Later he found his hole, near where we had seen him. But I never went again, where the old, gray badger lived.

There were mounds of fine dirt, as large as a half bushel scattered here and there in the grass where Pa had planted potatoes. He didn't know what made them. I was with him finishing the planting when we saw a small gray animal running along the plowing as though it were carrying something heavy. Pa hit it with a clod of dirt just as it was going into a hole in the ground. He killed it and we saw that it had a pouch of skin on each cheek and in each pouch was a piece of potatoe Pa had planted.

Pa dug along the hole and found that it was a runway leading to one of the mounds of dirt. Several such runways came in under the mound and there he found a pile of his seed potatoes that the pocket gopher had dug and carried there in the pockets in its cheeks. Mr Nelson told us what it was and that it was a great pest, carrying off grain and potatoes from the fields and ruining meadows with its mounds. When it dug its holes it carried the dirt in its pockets and pushed it up to make the mounds.

Mr & Mrs Nelson, our nearest neighbors, had a little girl named Anna. Once when they were at our house Anna wanted Roxy my rag doll. Roxy was old but I had kept her so carefully that she was still nice and I thought her beautiful, with her curled black yarn hair, her red mouth and her black bead eyes. When Anna cried for her, Ma said I

was getting to be too big a girl to play with dolls and she thought I would better give Roxey to Anna.

I didn't want to let my doll go, but when Anna left she took Roxey with her and the very next time I went to Mrs Nelsons I saw her lying face down in a mud puddle in the door yard.

I often went to Mrs Nelson's, not to play with Anna, she was too little, but to be with Mrs Nelson. She taught me to milk her big, old, gentle cow, the only one who would stand still and let me try.

Until she got tired of my fooling, when she would push me over carefully with her foot not hurting me a bit. Ma was so surprised when I ran out ahead of her to our barn yard and milked my tin cup full from our own, old, spotted cow before she got there.

Mrs Nelson was Swede and she taught me Swede words. I was with her so much that Pa said I talked English like a Swede and I could easily understand when Mrs Nelson talked her language with the other Swede neighbors.

Mrs Nelson was very clean about her house. She kept everything scrubbed and shining and pink misqueto bar over the pictures on the wall to keep the flies from specking them.

But when she milked the cows she would set a full buck-

et of milk down on the ground and let the cats drink out of it. When I drove them away, she said let them be, the poor cats wanted their milk.

When the 4th of July came we went to the picnic at Walnut Grove. Mary and I had never been to a 4th of July celebration and we were excited about it all. Ma packed fried chicken, bread and butter, cake and a lemon pie in our basket and all dressed up in our best we rode in the wagon to the picnic grounds. A platform had been made of rough lumber and board seats fixed around it. I got tired sitting still while a man read out of a book and other men talked, but I liked the singing. Several men and women on the platform led while everyone sang “The Star Spangled Banner” and other songs. Then a man and woman sang by themselves. She was very pretty, dressed all in white, and he was nice looking. They looked at each other while they sang “Then meet me, Oh meet me, when you hear the first whippoorwill’s song!” His voice was deep and tender and hers was clear and sweet. When he sang “Whippoorwill” and she answered “Whippoorwill,” it was just like birds calling to each other.

After the speaking and singing a big cloth was spread on the grass, the dinner baskets were emptied onto it and we all sat around on the grass and ate. Then everyone visited

until time to go home. Several days afterward I heard Pa tell Ma that the man and woman who sang the Whippoorwill song had run away together. I wondered why they had run away and what from.

The weather was just right and the crops grew and grew. At dinner one day, Pa was telling us that the wheat in our field was so tall it would just stand under his arms, with long, beautiful heads and filling nicely. He said the grain was all soft and milky yet but was so well grown he felt sure we would have a wonderful crop.

Just then we heard some one call and Mrs Nelson was in the doorway. She was all out of breath with running, wringing her hands and almost crying. “The grasshoppers are coming! The grasshoppers are coming!” she shrieked. “Come and look!”

We all ran to the door and looked around. Now and then a grasshopper dropped on the ground, but we couldn't see anything to be so excited about, [erasures]

“Look at the sun! Yoost look at the sun!” cried Mrs Nelson, pointing to the sky.

We raised our faces and looked straight into the sun. It had been shining brightly but now there was a light colored, fleecy cloud over its face so it did not hurt our eyes.

And then we saw that the cloud was grasshoppers, their

wings a shiny white making a screen between us and the sun. They were dropping to the ground like hail in a hail-storm faster and faster. "Ta will ruin ta crops, alretty ta eat ta wheat!" wailed Mrs Nelson forgetting her Norwegian speech in her excitement.

Our dinner was forgotten, Mrs Nelson ran home sobbing. Pa put on his hat and went out toward his beautiful wheat field while Ma stood in the door and watched the cloud of grasshoppers settling on the land.

Pa tried to save his wheat. He hauled straw and manure and put it in piles around and through the field, then set it on fire, hoping that the smoke might keep the grasshoppers away. He worked all the rest of the day and all night, but the grasshoppers paid no attention to the smoke. They ate through the stems of the tall wheat as well as the heads of grain so that it all fell down and was eaten and destroyed. They ate every green thing, the garden, the grass, the leaves on the trees. Our chickens ate grasshoppers until they would eat no more. The fish in the creek ate all they could hold. Everywhere we stepped we mashed grasshoppers and they crawled up under our skirts and down the backs of our necks.

The second day at noon Pa gave up fighting them. He came in the house all tired out, with his eyes all swollen and

red from the smoke and lack of sleep. He told us the wheat was gone and that the grasshoppers were laying their eggs.

The day after this which was the third day since they came, the grasshoppers began to walk toward the west. Every one was walking in the same direction like an army. They did not stop nor go around anything but went straight on over or through whatever they came to. They came to the east side of the house walked up it, over the roof and down the other side. There was an open window up stairs on the east side and those that came to the window walked on in. There were hundreds of them in the room when Ma thought of it and ran to shut the window. Pa tried with a stick to turn some of them, but they wouldn't go a step in any direction except west.

When they came to the creek, they walked out on the water and drowned. Others came up and walked out on the drowned ones, until they drowned too, when others walked out over them until finally the creek was choked with drowned grasshoppers and others walked safely across on the bodies.

All day they walked west and in the night they kept walking by. Next morning grasshoppers were still walking until the sun was warm and bright, towards noon, then they all rose and flew away into the west, clouding the sun again

with their wings.

We looked around as though we were just waked from a bad dream. There was not a grasshopper in sight except a few with broken wings that could not fly. Neither was there any green thing in sight and the ground looked like a honey comb it was so full of the little round holes where the grasshoppers had laid their eggs.

There were no crops to be harvested nor anything to live on until crops could grow again and there was no money to buy food.

And so one day, Pa told us all goodby, put on his hat and carrying his coat over his shoulder started walking east to where there was harvesting to be done. He walked because there was no money to pay for a ride on the train and he must go where he could get work in the harvest fields to earn money for us to live on through the winter.

It was lonesome with Pa gone, but Mr and Mrs Nelson were good neighbors. The grass grew again so that he cut some for hay for us. Then when the frost came and made the grass all dry and brown he came and plowed a firebreak around the house and barn to keep them safe from prairie fires.

We were glad of that strip of bare fresh earth where nothing could burn, when the prairie fire did come. The

wind was behind the fire and blowing strong, sending the flames before it.

We felt safe until we saw the great tumble weeds, some as large around as a tub. They had been dead and dry so that the wind blew them loose from the ground and now all ablaze they were rolling ahead of the fire like wheels setting fire to everything they touched. They began rolling across the firebreak and Ma had started to go put out the fire on some of them when Mr Nelson came up on his gray horse as fast as it could run. He sent Ma in the house and he watched for the tumble weeds stopping them as they came across the plowed [firebreak]. It was soon all over. The fire ran around us and went on.

We had several letters from Pa with some money and before the cold came, he was at home with us again.

We went to town, that winter, to live in a little house behind the church, and not far from the schoolhouse, so that Mary and I could go to school.

Coming home from school one day, we found a strange woman getting supper and a little brother beside Ma in the bed. We were very proud of him and always hurried home from school to see him.

Private

And then we caught the itch at school and couldn't touch

the baby. Gosh how it did itch and Ma rubbed us with sulphur and grease and turned us before the fire to heat it in. We had an awful time.

We didn't think much of school anyway and were glad when we left town and went back home while the snow and ice were still on the ground and the creek.

It soon thawed and the creek raised until the water spread over all the low ground.

And right in the midst of the spring freshet Ma was taken desperately sick.

One early morning she was in such pain that Pa dare not leave her. He must have forgotten about the high water for he told me to run to Mr Nelson's and tell him to hurry to town and telegraph for a Dr. The only Dr. was (40) forty miles away and would have to come on the train.

I ran as fast as I could down the path to the creek, for the creek was between us and Mr Nelson's.

When I saw the creek, it terrified me for the footbridge was standing away out in the middle of the stream, with yellow, foamy water running on both sides and just over the top of it. I didn't want to go on, but Pa had told me to go and Ma was awfully sick, so in I waded.

The water was at my knees when I heard someone shout "Go back!"

I looked up and there was Mr Nelson on the far bank, swinging his arms wildly and shouting, “You’ll drown! You’ll drown! You’re crazy!” he said.

I called to him and gave him Pa’s message. He hurried away while I went back to the house. Ma was quieter and when Pa saw me all wet he asked about it. When I told him he said “By Jinks!”

The Dr. came the next day. Pa had to bring him, and the women who came from town to help, across the creek and take them back in his boat. The Dr. came twice and after awhile Ma got well and the creek was down again.

Pa got some seed off the train and sowed a small field of grain. He said he would not sow much because if the grasshoppers hatched they would eat it anyway.

Mary and I walked to school that summer.

I was a big girl now seven years old and did not mind walking 21/2 miles each way.

It was jolly when we got there too. We could hear the boys shouting at their play a long time before we could see the schoolhouse.

After we were in town we went between the two stores passed Mr Kennedy’s house where Daniel and Christy and Sandy and Nettie would be starting for school, then by the church to the school house. We usually had time to play

anti-over or ring-around- the-rosie awhile before school.’

I liked Nettie Kennedy very much. The Kennedys were Scotch. Mr Kennedy was an enormous big red-headed man; Mrs Kennedy was little and dark. Daniel and Christy were dark and their black hair curled tightly. Sandy was red headed and freckled and Nettie’s hair was a brownish red that I thought wonderfully pretty.

Not many children were in the school but we made several friends.

The ones we came to know best were the Kennedys and Nellie and Willie Owens.

Mr Owens kept one of the stores and we were sometimes allowed to go home with them and stay a little while after school.

They had such wonderful toys, tops and jumping jacks and beautiful picture books. [It was a treat to see such toys, though they would] not let us play with them.

Nellie had the most wonderful doll that she kept wrapped up in soft paper most of the time. She would take it out and hold it up before our eyes, then wrap it up again and put it back in its box.

She and Willie would help themselves to candy out of the store and eat it before us never offering us any.

We would not have been allowed to be so rude and self-

ish but Mrs Owen never seemed to care.

Mr and Mrs Fitch, whos store was across the street had no children we could play with, but they often called us in, as we were passing and gave us candy to eat on the way home.

One day we saw a beautiful, high, back comb in their store. Ma hadn't any pretty combs for her hair and we wanted her to have this one. The price was 50¢ and Mr Fitch said he would keep it for us until we could save enough to buy it.

We each already had 10¢ so we saved the pennies Pa gave us and earned a little by doing errands. We wanted to surprise Pa too, so he did not know [how badly we needed money].

At last we had 40¢ and then days went by and it seemed as though we could never get the other 10¢. We were terribly discouraged and one night we went in the store just to look at the comb. It was more beautiful than ever but we couldn't get it.

Mr Fitch asked how much we had and when we told him, he wrapped the comb in soft paper and handed it to us, telling us to bring him the 40¢ when we came to school next day and never mind about the other 10¢.

We nearly ran all the way home and Ma was so surprised

and pleased when we gave it to her that we couldn't understand why her eyes were so shiny and wet. The comb looked awfully pretty in her hair.

Mr Fitch's clerk John Anderson and his wife lived in the little house where we had lived in town. They were only just married and Anna kept the little place wonderfully bright and clean. I could see my face in her shining black cookstove.

But one day, when Mary and I stopped on an errand after school, Anna had been crying. The place was clean as ever, but it didn't seem bright somehow and we hurried away.

In a few days we overheard Mrs Nelson talking to Ma about Anna and John. She said Anna would better do less work and be with John at the store some of the time for "that Teeney Peterson was hanging around him most of her time."

She said Teeney had tried her best to get John before he married Anna and now she was trying to make trouble.

I wondered how that could be and wished Anna wouldn't cry, I liked her so much.

I felt better about it soon, for going home from school we would see Anna in her pretty pink dress all smiling and beautiful, standing by John in the store. She was so pretty

with her blue eyes and hair more golden than Mary's.

Teeny Peterson was very dark and her hair was black. I didn't think her pretty and didn't like her, but it didn't matter for she went away from town.

Mary and I were glad when Saturday came, for we didn't have to go to school.

After we had washed the dishes and helped Ma clean up the house we went to the creek and fished with hook and line, often catching a good mess of fish for dinner. Or we waded and played in the water. Mary didn't care much about going and I had to coax her a lot, for Ma wouldn't let me go down to the creek alone.

Around the footbridge was the nicest place to play.

A big willow grew at our end of the bridge and shaded the pool just above the bridge, where there were always fish that would take the bait.

Mary wouldn't bait her hook nor take a fish off it, so when we fished, I did all that for us both.

Just below the footbridge, in a sunny spot, the bottom of the creek was nice clean sand, a nice place to wade with the water so cool and clear, running over our feet.

Next was the stone where a big old crab lived. If we went near the stone he would run out at us and we teased him until he got very cross. Down the creek from the crab's

stone was a shady little pool with a muddy bottom, where blood-suckers (leaches) lived. If we waded in the pool they would fasten themselves on our feet and legs. They didn't hurt a bit, but they were shiny and flat and mud colored, very unpleasant looking. To get them off, we must take hold of them with our fingers and pull. They would hardly come loose for they were fastened on tight all over like a plaster. They were sucking the blood all over and when we pulled them loose a tiny trickle of blood would run down from where they had been.

When we were playing by ourselves we didn't wade in that pool, for we didn't like the bloodsuckers they seemed such nasty things.

But when the girls from town came out, as they often did to play with us, we would lead them by the old crab's stone and when he would chase them, they would run screaming on into the bloodsuckers pool.

When they came out on the bank and saw the little, long, flat bloodsuckers stuck on their feet and legs, they would try to brush them off. When they found they couldn't they would dance around and kick and scream while I would roll on the grass and laugh, until Mary would make me come and help her pull them off.

They would come again but they never caught us at our

little trick of leading them into the pool on purpose and the[y] never learned that the old crab lived under the stone and that the pool was the home of the bloodsuckers.

Mary was tender hearted and sometimes said we ought not to frighten our company so, but I said, when we went to town to see them they wouldn't let us handle their toys, the wonderful doll that would open and shut its eyes we were not allowed to hold and we could only look at their other things while they showed them to us; so I just would play my way when they came to see us. Finally Ma said we must not do so any more, but Pa's blue eyes twinkled when he heard about it.

The warm summer sun hatched the grasshoppers eggs. The little grasshoppers came up out of the holes in the ground, tiny at first but they ate [ate?] the grain and grass and leaves and grew, larger and larger. We smashed them when we walked; they got up under our skirts when we walked to school and Sunday-school; they dropped down our necks and spit "tobacco juice" on us making brown, ugly spots on our clothes.

The crops were ruined again and Pa said he'd had enough. He wouldn't stay in such a [erasure] "blasted country!"

One of the friends in town had traded for a hotel in Burr Oak, Iowa and was going there late in the fall. He wanted

Pa and Ma to go and be partners with them and it was so decided. But Pa said there was no use to wait, he had found a man who would buy the farm and we would all go now, back east to Uncle Peter's. He had written for us to come and Pa could work in the harvest fields and at the fall work until time to go to Iowa.

The wagon was covered; our things were loaded and early on a bright morning the horses were hitched on, we all climbed in and started east.

I felt sorry to leave Plum Creek and our play ground by the footbridge, but it was nice to be in the wagon again and going on and on. We stopped that first day in such a nice, clean, grassy place to eat our cold lunch at noon, but Ma would not eat until she had combed and braided our long hair, Mary's still golden, but Carrie's brown like mine. Little Brother Freddy didn't have much hair to comb, I here had been so much to do that morning getting started that our hair couldn't get done, but Ma said nice girls would have their hair combed sometime in the morning anyway. It was nice to be in the big, fresh outdoors all the days and nights and we found so many nice camping places.

One night we stopped near a house and three little girls came out to the wagon and played "Hide and Go Seek" and "Ring Around the Rosie" with us until it was dark and we

had to go to bed. Their father was leaving the grasshopper country too, but he was going west to Oregon.

He kept bees and had rows and rows of hives.

The grasshoppers had eaten all the flowers and everything so the bees could not find any honey to store for eating in the winter. Then because they had nothing to feed them, the bees stung all their baby bees to death and threw them out of the hives.

The man nearly cried when he told about the poor bees and he said he would not stay any longer in a country where even a bee couldn't make a living.

Uncle Peters folks were so glad to see us when, after driving for days, we came to their house. The cousins had grown and there was a new cousin, Lansford, just a little older than Baby Freddy.

Mary and I were glad to be with the cousins, but we did not play so much as we used to.

There was work to be done, washing dishes, bringing wood, running errands and helping take care of the babies.

Late in the afternoon Ella, Peter and I must go hunt the cows in the pasture and drive them home to be milked. I loved to go after the cows for their pasture was on the Zumbro River and the river was so pretty running along in the sunshine and shade with trees and flowers on the

banks. The grass was soft on our bare feet and the cow bells would “tinkle, tinkle” telling us just where to look for the cows.

The wild plums along the river were ripe and sweet. There were several kinds of red plums and the Frost Plum a big, beautiful, purple kind with a dusting of white that made it look as if it were frosted. They were best after the frost came. When we would get to the plum thickets we would eat and eat. Sometimes we would forget about the cows while we were stuffing ourselves with plums; until dark would come and listening we would hear the cow bells ahead of us going home. Then we would run like anything to catch up and go home with the cows and we would get scolded for being late.

After some time the cows were taken out of the river pasture and Ella, Peter and I herded them on the meadows where the hay had been cut. We had to keep them away from the haystacks and see that they did not stray away.

The fall rains came on and it was cold, but we wore warm coats and built little camp fires in sheltered places over which we roasted wild crab apples and bits of meat and toasted pieces of bread so we played even when we worked.

Little Brother was not well and the Dr. came. I thought

that would cure him as it had Ma when the Dr. came to see her. But little Brother got worse instead of better and one awful day he straightened out his little body and was dead.

CHAPTER 4

Iowa, 1876-1877

We felt so badly to go on and leave Freddy, but in a little while we had to go on to Iowa to help keep the hotel. It was a cold miserable little journey and we were glad when we drove into Burr Oak and got out of the wagon into the warmth and comfort of the house.

Mr & Mrs Steadman the friends from Walnut Grove were there and their two boys Johnny and Ruben were our playmates now. There was a baby boy named Tommy who was always crying and no wonder for his mother was always shaking, or slapping him.

Johnny was lame, one leg was shorter than the other and he wore a wooden support under his foot and strapped to his leg. We always had to be good to Johnny because he was a cripple but it was hard not to fight back when he would pull our hair, pinch us, tear our books or break our playthings as he was always doing. Neither Johnny or Ruben were like the cousins who had always been good playfellows.

The hotel was built on a side hill. A door off the front

street opened into the barroom; across the hall was the parlor also with a front door onto the street. At the back of the hall was a stair going up to the bedrooms above and another stair going down to the dining room, kitchen and kitchen bedroom. A side door opened from the hillside into the dining room and the outside kitchen door opened onto the hillside farther down. From there the yard sloped down to a little, level yard with a fishpond in the center. At the side of the path to the pond was a spring with a springhouse over it. The spring was boxed in and a place made to keep milk and butter, in the cold water, in the summer time.

It was all a very pretty place, but in the door between the dining room and kitchen were several bullet holes made by the son of the man who had sold us the hotel, when he shot at his wife as she ran from him through the door. He had been drunk! It was because of his drinking that his father had taken him west away from the saloon next door. Pa and Ma didn't like the saloon next door either and we were a little afraid of the men who were always hanging around its door.

The hired girl, Amy's beau was there a good deal. His name was Jim, but the crowd at the saloon called him Hairpin, because he was so tall and thin.

Burr Oak was a small town, but it was not a new, clean little town like Walnut Grove. It was an old, old town and always seemed to me dark and dirty. But there was a nice big school house up on a hill in the sunshine.

The Principal, Mr Reed lived at our hotel and Johnny and Ruben, Mary and I went to school.

While Mr Reed was a slim young man, just 21 years old, some of the boys in his room were big men 24 and 25 years old. They went to school only in the winter time and always before the winter was over they started a fight with the teacher and drove him away.

Awhile before Christmas these boys began to act ugly. They were late at school, noisy in school hours and didn't learn their lessons. Downtown they said that Reed wouldn't be there after Christmas.

One morning the week before Christmas, they were very late and made a great disturbance as they came in.

The oldest and biggest one, named Mose, was the worst of the lot.

Mr Reed sat in his chair by his desk with his ruler in one hand, idly spitting it against the other. It was a large, flat, very strong ruler he had just had made. Mose was the last one in and before he sat down Mr Reed told him to come to him.

Mose was all ready to fight and came swaggering up expecting Mr Reed to stand up so he could knock him down. But Mr Reed sat still and, just as Mose stood in front of him, reached up with his left hand, grabbed Mose by the collar and jerked, tripping him with his foot at the same time and layed him neatly across his knees, with one leg across Mose's legs. It all happened so quickly and Mose was so surprised that, before he knew what had happened, he lay there like a bad little boy and was being soundly spanked with the flat, strong ruler. He looked so funny that every one in the room laughed, even the other big boys "Haw! Hawed!" at him.

When Mr Reed let Mose up, he went toward his seat, hut as he passed the door he went out and he never came back to school again. Everyone in town was laughing at him and he went away somewhere. The other big boys left too and school went on peacefully. When we were at home, Mary and I helped wash dishes and wait on table. We took care of Tommy all day Saturdays and Sundays. Mrs Steadman had said if we would, she would give us something nice for Christmas and so though we couldn't like Tommy we did our best to keep him clean and happy.

The snow was fine for coasting and there was a wonder-

ful place for it from the front gate of the yard down past the barroom, the dining room, the kitchen; past the springhouse and out on the little flat yard at the bottom of the hill. But we had no sled of our own and Johnny wouldn't let us use his, but at times when I knew he was away I would take it anyhow and slide down a few times then hurry to put it up before he got back.

Christmas was disappointing. Ma was always tired; Pa was always busy and Mrs Steadman did not give us anything at all for taking care of her disagreeable baby, Tommy!

Then we all had the measles! Mary and Ruben and I had them all at the same time and Johnny would slip in where we were and snatch the pillows from under our heads and pinch us. I was glad when he had the measeles himself and was awfully sick. We were all well again when spring came and when our school and work were done we played out by the pond.

My play time was cut short because Mr Bisbee, one of the boarders, took a notion to teach me to sing and I had to waste some time every day practicing the scales up and down and mixed. I would rather play but Mr Bisbee was one of the richest men in Burr Oak and our best paying, steady boarder. He must be pleased if possible and so I patiently learned to sing "do ra me fa sol la see do."

And so the summer passed but, before winter came again, we moved out of the hotel to rooms over a grocery store on the other side of the saloon. We didn't help with the hotel any more. (Funny but I don't remember of ever seeing Johnny and Ruben again) Pa had a good job running a feed mill, grinding the corn and wheat with our horses, and Ma just kept her house again, while Mary and I went to school and helped her out of school hours. There was an outside stairway to get up to our rooms but we always hurried up and down it, for it was almost against the saloon. The town pump was in the middle of the street right in front of the store below us.

One night Ma waked Mary and me and told us to dress quickly. The saloon was on fire and our place might catch fire any minute. All the men in town came running with buckets to carry water from the town pump to put out the fire.

Pa was out there and Ma, Mary and I stood at the windows and watched. The men were standing in a long line waiting their turn at the pump to fill their buckets. They didn't seem to be moving up and Ma kept saying "why don't they hurry."

Mr Bisbee was standing at the pump. He was pumping water fast enough and every time he worked the pump

handle up and down he would shout “Fire! Fire!” And Ma kept saying “Why don’t they hurry?”

Then there was a great shout and some one jerked Mr Bisbee away from the pump, filled his bucket and went on the run, and every one filled his bucket quickly and ran. They put the fire out and when Pa came, he told us Mr Bisbee was pumping water into a bucket without any bottom and yelling fire while they all stood and waited and the fire burned merrily.

Pa said if the darned saloon could have burned up without burning the town, he wouldn’t have carried a drop of water. And Ma said she guessed Mrs Cameron would have been glad.

Mr and Mrs Cameron owned the store below us and lived in rooms at the back. Mr Cameron spent a good deal of his time in the saloon and left his wife to tend the store.

One night we heard Mrs Cameron scream and Pa dressed quickly and went down. He found Mr Cameron dragging her around the room, by her long hair, with one hand and in the other hand he carried a lamp bottom side up. The kerosine was running out of the lamp, catching fire and flaming up around his hand.

Pa made him stop; put him to bed and came back to bed himself’ saying it was a mercy we were not all burned to

death in our sleep.

Mary and I liked to go to school this winter. I learned to sing the multiplication table and was put in the fifth reader. We liked our reading lessons very much and used to practice reading them aloud at home nights.

Pa knew, but did not tell us until later, that a crowd used to gather in the store beneath to hear us read, “The Polish Boy, The Burial of Sir John Moore, The High Tide, The Bison Track, Paul Revere’s Ride, The Pied Piper, Tubal Cain, The Village Blacksmith[”] and many others.

For our reading lessons we went upstairs to Mr Reed’s room but we stayed in the downstairs school room the rest of the time. We could bring our school books home and study without any boys to bother. It was so nice not to be in the hotel any more and the rooms where we lived were very pleasant and sunny and clean. From our front windows we could look into the beautiful, terraced, lawn of a big, white house across the street. The house and grounds filled all of two blocks.

Mr Pifer, the man who owned it, was very rich and the house was beautiful inside as well as out. There were wide open stairways and beautiful marble fireplaces but the place seemed chill and un- homelike. Mr Pifers widowed daughter and her two daughters lived there and kept the house.

The girls were much too large to be our playmates but they often came to sit with Ma in our pleasant front room, because, they said, it was so bright and cheerful.

Then a dreadful thing happened at the saloon! Amy's beau, Hairpin, who had been lying there drunk for several days came to and took another drink to sober up. Before he had well got it swallowed he put a cigar in his mouth and lit it. He brought the flame of the match close to his mouth and the fumes from the whiskey caught fire. He breathed the flame into his lungs burning them and died almost at once.

Pa said we should not live near the saloon any longer. It was coming spring and there was no more grinding to do. The work he would have in the spring would keep him away from home a great part of the time and we must not live where we were.

So he rented, from Mr Bisbee, a little red brick house out on the very edge of town and we moved into it in the spring.

It was a wonderful place, to live, right beside an oak wood that was filled with sunshine and shadows, where birds sang and wild-wood flowers grew.

We had a cow again and it was my happy task to take her to pasture in the morning and bring her back at night.

The pasture was a little open meadow through which a small brook wandered. Wild Iris, or flags as we called them, sweet Williams, buttercups and dandelions grew among the grass near the water. There was an old stone quarry in the side of a little hill; water from the brook ran into it, just before it left the pasture and made a little pool. I loved to wander along the creek and look at the flowers and wriggle my toes among the cool, lush grasses. I was such a great girl now that I wore my shoes all day, but I always went barefoot after the cow.

My greatest trouble this spring was that I couldn't get past the multiplication table at school. I just couldn't memorize it and we couldn't go on in the arithmetic until we could say the multiplication table. Those who passed were going up stairs next term and I would have to stay behind. So I was glad when Ma said she needed me to help her and I would have to stay out of school for awhile.

I helped Ma with the work, ran errands and every day worked sums in multiplication looking back at the multiplication table to help me when I couldn't remember.

One day when I came back from an errand that had taken me a long time, I found a new little sister. We named her Grace. Her hair was golden like Mary's and her eyes were blue and bright like Pa's.

I stayed at home to help for awhile longer, then I went back to school and I knew my multiplication so well that I went up stairs where my class was.

That was a delightful summer! Work and play were so mixed that I could not tell them apart. Of course it was work, helping Ma take care of Grace but it was the best kind of play too. Going after the cow was work but it was the best part of the day. Even if it rained the wet was nice on my feet and the rain felt good on my face and on my body through my thin, summer clothes. The oak woods were always a delight and sometimes, on Saturdays, I would go with my chum to the old graveyard on the other side of town. On the way we passed a little stone house all covered with ivy with a front yard full of roses.

A boy lived there who, people said, was an idiot whatever that could be. Sometimes he would be leaning on the picket fence and he acted so strange we didn't like to see him, but an old woman, his grandmother, always called to us and gave us cookies and roses from the yard.

The graveyard was a beautiful place. The grass was so soft and green and short like velvet; there were mossy places in little hollows and growing on some of the tombstones; and there were tall, dark, evergreen trees and lovely flowers everywhere. We might look at the flowers and smell them

but never, never pick them.

The white stones standing among all this beauty didn't look lonesome. We could wander for a whole afternoon looking at them and reading the names and verses on them. It seemed a very pleasant place to lie and sleep forever.

But we always went away before sundown.

Coming home from one such afternoon I found our Dr's wife Mrs Starr visiting with Ma. As I came in the door she put her arm around me and went on with her talk. She said she wanted me to go and live with her; that her own girls, Ida and Fanny, were grown and gone away teaching and she wanted a little girl to help her around the house and keep her from being lonesome. She said if I would come she would adopt me and treat me just like her own. But Ma smiled at me and said she couldn't possibly spare me. So Mrs Star went away looking very disappointed.

Toward the last of the summer I knew that Pa and Ma were troubled. Pa's work kept him away from home most of the time and the pay was not much. I knew we needed money and besides Pa did not like an old settled place like Burr Oak; a dead town, he said it was, without even a railroad.

Pa was restless and nights when he was home he played on the fiddle sort of lonsome, longing music, "My Old

Kentucky Home, Suanne River, There Is a Happy Land Far, Far Away,” but always afterward he would play some marching tune, “John Brown’s Body” or “Johnny Comes Marching Home.”

So I was not at all surprised, hearing Pa and Ma talking to learn that we were going back west. I learned too that if all the debts were paid, Dr. bills, grocery bills and rent, we couldn’t go, for we wouldn’t have any money to pay our expenses.

Pa had asked Mr Bisbee to wait for the rent, promising to send it to him in a little while, but he would not wait. He said if we tried to go he would take our team and sell it to get the rent.

Pa was very angry. He said he always had paid all he owed and he would pay everyone else but he’d “be darned if he’d ever pay that rich old skinflint Bisbee a cent. [”]

The man Pa had been working for, came one night and bought the cow, paying Pa the money. He told Pa goodby and wished him good luck.

Sometime in the night we children were waked to find the wagon with a cover on standing by the door and everything but our bed and the stove loaded in. While we were dressing with Ma’s help, for we were awfully sleepy, Pa put our bed in the wagon and hitched the horses on; then we

climbed in and drove away in the darkness.

Before daylight we were in another county. Then Pa stopped, unhitched and fed the horses. We had breakfast while they ate and then went on again, once more driving into the west.

Oh those sunrises by the light of which we ate our breakfasts; those sunsets into which we drove looking for a good camping place!

The first camp we made was a little late and as Pa hurried building the campfire he pointed over his shoulder and said “Old Sol has beaten us this time. There’s his campfire.”

And there, looking like a fire, through a grove of trees, was the great round moon just rising; “Old Sol’s campfire.”

I am sure Pa was happy to be going back west. He said the air

was fresher where there were not so many people and he played his fiddle by the campfires. “Marching Through Georgia, The Star Spangled Banner, Yankee Doodle, Buffalo Gals, Arkansas Traveler” were scattered on the air all the way from Burr Oak Iowa to Walnut Grove Minn.

CHAPTER 5

Minnesota, 1877-1879

When we drove up to Mr Ensign's house in Walnut Grove we were welcomed as though we had come home. When Pa was going, the next day, to find a place for us to live, they said "No!" we were to stay with them until Pa could build a house for us.

So we lived at Mr Ensign's, Pa paying half the family living expenses and working in a store down town. Willard, Anna and Howard Ensign, Mary, and I went to school.

We all studied the same books, only I was at the beginning of the grammar, Arithmetic, history and geography, Mary was quite a ways farther over and Anna and Willard were quite in the back of the book. We were all in the fifth reader.

There were two spelling classes and I was in the highest. We all stood up in a row, each in his own place. When anyone missed a word it was given to the next to spell and so on down the line until some one spelled it right when they went up the line above the one who first misspelled

the word. When class was dismissed we knew our number in the line so that we could take the right place next time. It was a great honor to stay at the head of the class for a week. There was a foolish boy in the class and if I could not go up I would go down to keep from standing beside him.

Every Friday afternoon at school we did not have our regular lessons but instead spoke pieces and spelled down to find who was the best speller in school.

Friday night there was the spelling school. All the grown folks came to this, bringing lamps and lanterns to light the schoolhouse. Everyone talked and laughed and visited until the teacher rang the bell, then they all took their seats and were quiet.

The teacher chose two leaders, the best spellers in school who stood one on each side of the teachers platform. They each in turn chose one person to stand on their side until everyone was chosen and all were standing in two long lines facing each other across the room.

The teacher then gave out the words from the spelling book first to one leader then to the other leader across the room to the next in line back and forth from one line to the other. Whenever a person misspelled a word he took his seat and the next in the other line tried to spell it and so on back and forth across the line until some one spelled it

right.

Words were given out and spelled in this way, while the lamp flames flared in the drafts and the fire roared in the red hot stove, until all but one were spelled down and seated. The teacher gave out words to the person left standing until one was misspelled, then school was out.

Mary and I liked to go to school in the same little old school house where we used to go and we were all happy to go to the old church and sunday-school again.

A parsonage had been buil[t] while we were away and a new preacher lived in it. His childre[n] Lura and Albert Moses walked with us to and from school while we snow-balled and played all the way. Howard Ensign wanted me to promise to marry him when I grew up and I thought quite seriously about it but when he cried because I played with Albert Moses I was disgusted and told him “No!”

Mr Masters, who had owned the hotel in Burr Oak before we went there, had built a hotel in Walnut Grove and his son Will who had made the bullet holes in the door shooting at his wife Nannie, still lived with him. Besides the hotel, Mr Masters owned a large pasture, joining and back of his town lots.

During the winter, Pa worked for him and paid for a lot in the pasture near the hotel. When spring came he built a

little house on the lot and we moved in as soon as we could while Pa finished the house afterward.

We had all enjoyed living with the Ensigns but it was nice to be in our own home again, where it didn't bother anyone if Grace cried a little in the night and there was only just ourselves.

After the house was finished and a garden made, Pa rented a room down town and kept a butcher shop. Everyone had used up their supply of home butchered meat by that time in the spring so that he had a very good business.

Mr Ensign moved out on his farm and Anna stayed with us to finish the school term.

A milliner had rented the Ensign house and she made such beautiful hats with lace and ribbon and artificial flowers, that I decided I would be a milliner when I grew up. Mary and I used to stop with her little girl on the way home from school to watch her work. I could not understand how any one who handled such lovely things, making of them something still more beautiful, could be so gloomy as the milliner was. I never saw her smile and often she would give deep, sad sighs. I asked her little girl why her mother was like that and she said her Mamma was divorced from her Pappa. There must be something terrible about being divorced, I thought, to make anyone so miserable.

Our teacher this spring and summer was Mr Master's brother. We all called him "Uncle Sam." He was tall and thin, with bad teeth and a bad breath and small brown eyes and a bald head. He had an unpleasant habit of putting his face to close to ours when he talked to us and would absent-mindedly pick up and fondle any of the girls hands that happened to be handy. He captured mine one day when I had a pin in my fingers and I turned the pin quickly, so it jabbed deep when he squeezed. After that he let my hands alone.

Sam Masters oldest boy George and girl Gussie had not come west with the family but Jessie and Jenieve his other children were about my age. Genieve sneered at the other girls in school because they were westerners. She thought herself much above us because she came from New York. She was much nicer dressed than we were and lisped a little when she talked; if she could not have her way in any thing she cried or rather sniveled. Everyone gave up to her and tried to please her because they liked to appear friends with the new girl. Every one that is except Nellie Owens. Nellie was still a leader among the girls when Genieve came and did not intend to give up her leadership. She tried to hold it by being free with candy and bits of ribbon from her father's store. So my crowd divided.

Mary and her crowd were older. Carrie just starting school was with the little girls. That left me alone for I would not be led by either Nellie or Genieve but took sides first with one and then the other as I had a notion, until to my surprise I found myself the leader of them all, because Genieve and Nellie each being eager to win me to her side would play what I wanted to play and do as I said in order to please me.

Genieve lived in the little, old house where brother Freddy had been born. She asked me to stop as I passed going home from school to eat cookies when her mother had baked and Nellie gave me her pretty carnelian ring.

Being, as sister Mary said, a tomboy, I led the girls into the boys games. We played Anti-over, Pullaway, Prisoners Base and hand ball. Only one boy in the school could run faster than me and not always could he do it. When the boys saw how well we could play, in an hour of triumph they took us into their baseball game and we played that the rest of the summer, much to the scandle of Mary and Anna, Lura and Christy and Ida and May Cockrhan all big girls, being ladies.

Early in the summer [erasure] the Sunday school supren-tendent, invited all the Sunday-school to go on a picnic to the walnut grove, two miles from town. We were to pack

our lunch baskets and go to Mr Moses' house. A big wagon would be there to take us all to the grove. Swings had been put up and there would be plenty of lemonade and ice-cream. Ma made us a delicious lunch and packed it in our basket. There was a whole lemon pie, which was the only kind of pie I liked. Ma said there would be a piece each for Mary and I and the rest for some one else.

Pa bought me a new pair of shoes because my old ones were shabby and early in the morning, Mary and I went gaily to the meeting place.

The ride to the grove was crowded but fun. When we got there we found two swings and played with them awhile, taking our turn at swinging with all the others.

The lemonade and ice cream were there too, but the lemonade was 5¢ a glass and the ice-cream 10¢ a dish. As we had understood the lemonade and icecream were provided for the Sunday school scholars we had taken no money, so we went without any. As Mary

and I agreed we would not have asked Pa to give us money for them anyway so it didn't really matter.

At noon the teachers took the lunches out of all the baskets and spread them on a large, white cloth on the ground.

Someway I didn't care much for any of the dinner and I couldn't see the lemon pie that had been in our basket. I

went away from the food and wandered by a large box at one side just as a couple of the teachers came to it.

“Here,” said one, “I saved this lemon pie out for us teachers. There wasn’t enough of it to go all around anyhow.” I looked and there was my lemon pie, under a paper, on the box.

Then I went and sat down in the shade of a tree. When they called me to come play, I said I didn’t want to play any more, my foot hurt.

After awhile, Mary and I went picking flowers in the wood away from the sight of the ice-cream and lemonade and soon it was time to go home.

We all crowded into the wagon and rode quietly back to town; Mary and I said goodbye and walked on home where I took off my new shoes and found a big blister on the heel of my right foot.

When vacation time came, Mrs Masters wanted me to help a[t] the hotel, washing dishes, waiting on table and helping take [care] of Nannie’s baby, Little Nan. She said she would give me 50¢ a week and not let me work too hard, so Ma said I might go. The work was easy and there were interesting things happening all the time.

Matie Masters was Will’s sister and she was very much the fine lady. She never helped with the work, not even

making her own bed. Her room was the parlor bedroom, furnished expensively. And in her bed, with its snowy linen and silk draperies, Matie would sleep until ten o'clock in the morning, while her mother and Nannie and a cousin Lotie were busy as they could be. They worked hard all day but I never saw Matie even do a bit of sewing. When Matie came out into the dining room at 10 o'clock, in her pretty wrapper and soft slippers with her fair hair hanging loose, Lotie or Nannie or her mother would bring her a warm breakfast with usually some special, dainty dish.

Lotie was a pretty girl, with wonderful, long, thick hair that she wore in two braids wound around her head. She was a poor relation with no other home and lived like an ordinary daughter, not like Matie, getting nothing for her work but her hoard and clothes. Nannie was a tiny, little, brown woman, a nice English girl. Of course living as she did in her father-in-laws house with her husband and baby she was expected to work as long as there was work to do, which she did cheerfully.

On Monday morning Lotie and Nannie did the hotel and family washing out in the yard, such stacks and stacks of clothes. On that day at 10 o'clock Mrs Masters and I always gave them a warm lunch with coffee at the same time Made had her breakfast but Nannie and Lotie ate in the

kitchen. Then they went back and finished the washing while Mrs Masters, with my help, cooked the dinner.

I washed dishes and swept and dusted and played with Little Nan. I never liked to wait on the table but I did like to set it, with the silver castor, its bottles filled with salt and pepper, vinegar and mustard in the center. Near the castor were the sugar bowl, cream pitcher and spoon holder, the silver spoons standing bowls up looking like a boquet.

I liked to put the wire screens, looking like round bee hives over the food, the little one over the butter, larger ones over the cake and bread the vegetables, cooked fruit and other food.

The flys could come in the open doors and windows, as they pleased, but could only crawl disappointedly over the round, wire-

screen caps that covered the food.

When my work was done and Little Nan sleeping, I could curl up in a corner out of the way and read the stories in the New York Ledger. Great stories they were of beautiful ladies and brave, handsome men; of dwarfs and villians of jewels and secret caverns. I would lose myself in them and come to, with a start if Little Nan cried or Mrs Masters said it was time to set the table for supper.

Dr. Robert Hoyt was a regular boarder and Matie al-

ways smiled her sweetest and dressed her prettiest when she would see him. At the noon dinner and at supper Dr Hoyt always ate with the family sitting beside Matie and after supper, before my dishes were done so I could go home, Matie and the Dr. would be in the parlor, playing the piano and singing or sitting on the sofa talking.

Then Fanny Star came to visit Matie. Fanny was one of Mrs Star's big girls who had gone away from Burr Oak to teach leaving Mrs Star lonesome. Dr Hoyt had learned to be a Dr. studying with Dr Star.

The first I knew of Fanny's coming was when Matie was having her breakfast. She read a letter that was beside her plate, then told her mother that Fanny Star was coming to make her a visit. "And I just know," Matie said almost crying "that she is coming to try to get Robby back. It doesn't make any difference if he did engage himself to her when he was studying with her father, she shan't have him!" Matie threw the letter on the floor and stamped on it, then went to her room and slammed the door so that we heard it out in the dining room.

The next morning, Matie was all smiles at her breakfast. "What a storm in the night," she said. "My window was open and it rained right in on me and waked me up. It was lightening something terrible and you know I'm so afraid of

lightening,” she went on in her lisping voice. “I was terribly frightened but I heard Robbie going up stairs to his room and I called to him and he came in and shut the window.” And she laughed softly.

Fanny came and Matie met her all smiles, but I had a feeling that underneath the smiles was a sneer, and I could see that she tried to hurt Fanny by showing off her friendship with Dr Hoyt and calling him “Yobbie,” instead of his proper name. I thought Matie was mean and silly and I liked Fanny who was a tall, dark, handsome girl always kind and considerate and sensible.

The three of them went on picnics and played croquet. They played cards evenings and played the piano and sang.

Fanny was a good singer with a deep, rich voice that I thought was wonderful compared with Matie’s little soprano squeak.

Fanny sometimes sang “Under The Daxies,” and her voice trembled a little, I thought as she sang,

“Better far better than a love unblest,

Is a low grave under the daxies The beautiful, beautiful daxies The snowy, snow daxies.”

Fanny came intending to stay two weeks, but only one week had past, when on my way home one night as I passed the parlor, I heard angry voices and some one crying. I

knew Fanny and Made and Dr. Hoyt where there and I wondered.

When I came back in the morning, Fanny was having breakfast alone so she could catch the early morning train. Mrs Masters and Lotie were there but very quiet. Fanny did not go into Matie's room at all, but after cool good bys to Mrs Masters and Lotie went to the train with Mr Masters.

Made did not come out of her room until noon. Her eyes were red and swollen and she was very angry at Fannie, muttering something like "I'll never forgive her for insulting me."

Right away Mrs Masters began to get Made ready for her wedding. Ma sewed on her pretty clothes and went to her wedding in a few weeks.

Will Masters was as good for nothing as ever but he could not get as much as he wanted to drink so he and Dr Hoyt persuaded our old neighbor on the farm, Mr Nelson, to come to town and keep a saloon.

It got to be a pretty rough place and because of so much drinking and fighting there, the constable was going to arrest Mr Nelson. He went to the saloon to get him, but Anna Anderson had sent Mrs Nelson word of it. Mrs Nelson beat the constable to the saloon and had Mr Nelson in the wagon ready to start home to the farm when the consta-

ble got there. Pa said Mrs Nelson used some dreadful language and dared the constable to touch them and they let her drive away home with Mr Nelson drunk in the bottom of the wagon. We were all very glad for Pa was Justice of the Peace that year and did not want Mr Nelson brought before him.

So there was no saloon in town, but Dr. Hoyt would get whiskey somewhere and give it to Will so that he was drunk most of the time. Pa said he was trying to help Will drink himself to death so that his wife Matie would get all their father's property.

Pa's Justice office was in our front room; when he had a trial we all went into the kitchen, but we could hear very well through the door between the rooms and whenever I could I would sit by the door and listen, There was a lawyer in town now, a stranger named Thorpe. It was said that he was part Mexican, he was so very dark with such straight black hair and black eyes. He had an awful temper and I enjoyed hearing him argue a case for he nearly always got mad at someone or something.

One day some people came in from their farm to sign papers before Pa. They were Mr Welch and his wife a large, coarse looking red-headed woman, her sister, a tiny little white haired woman, who had been crying and her husband,

Mr & Mrs Ray, and their grown son Will Ray.

There were queer stories about Mrs Welch, her awful temper, the quarrels she had with her husband and the outlandish things she did. Mr Welch had advertised, in a paper, for a wife and this woman had answered the advertisement.

After exchanging a few letters she had come to Walnut Grove on the train; hired a rig, took the preacher and driven out to Mr Welch's farm. There they were married beside a hay stack. "And what," people said, "could you expect of a woman like that!"

She had later sent for her nephew Will Ray who made his home with her, worked for Mr Welch and held a homestead he took near by.

This spring Mrs Welch had persuaded Will to have his father and mother make him a visit. She had sent them money to buy their railroad tickets and when they came was very nice to them, insisting that they make their visit longer and longer, until it had lasted the whole summer.

When at last they were determined to go home, they learned from the east that they had no home to go to. They had given a mortgage on it when Will went west, under a contract that they could not be turned out so long as they lived, but the contract was so worded that if they gave up residence on it then the mortgage could be foreclosed. They

had been away so long, they had lost residence, the mortgage had been foreclosed and a quit claim deed sent them to sign as a further security to the title for which they were to be paid a small sum.

They had come to sign the deed before Pa. From the deed as Pa

read it I knew it must have been a beautiful old place. It was in New York and the description read from a certain tree on a hillside to a certain stone in a valley, then following the course of a brook to another stone, twisting and turning here and there, not square with straight lines like the farms I knew.

Everyone was very quiet, with Mrs Ray touching her handkerchief to her eyes now and then, until the deed was read and signed.

Then Mrs Welch snatched the deed, while the red flew into her face and her eyes blazed. "It's mine!" she screamed at her sister. "That's where I put the money I earned teaching school. I was the one held that mortgage and no one but the lawyer knew. That's why I hired Will to come out; that's why I had you come and kept you from going back. I planned it all from the beginning! All these years I've waited, but I told you I would get even with you when you married the man I wanted!"

Then she began to call her sister names and curse her, until Mr Welch took her roughly by the shoulders, pushed her out into the yard and shut the door, while she screamed and kicked and clawed, scratching his face, till her nails drew blood.

Mrs Ray looked tinyier than ever crumpled in her chair, with her sweet, dark eyes looking frightened in her white face.

I looked at Mr Ray, a feeble, small, old man and wondered why anyone should make such a fuss over him, but when I saw him put his arm around his wife, heard his voice as he spoke to her and saw her eyes light up, I almost understood.

Will took them over to the hotel, while Mr Welch to[ok] his wife home. Mr Masters loaned Will some money and he paid Mrs Welch the money she had sent his mother to bring them west; built an addition to the claim shanty on his homestead and took his father and mother home to live with him. But they had wanted so much to go home!

Uncle Sam Masters had invented a machine he said would find gold, silver or iron wherever it was. He used to try it and show how it worked by finding gold or silver watch which had been hidden in the house. It did so well that Mr Masters had him try it out in the pasture. Mr Masters

thought there was some kind of ore there.

And sure enough Uncle Sam's instrument said there was on the far bank, of a dry wash a little ways back of our house. The instrument didn't tell what kind of ore was there but Mr Masters got a drill and began drilling to find out. When the drill had gone down a hundred feet, it was blown out of the hole and a stream of water followed it. It was no use trying to drill any farther, so they put a pipe around the hole that stood up from the ground and there was a flowing well. The water ran out the top of the pipe into a barrel, overflowed from that and ran off making a little brook out of what had been the dry wash. The water tasted strong of iron and turned everything it ran over a rusty red, so Pa and Mr Masters thought likely there was iron ore down in the ground.

Our house sat in the big pasture without any yard fence around it, but I wished we were not there when a cattle buyer came from the west driving 200 cattle he had bought and was taking to his farm in Iowa to fatten.

He rented the pasture to put them in over night and hired Pa to watch them, while he and his men slept.

Such a bawling and a pawing as there was around our little house as they drove the cattle in the gate, but they drove them on past to the running water and left them drinking

and eating grass.

After awhile they all lay down, while Pa walked around the outside of the fence and the dark settled quietly over everything.

Ma said I was to stay dressed because I might have to go call the men if Pa needed them and along in the night sometime she shook me awake and told me to run to the hotel as fast as I could and call the men. I heard the cattle bawling and Pa shout and when Ma opened the door I jumped to the fence, rolled under it and ran. I couldn't tell which way the cattle were going, but I could hear them bawling and trampling and I lost no time to the hotel door where I pounded and shouted. The men came running, jumped on their horses and went after the cattle. They didn't get them back until daylight.

Pa said they were all sleeping quietly when one big steer jumped to his feet and bawled. Instantly all were up bellowing and away they went. The fence might as well not have been there for all the good it did.

I never saw a stampede, but hearing one is enough.

Late in the summer, Pa sold his butcher business, because, he said, folks would soon be butchering their own meat.

Mr Masters was putting up a store building, with a hall

above, beside the hotel and Pa did carpenter work on that until it was finished before winter came.

We had a new teacher when school began that winter. Mr Thorpe did not have law business to keep him busy or pay him much so he took the school to help out. He was a good school teacher and we were getting along nicely in our books. Also we were playing particularly hard at recess and noon. The snow was deeper and softer than usual and we chose sides and had snow-ball fights that were gorgeous.

Mary objected to my playing such rough games out doors with the boys, but she could not keep me in and once when she took both hands full of my loose, long hair and tried to hold me I stiffened my neck and dragged her to the door where she caught some of the snowballs herself before she let me go. Then she told Ma about it and Ma said I was too large a girl to play that way any more. I would soon be thirteen and must be more of a lady. After that I stayed with the big girls and the very little ones in the house. The other girls of my crowd would not go because I didn't and soon the boys had all the outdoor fun to themselves except on the way to and from school. When Genieve got her face washed in the snow she would cry helplessly but I was busy giving as good as I got.

There were three new boys in school. Clarence and

Maylon Spurr were brothers. Clarence was man grown but Maylon and Silas Rude the other new boy were about my age.

There was quite a rivelery among the big girls over Clarence, especially between Anna Ensign and Lura Moses. They were both pretty girls, tall, with black hair and brown eyes, but Anna's hair was straight and long in braids around her head; her eyes were cold and her face pale and fine.

Lura's hair was short and thick and curley. She wore it in crisp ringlets. She was not so slender as Anna; her eyes were large and soft her cheeks red and her lips very red and full. I thought they were silly to care at all about Clarence. He was rather a prissy, thinking himself smart, he was sometimes impudent to Mr Thorpe. The other boys did not like him, but I suppose being a new boy from the east made him interesting to the girls.

The boys had been careless in their play about throwing snow in the door and Mr Thorpe told them to stay out when they were snowballing, not be dodging in the door bringing the snow with them.

Clarence Spurr never condesended to snowball with the other boys, but one noon as he came back to school he made some balls and threw them at the boys as he dodged for the door. He opened it and ran in just as the snow balls

all the boys threw at him got there and then a perfect shower of snowballs came in with him causing him to slip on the snow and fall on the floor.

Mr Thorpe was there before he could get up and his eyes were blazing. "What do you mean by this?" he said and Clarence answered "None of your business!" Mr Thorpe took him by the collar, jerked him to his feet and great boy that he was, as large as Mr Thorpe, he shook him as though he were a small child until his teeth must have rattled, then he slapped his face on both cheeks with his open hand and slammed him down in his seat.

Clarence sat there sullenly, with his hair on end and his tie undone, while we girls huddled together fearfully, until Mr Thorpe rang the bell. Then Clarence got up took his cap and walked out of the door, Mr Thorpe watching him and saying nothing.

Anna and Lura were very angry they said they would not come to school any more and at recess they took all their books and went home. Because they were the oldest and the rest of us looked up to them Mary and I and several of the others took our books too. Daniel and Sandy Kennedy said it served Clarence right and Christy and Nettie stayed.

When Mary and I got home, Pa and Ma wanted an explanation and when we told them about it he said we were

to go right back to school in the morning. We hated to do it thinking the others would not be there, but in the morning there they all were, with their books, looking rather sheepish.

Clarence did not com[e] but Maylon came and took Clarence's books and his own and went away again. They didn't come back any more and I thought school was much pleasanter without Clarence strutting around.

The girls of my crowd missed Maylon. We had liked him. He and Silas Rude were so different from Howard and Alber[t] and Sandy with their rough hair and freckled faces. Like Clarence, Maylon and Silas wore collars and ties. Silas said he was Rude by name and rude by nature," but if so he hid it well, for his manners were very nice and instead of treating us girls like playmates only a little less good than boys, he was very polite and treated us like grown ladies, which was strange and somehow thrilling, though really not so much fun.

Any of us were proud to have a note from him slipped to us in school hours or to walk with him on the way to school.

Genieve used to watch from her window until she saw him coming, then start to school in time to meet and walk on with him.

I could do nothing like that for I lived in another part of town, but one night, when I knew he was going down town, I went around that way home so I could walk with him.

Of course Ma wanted to know why I went down town and I didn't have a good excuse, so she said I should stop being silly over Silas Rude or she would take me out of school and Pa said any boy who would fool around with the girls, instead of playing with the other boys like a man, was no good, only a sissy.

I knew all this but somehow I couldn't tell them that I didn't really even like Silas, but I just didn't want Genieve to have his attentions.

But soon we were rid of Silas Rude! It happened this way.

A Good Templars Lodge was organized in town and all the nice, older people in town joined it. Pa and Ma joined although they were angry at the lecturer who organized it, because he had been drinking and when he was lecturing for temperance and telling the evils of drinking, he had a bottle of whiskey in his pocket. But he went away as soon as the Lodge was started and the people used to have good times at the lodge meetings.”

On the nights of those meetings I stayed at Mrs Goffs

to take care of the baby while they were away. I always locked the door carefully after they went away and would read while the baby slept or rock it if it waked.

One night as I sat reading there came a knock at the door and when I asked who was there a voice said “Silas Rude.” I opened the door and he asked for Mr Goff. When I told him where Mr Goff was he ran towards town as fast as he could.

I locked the door again wondering what could be the matter that Silas should look so wild and be without a cap outdoors in the cold.

Silas lived with his sister and her husband out a little ways in the country. He passed Mr Goffs on the way to town, but I wondered why he had not stayed home as he always did alone until his folks came from lodge.

In a few minutes there was another pounding on the door and Mrs Goff calling “Open the door! Open the door!” I did so quickly and she rushed in, snatched the baby from the cradle where it was, sound asleep, and asked in one breath, “Are you all right? Has anyone been here?”

She sent Mr Goff home with me though I usually ran home alone.

It was only when I was home where Pa and Ma had just come from Lodge, that I learned what it was all about:

Silas Rude had burst into the Lodge room with his face bleeding, his wrists cut, a piece of rope hanging to one and told how two strange men had come into the house, beaten and gagged him, tied his feet and hands together, then gone and left him lying on the floor. After a long, hard struggle he had got his hands loose untied the gag and his feet and ran for help.

There was wild excitement in the Lodge room and everyone ran home to see if their children were safe. Then they hurried out to see if they could find any trace of the men.

They found no sign of them, nor could they the next day when they went back to search by daylight. No strangers were seen or heard of in the neighborhood, no one that at all answered the description of the men that Silas had given.

It was plain that Silas had bruised his own face and wrists, tied the rope around his wrist and made up the whole story, to make of himself a sort of hero and create excitement.

He had made an excitement but he was no hero. Everyone despised him and his sister took him out of school and sent him home because he could not face the ridicule of the town.

There was a revival in our church that winter.” I enjoyed going, hearing the singing and watching the crowd. One

man named Will Knight was very amusing. He was tall and dark with a deep bass voice and sang as loud as he could. When the meetings were at the greatest pitch of excitement, he one night left off singing and with a great shout went forward among the mourners. This was the first revival I had ever attended and I didn't understand the process. It rather sickened me to hear Will Knight groan and sob and take on calling on the Lord to forgive him for his many sins. After a couple of meetings he stopped groaning and imploring and shouted and sang joyfully. Pa said he was all right now until he backslid again. When I asked what he meant, he said Will Knight always got religion every revival meeting, but backslid and was a sinner all the time between.

Will Ray was there too. He sang tenor and I loved to sit or stand beside him and follow his tenor with my piping soprano.

Will Ray loved to sing and when he was reaching a high note with his voice would raise himself on his tiptoes. The higher the note the higher he stood seeming to raise himself that he might pick it out of the air above him, lifting his voice with his feet.

Will Ray was a church member who never backslid, but he was very quiet in the meetings, the opposite of Will

Knight in every way even in his looks for though he was tall too, it was a slim tallness and he was very light, with pale hair. His little mother sometimes came to church with him and one could see how proud of him she was.

When the revival meeting at the Congregational church stopped, the Methodists began one in the hall over Masters' new store where they had their preaching and Sunday-school.

This was much more exciting. Will Knight was there shouting and singing and helping with the sinners. Pa said this was where he belonged instead of at the other church.

The preacher and his wife were English people who had come from England after they were married. They always put their Hs in

the wrong place and were queer in some of their ways, but they certainly knew how to handle a crowd and sway them as they pleased. At times the whole congregation would be on their knees with groanings and shoutings breaking out in all parts of the room. Again everyone would be singing and shouting at the same time.

All that winter we all went to our church and Sunday-school on Sunday morning and in the afternoon I went to the Methodist church and Sunday-school.

Mary did not go in the afternoon, because she was not very well all winter. Sometimes Pa went with me but I nev-

er failed because there was a contest in the Sunday-school. A prize was offered to the pupil who at the end of the year could repeat from memory, in their proper order, all the Golden Texts and Central Truths for the entire year, which would be two Bible verses for each Sunday of the year. When the time came for the test, we stood up one at a time before the whole Sunday-school and beginning with the first lesson of the year repeated first the Golden Text then the Central truth of each lesson, one after the other as they came, without any prompting or help of any kind. The prize was a reference Bible.

One after the other they tried and failed until my turn came and I was perfect. But alas so was Howard Ensign when his turn came and there were both of us winners with only one prize between us.

My teacher, the preacher's wife, said if I would wait until she could send and get another Bible she would get me one with a clasp, so I was glad to wait.

Howard Ensign had joined the Congregational church after their revival and would testify at prayer meeting every Wednesday night. It somehow offended my sense of privacy. It seemed to me that the things between one and God should be between him and God like loving ones mother. One didn't go around saying 'I love my mother, she has

been so good to me.' One just loved her and did things that she liked one to do.

On stormy winter evenings, Pa loved to play his violin and he took great pains to teach Carrie and me to dance together nicely all the round dances. With him playing, and watching our steps to see that we did them right, we learned to waltz, and shottice (that is not spelled right but it is not in my dictionary) and polka.

Pa had taught me some of the steps before but I had to dance alone. Now Carrie was big enough to dance with me, we became quite expert and were often called on to dance when some one came in for the evening.

I had been away from home a good many days that winter helping Mrs Goff on Saturdays and holidays and soon after the Methodist meeting was over, Mrs Masters asked Ma to let me go and stay with Lotie's sister Sadie Hurley. Sadie's husband, John, had to be away at his work a good deal and Sadie not being very well ought not to be left alone.

Ma hated to take me out of school but finally consented, so taking my school books with me I went with John driving through the cold and the snow to a little two roomed house in the country. My bed was curtained off with a calico curtain from the front room.

I stayed with Sadie two weeks while John made up his

crop of broom straw into brooms to sell in town. One day to my pleased surprise I found Pa helping him, when I went to call him to dinner.

The rest of the days were lonely and I was homesick. I knew things were not going well at home, because Pa could not get much work and we needed more money to live on.

One night while saying my prayers, as I always did before going to bed, this feeling of homesickness and worry was worse than usual, but gradually I had a feeling of a hovering, encompassing Presence of a Power, comforting and sustaining and thought in surprise ‘That is what men call God!’

I was no more than back home again when Matie now Mrs Hoyt was taken sick. Ma went every day to help take care of her and they had Dr Fred Welcome, our old Dr.’s son come, but after all she died. No one ever said what the sickness was but I heard Ma tell Pa that Dr. Hoyt had been trying some experiment and she said, “Matie would better have let Fanny Star have him than to have gotten him that way.”

The winter which had not been so bad, this far, turned stormy and the awful blizzards came again out of the northwest as they had when we lived on the farm. We stopped going to school for we were not very warmly dressed and

on our path was quite a ways where there were no houses and the wind swept harder there.

One morning, after a blizzard, Pa went down town early, then came hurrying back to dress himself warmer. He was going, he said to help find Robbins' children, who were all lost in the storm.

Pa didn't know how it had happened and he hurried back to go with the other men out to Mr Robbins farm about three miles from town. The morning was clear and still with the sun shining brightly, but it was very cold and they must hurry to try to save the children from freezing to death, though they didn't have much hope.

Mr and Mrs Robbins had been in town the day before when the storm struck and they stayed until the wind began to go down in the night, then they hurried home. They found the house cold and empty, no sign of the children anywhere, but the stovepipe had fallen down and was lying on the floor.

They and a neighbor who lived a half mile away had been looking for the children ever since and the neighbors boy had ridden to town for help.

When Pa came home, about noon, he told us that the men had started in a circle from the house, spreading as they went, looking into every drift and pile of snow and

at last they found the children in a snow drift. There were five. They hurriedly carried them to the house and began to work over them.

The oldest a girl twelve years old was alive but badly frozen. The baby wrapped close against her under her coat was alive and only chilled. The others, two boys and a girl were frozen to death.

They packed snow around the frozen arms and legs of the girl who was alive to thaw them out. Pa said it was terrible with the dead children lying there and this girl swearing horribly as her legs and arms hurt thawing out. They thought she would be all right, but she had been so badly frozen that later the Dr. had to cut off one leg.

When the stovepipe fell down in the night, the room filled with smoke and sparks from the fire and the children thought the house was on fire. They wrapped themselves up the best they could, quickly, and ran out into the night and the storm trying to go to the nearest neighbors.

In a few minutes they were lost, but kept on trying to find their way until they could go no farther. Being wrapped under Nora's coat, so close to her body had saved the baby.

That was the last, bad storm of the winter. Soon a warm wind came out of the north west instead of a blizzard and Pa called it the Chinook wind and said spring had come.

Pa got work to do when the days were warmer, repairing the pasture fence for Mr Masters and doing carpentering. He got Mr Masters team and plowed our little garden and I helped him plant the seeds. Mary and I made some flower beds and planted seeds and set out plants that Missouri Pool gave us. Mary liked to [dig?] in the flower beds, but I did hate to get my fingers in the dirt.

Will and Nannie Masters had moved into rooms over the Masters' store and Mrs Masters persuaded Ma to let me stay with Nannie, because she had falling spells and it was not safe for her to stay alone with Little Nan.

There was'n't much work to do. The washing was done down at the hotel and Nannie and I together cooked and washed dishes made the beds swept the floors and took care of Little Nan.

But it was not pleasant, for I never knew at what moment Nannie would fall without a word or a sign and lie as if dead. Then I must loosen her clothes and sprinkle water on her face until she opened her eyes, then in a few minutes I would help her up and to a chair.

I did not like either to be where Will was. He was drinking more than ever. His eyes were red rimmed and he had such a silly look on his face. Dr. Hoyt was always giving him whiskey, sometimes bringing it into the rooms and

giving it to him there. He seemed to be doing it more for spite than anything for since Matie was dead Mr & Mrs Masters would have nothing to do with him and Fanny Star wouldn't take him back.

I hadn't stayed with Nannie very long when one night I waked from a sound sleep to find Will leaning over me. I could smell the whiskey on his breath. I sat up quickly.

'Is Nannie sick,' I asked.

"No," he answered, ["lie down and be still!"

'Go away quick,' I said, 'or I will scream for Nannie.'

He went and the next day Ma said I could come home.

Old Mr & Mrs Pool, with their grown daughter, Missouri, lived in a queer little house near us. There was a fireplace and Missouri never let the fire go out on the hearth, carefully covering the coals with ashes to keep them when the fire was not needed. Missouri did all the work, caring for her father and mother for they were old. She kept the house and herself always spotless. I never saw a speck of dirt on her dress or apron or sunbonnet, not even when she was working in her garden. She had a wonderful garden and the house yard was filled with all kinds of beautiful flowers, mingonnett and moss roses on the borders, tall hollyhocks against the back fence and poppies all over the place. I loved the poppies best, with their wonderful colors and

the texture of their petals, the blossoms were like silken banners blowing in the wind.

Mr & Mrs Pool and Missouri all smoked pipes, Missouri's was a very small, white clay pipe. She used to bring it with her when she came to visit and tell us stories of Missouri, the state for which she was named. She had five sisters and six brothers all married and still living there, but she said whenever she had a beau, something happened to drive him away.

She couldn't understand it until she overheard her mother telling a neighbor woman that she "aimed to keep Missouri at home to take care of me in my old age and so far I've managed to drive her beaus away."

Missouri was homesick for the old place in Missouri where she used to ride horseback and pick wild fruit in the woods. She was a great help and comfort when Mary was taken sick and we were all so sorry when we learned later, that having at last married an old sweetheart and gone back to Missouri, she died in childbirth, it having been much harder for her because of her age.

Mary was taken suddenly sick with a pain in her head and grew worse quickly. She was delirious with an awful fever and Ma cut off her long, beautiful hair to keep her head cooler.

We feared for several days that she would not get well and one morning when I looked at her I saw one side of her face drawn out of shape. Ma said Mary had, had a stroke and as I looked at her I remembered her oak tree away back in Wisconsin that had been struck by lightning all down one side.

After the stroke Mary began to get better, but she could not see well. Pa had Dr Welcome come to help Dr Hoyt with them, but he said the nerves of her eyes had the worst of the stroke and were dying, that nothing could be done.

They had a long name for her sickness and said it was the results of the measles from which she had never wholly recovered.

As Mary grew stronger her eyes grew weaker until when she could sit up in the big chair among the pillows she could hardly see at all. The last thing Mary ever saw was the bright blue of Grace's eyes as Grace stood holding by her chair, looking up at her.

Mary was getting strong again sitting up most of the day and her face was almost straight once more, when, one day, Pa's sister Aunt Docia Holms drove up to the door, taking us by surprise.

She was on her way west, where Uncle High had a contract grading for the Chicago and Northwestern which was

being extended westward from Tracy that spring.

Aunt Docia was alone with her horse and buggy and had come to get Pa to go with her to the camp where Uncle High was. They wanted Pa for book-keeper, company store keeper and time-keeper and would pay him a good salery.

Pa was glad of the chance and Ma told him to go along, we would be all right until we could come later.

So the next day, Pa sold our house and lot to Mr Masters and drove away with Aunt Docia the morning after.

There had not been much idle time for me that summer, what with working away from home and then helping at home with the house and garden and taking care of Grace while Mary had been so sick. I had hardly seen any of the girls. Anna Ensign would come from the farm some days to see us; Maud Blair my chum at Sunday-school came once in a while to see me and I walked out to where Nettie Kennedy lived two miles from town and spent a long, lazy day with her.

How I did enjoy that day with Nettie and Sandy. Christy and her mother made an extra good dinner and wouldn't let Nettie do any of her work, so we had the day to ourselves with her books and pictures and the sunshine and flowers. Sandy, with his red head and freckled face, his pant legs rolled up from his bear feet was on his good behavior and

he and Nettie walked part way home with me when it was time to go. I never saw them again.

After Pa went away, Ma and I were busy getting all our clothes in order, sorting out and packing the things we were to take with us and selling or giving away the rest. When a month had gone by Pa sent Ma his first pay check; she bought our tickets to Tracy which was as far as the train ran and once more we started west, but on the train this time instead of with horses and wagon.

This was my first ride on a train and was all too short for leaving Walnut Grove in the morning we were at Tracy by noon, but short as it was I enjoyed it, while I helped Ma with Grace and the satchels (?) and told Mary about every thing I saw, for we were on our way again and going in the direction which always brought the happiest changes.

Pa was driving in from the camp to meet us at Tracy that night and take us out the next morning, so when we got off the train we went to the hotel to wait. The man carrying our satchels took us into the parlor and left us. We stayed there looking at pictures and books seeing no one for some time, then two little boys came in looked at us and went out again. A few minutes after a man came in leaning on a cane. He said he was sorry there was no one to make us welcome. His wife and her sister used to make the place

pleasant, but they were dead and gone. There was no one left but him and the little boys and the hired help didn't do very well by themselves.

The man sat down in a big chair with pillows in it and told Ma his story.

He and his wife and the twin boys, with his wife's sister and her sweetheart had gone for a drive one Sunday afternoon. A storm had come up and they were trying to get home before it struck. That was the last he knew until he waked up in bed not able to move seemingly paralyzed.

People caring for him told him the storm had come with a great deal of thunder and lightening and a deluge of rain.

The open prairie came up to the hotel on the back and some time after the storm was over, the hired girl saw the little boys come walking down the road. They acted strangely, walking a little ways, then stopping and whispering to each other, then coming a little farther and stopping again appearing very frightened. She ran out to them and brought them in, but when she asked where their father and mother were they would not talk at first, but finally said they were all asleep out there in the road.

People went hurrying along the road until two miles from town they came on the four people and the horses lying in the road. They were indeed all fast asleep and none

of them ever waked, except the boys' father. Lightning had struck them and when the man talking to us, had waked in bed, he had been unconcious so long that his wife, her sister and the sister's sweetheart were buried.

No one knew whether the boys had not been touched or if they had been stunned and revived by the rain. The boys would not talk about it and for a long time would just sit and stare at nothing. Even yet they would not play, but wandered around the house and still seemed strange and frightened.

After a short time, as the man still lay helpless, boils began to break out on his body and limbs and as far as the swelling and inflamation of a boil reached the body came back to life. By now he had so far recovered that he could hobble around with a cane. He showed us the gold watch he had been wearing when the lightening struck him. It was full of round holes and the inside all melted together.

It was no wonder the hotel was quiet and gloomy. We were so glad and felt much better when Pa came. In the morning after an early breakfast Pa loaded all our things from the depot and the hotel into the lumber wagon he had driven in and we started on to Uncle High's camp.

CHAPTER 6

Dakota Territory, 1879-1880

Nothing happened on the way and the road looked all the same. At noon we stopped, fed the horses and ate the cold lunch we had brought from the hotel, then went on again.

It was after dark when we got to the camp, but Aunt Docia had a good warm supper waiting for us.

Gene and Lena were two cousins I had never seen before. Lena was a very pretty girl about my age with black eyes and black curly hair. Gene was very dark too a little younger than Lena.

There was room in Aunt Docia's shanty for all except Gene and Lena and me. Gene went to stay in the bunk house with the men and Lena and I slept on a quilt on the ground in a tent. It was all very strange and rather unpleasant. If I had been up in the wagon I wouldn't have minded, but I didn't like to sleep on the ground where there might be snakes and bugs and I was away from Pa and Ma and the girls in a strange country. It didn't seem as though I

ought to mind any of these things but taken all together I felt lonesome. Just as I was dropping off to sleep there was a scratching on the tent by our heads and a screech almost in our ears. It gave me a frightful start, but Lena shouted “Hey! I wasn’t brought up in the woods to be scared by an owl. It’s Gene trying to scare us,” she said and was asleep at once, so I went to sleep too.

We didn’t stay long at this place. The camp was already breaking up and going farther west to the next camp, for the grade was finished here and a town called Brookins started.

Aunt Docia’s family and Pa were staying on for a final acceptance of the work and settlement with the railroad company. I understood that Aunt Docia and Uncle High were bitterly disappointed for after their hard summer’s work with themselves and four big teams they were coming out behind, in debt to the railroad company for the price they were paid for making the grade would not cover the expense of building it allowing nothing for the work of themselves and teams. On the contract at the camp ahead” they hoped to pay what they owed the company and make a little for themselves.

Besides the big work horses, Uncle High had two black ponies one for Lena and one for Gene, These were on pick-

et ropes near the camp. Gene loaned me his pony and I rode around with Lena a little, but I was timid for I had never ridden a horse. Lena could leap on her pony from the ground and ride it bareback on the run. She and Gene raced each other from the ground trying which could sooner mount and reach a certain place.

Lena and I drove both ponies hitched to a light wagon several miles into the country to bring home the washing a farmer's wife had done for us all.

It would be hard to tell which enjoyed it most the ponies or Lena and I. They ran most of the way with their long, black manes and tails blowing in the wind while we shouted and sang. When we slowed the ponies down to rest, they were quiet only a few minutes, then would touch noses and break into a run of their own accord.

We found the reason the washerwoman had not brought the washing back was because her daughter had just been married and she had been busy with the wedding. "She is only thirteen," she said proudly, "but it is just as well to be married young." The bride was just my age and a year younger than Lena. As we talked about it going back, we were glad we were not in her place but could run around and play as we were doing. We decided we didn't mind helping with the work and the babies but as for us let some

one else be responsible.

The next day aunt Docia's folks moved on to the new camp, but we had to wait another day for Pa to be checked out of the Company store.

Then very early in the morning we put all our things in the big wagon; Pa hitched on the big team and we went on west. Almost at once we drove through the breaks along the river; crossed the Sioux river and were out on the broad prairie that looked like a big meadow as far as we could see in every direction.

There was no cover on the wagon for we were going only forty miles and the sky was clear and cloudless.

The weather was warm, hut not too warm and the wind was blowing, waving the tall prairie grass that had turned brown in the summer sun.

At noon we stopped, fed the horses and ate our lunch quite in the old way, then hitched up again and went on mile after mile, never seeing a house or any sign of people, the trail we were following showing only broken and bent down grasses to mark it.

There were old buffalo paths worn deep in the ground but grassed over and round depressions of perhaps a quarter or a half an acre that had once been buffalo wallows but where now also the grass was growing.

Late in the afternoon a man on horseback showed on the prairie behind us and followed gaining a little and so drawing nearer as we went on. Pa seemed uneasy and kept glancing back.

Then a man on a white horse overtook the other and they came on. Ma didn't like their coming but Pa said the last man was Big Jerry and everything was all right.

When they overtook us the first man went on, but Jerry rode beside the wagon and talked to Pa. He was a very tall, broad man, but not a bit fat, very dark, with high cheek bones a large nose and straight, black hair. He wore no hat. His shirt was a flaming red and he rode his snow-white pony without saddle or bridle, guiding it with his knees. In a few minutes he touched his pony with his heel and away it went in the smoothest, prettiest run, down into a little draw, up on the other side and away.

Ma was afraid they might wait for us in some draw to rob us, but Pa said Jerry was perfectly safe. He didn't like the looks of the other fellow but Jerry had promised to keep with him. Jerry, Pa said was a half breed, Indian and French, a gambler, some said a horse thief, but a darned good fellow.

For some time the sky had been full of flocks of wild ducks and

shaped flocks of wild geese, the leader flying at the point of the

and calling on his flock to follow. They always answered him all along the lines and the air was full of their “Honk! Honk!” They were flying low to light and rest for the night on the chain of little lakes not far to the west of us.

The sun sank lower and lower until, looking like a ball of pulsing, liquid light it sank gloriously in clouds of crimson and silver. Cold purple shadows rose in the east; crept slowly around the horizon, then gathered above in depth on depth of darkness from which the stars swung low and bright. The winds which all day had blown strongly, dropped low with the sun and went whispering among the tall grasses, where the earth lay breathing softly under the summer night falling softly over the prairie and tucking them gently in.

We drove on and on under the stars and at last saw the twinkling lights of the camp ahead.

When, tired and hungry, we stopped before the largest shanty, Cousin Charley Quiner came out to meet us and lifted us down from the high wagon. Cousin Charley whom we had not seen since we left Wisconsin so long ago! He was a man now and Cousin Louisa was inside dishing us up a hot supper. She kept the cook shanty and boarded

all the men who did not have their families with them.

After supper we went to the new shanty the men had built for us, spread the beds on the floor and slept soundly until morning. The camp was awake and stirring early and after the men had gone to their work we went to breakfast at the cook shanty. It had been a pleasant surprise to find Louisa and Charley and we were glad we were to have them in the camp with us.

The shantys were in a scattered group on the north bank of a lake. Silver Lake was only about a half mile each way (160 acres) but the water was clear and cool. It lay in its little basin with a high bank on the south. On the north the bank was low but firm and dry, while at the west end the Big Slough began and extended in a curve southward. At the east end the bank was very low and from it another slough extended east and north.

In these sloughs the thick slough grass grew five and six feet high. The rest of the way around the lake the upland prairie grass grew thickly.

There were no trees. The only tree in sight from all the surrounding country was a giant cottonwood called Lone Tree which could be seen for miles across the prairie. It grew between the twin lakes Henry and Thompson. Lake Henry was the nearest three miles to the south-east. Lake

Thompson was beyond Lake Henry with only a narrow tongue of land between, high enough not to be overflowed but only wide enough for a good road with scattered choke cherry trees and wild grape vines on each side close to the water.

Nine miles north-west from Silver Lake was Spirit Lake with the old Indian mound on its bank. There were quite a good many trees at Spirit Lake but they were not large and the breast of the prairie swelled gradually to a higher level between so they could not be seen from the line of the railroad.

Lake Thompson was the largest of the group. Spirit Lake was next in size; its water was deep and the banks high and rocky except for a slough on one side.

Wild gray geese; ducks of many kinds from the large Mallard and the Teal down to the Mud hens and the little Hell Divers; pellicans, swans, herons, Sand Hill Cranes, gulls and different kinds of queer little water birds stopped at this chain of lakes going south ahead of the winter. The sky was filled with flocks of them, resounding with their cries and any time we could see them rising from or settling down on the lake or on the prairie. They fed in the sloughs during the day but slept on the water through the night.

It was very pleasant when we were comfortably settled

in the new shanty, with the great, new country clean and fresh around us. I was so happy to be out in it that I never gave a thought of regret to Walnut Grove, where the settlers, Pa said, were getting too thick. None of us were lonesome or homesick.

Our shanty was just one large room, but Ma got some calico from the company store and we made curtains of it, to shut off each bed by itself in the far end.

Cousin Louisa, with Charley to help her, was busy all day long cooking and serving food to the men. Aunt Docia's shanty was not far from ours and Lena and I were together some. Always we did the milking together night and morning. The cows were on picket ropes at one side of the camp where the grass was good. We always sang as we went and came and while milking. The cows became familiar with "The Wind Blew Across The Wild Moor, Miss McCloud's Reel, the Gipsy's Warning, Buy A Broom, She Was Only A Bird In a Gilded Cage, Where Oh Where Has My Little Dog Gone[""] and many others.

Pa's helper, Fred, who slept in the store as watchman, took dinner with Pa one day and then begged so hard to have his meals at our place, instead of at the crowded cook shanty, that Ma took him to board. Fred was Big Jerry's brother-in-law and [Big Jerry] came with Fred to dinner.

After that whenever he was in our camp he ate with Pa and Fred. The Co. men when passing through came too and so Ma and I were very busy.

Big Jerry never stayed long in one camp, but at any time might ride up on his white horse, always bareheaded and wearing a flaming red shirt. He would work a few days, long enough to win the men's money gambling at night in the bunk house and then ride away to another camp where he would do the same thing. He was a good worker when he did work and very kind to any one in trouble.

There was a rumor that he was the lookout for a gang of horse thieves operating along the line. One thing was certain no horses were ever stolen where Jerry was in the camp.

It was thought that while he was working he had a chance to see which horses were the best and the place where they stood at night in the in the long shanty-stable, so that it was easier for some one to come in the dark and get a good horse instead of a poor one. Jerry had been seen looking them over as they stood in their stalls and the men had become suspicious of him.

One night a warning came to camp to watch the horses. The men came to the store and bought extra cartridges for their guns and lay around in the dark all night watching

the stable, but no one came. They had thought they would catch Big Jerry and swore that some one must have warned him. Next day we learned that two horses had been stolen from the camp west of us.

We were glad nothing had happened to Jerry. We all liked him, he was so quiet and nice around our shanty and so kind hearted.

There was, in camp, a funny, little, old Irishman named Johnny. All his life he had lived and worked in railroad camps, but was now so old that he couldn't work hard any more. He had no money, so Pa made him a water boss and paid him regular wages. He had a wooden yoke that rested on his shoulders and carried a bucket of water with a dipper hanging by a chain from each end. As he walked up and down and around among the men, steadying the buckets with his hands, they helped themselves to a drink whenever they wanted one.

One night Johnny was taken sick and Jerry waited on him most of the night, taking the blankets from his own bunk to put over Johnny [to make him] warmer, for it was cold at night and poor old Johnnie needed more covers. In the morning Jerry came to our shanty and asked for some of Ma's good warm breakfast for Johnny. He took it to Johnny and waited on him while he ate, before he had his

own breakfast.

But every man in camp except old Johnnie, Pa and Fred were afraid of Jerry, for he was a terrible fighter with his fists and feet, a dead shot with his gun.

It was because of a fight that Jerry came to our shanty the first time. Looking out of our door toward the cook shanty, where the men had just gone in to dinner, I saw them come piling out so fast they could hardly get through the door. They spread out into a great ring with Jerry and a big Irishman in the center. The two began walking around each other and I said, ‘something is wrong down there.’

Pa and Fred were just sitting down to the table, but they came to the door to look. Fred exclaimed, “that dammed fool Jerry will kill him!” And with a flying leap through the door he was running as fast as he could go toward the crowd.

Fred was a small man, almost as small as Old Johnny, and when he broke through the ring of men, jumped between Jerry and the big Irishman and faced Jerry talking fiercely and gesticulating he reminded me of a Bantam rooster. Pa watched and laughed and when Ma looked her astonishment he said “Oh Fred will manage Jerry.” And sure enough, in a few minutes Fred came back to his dinner, bringing Jerry, grinning sheepishly, with him and asked Ma

to put on another plate.

The next excitement, in camp after watching for the horse thieves, was a prairie fire that came sweeping out of the west after dark and

got into the tall grass in the Big Slough. It looked for awhile as though the camp would be burned, but the men were all out with teams plowing furrows to turn the fire and setting back fires whipping them out on the side next camp while they were small and whipping out little fires with grain sacks. They headed it around the camp and it went roaring around on the other side of the lake and away to the east.

Then the men became restless and unruly. Some of them wanted to quit the job and they decided they would not wait for pay day but insisted that Pa pay them at once and up to date." Pay day was the 15th. of each month. On that date they were paid up to the 1st. leaving them always fifteen days behind in their pay and this was their excuse for making trouble, but Pa could not pay them until the money came from Co. headquarters.

He told us at supper that he must stay at the store that night to keep the men from breaking in, and wrecking it. Fred was away for a few days.

Pa went back to the store and, in the darkness, the men

began to gather in groups and go toward it until all the 200 men in camp were in a crowd before the door. Then they began to shoot off their guns and call Pa names daring him to come out.

Ma and I were watching through our partly open door and I was shaking, not with fear but with rage. 'Pa's alone,' I said, 'I'm going to help him.' But Ma held me and said to be still! I would only make it worse if I went out there.

Then the store door opened and closed behind Pa and he stood out on the step with his hands in his pockets talking to the men.

Two or three of the men started to talk ugly, but the others were quiet while Pa told them how foolish they were, for he couldn't pay them when the money was not there: that he had always treated them right and would pay them as soon as he could; that if they shot him and wrecked the store, still they wouldn't have their pay, but would be in trouble.

Finally the men began to go away, one at a time then several together until they were all gone, then Pa locked the store door and came home.

The gun shots, the shouts and loud talking had not been the worst of the affair, but the low, ugly muttering I had heard as a sort of undertone and now that it was over, I sat

on the edge of my bed shivering with fright long after I should have been asleep.

The days passed by while the weather grew colder and there was frost in the night.

The railroad grade was nearly finished. The ground had been broken with big plows drawn by great horse teams all the way where the grade stakes were set, then teams, on scrapers, scraped the dirt up into the grade on which ties could be placed and the steel rails laid. Where there was a low place in the ground the grade was raised higher making a fill; where the ground was too high, the roadway was cut through so that the grade was nearly level all the way. All the grading must be finished before winter to be ready for laying the track in the spring, so Pa and Uncle High were hurrying the work along all they could.

But the men were dragging. The weather was unpleasant with a cold wind blowing at times and there was a feeling of coming winter in the air. Added to the discomfort of dust from the grade as the teams and men worked in the dirt it made the men disheartened and rather uncertain in temper.

The Company had put a new man on the work. He was a time keeper over several camps, riding from one to the other down the line one day, then back the next day so that

he visited each camp of his string every day, docking the men if they were a few minutes late, spying and prying to be sure that no one got credit for a half day he didn't work.

Naturally the men disliked him and more because he was a town man, very well dressed, wearing always a white shirt and collar and tie.

He made our camp before noon and stopped for dinner at our place, but unpleasantly as though he thought himself above the fare, the place and all the people.

Our men were working on the big fill; scraping the dirt from a nearby high place, loading it on wagons at the dump, hauling it to the fill, unloading and coming back for more.

The dump was a cut in the high ground just wide enough to drive the teams and wagons through. Planks were laid across leaving a hole in the middle. A team with a scraper full of dirt was driven over the planks while the driver tipped the scraper, spilling the dirt through the hole into the wagon just beneath. When five scraper loads had been emptied the wagon was driven on to the fill making room for the next wagon to be loaded.

The new timekeeper had been making his rounds for some time before Jerry came to camp. Then he rode up on his white horse while the timekeeper was checking the men at the dump.

Jerry sat on his horse and listened for a few minutes then reached and taking the timekeeper's horse by the bridle led him through the dump between the wagons so that he received the scraperful of dirt in place of the wagon it was intended for. At the other side the timekeeper tried to escape, but Jerry wheeled his horse and took him back through just in time for the next scraper. Three times he led him through the dump and three scraperloads of dirt and dust spilled down over the good clothes, the once white shirt and collar, while the men all but Jerry were laughing. Then he let him go. The timekeeper did not stop for dinner and he never came back. We heard later that he rode east to Tracy, took the train and went still farther east, shaking the dust of the west from his shoes — and from all the rest of his clothes.

But the big laugh did the men good. They laughed about it for days and put themselves in a good humor so that the work went merrily on.

Shortly after this there was trouble at a camp far[t]her west where the paymaster had headquarters at the big Company store.

The three hundred men in camp did not want to wait until the 15th. for their pay. They thought that five days was long enough for the paymaster to figure their time,

so on the 6th, they stopped work and demanded their pay. The paymaster refused to pay until the 15th.

After some drinking and arguing the men decided they would be paid at once and up to date for one month and five days.

The men were quarrelsome and one of the teamsters had some difficulty with the man who weighed in the oats he had hauled for the Co. store.

The weigher hit the teamster on the head with one of the heavy weights from the scales. The teamster dropped and the men thought he was killed.

The weigher barely got inside the store ahead of the mob, dodged through the crowd in the store, out the back door and into the tall grass of a big slough that came close to the door. While the friends of the teamster were hunting for him in the crowd a friend of his led two horses into the slough, the weigher mounted and they two followed the slough for some distance before they were seen. Then the mob gave chase but being drunk and so far behind they soon gave it up.

In the store were two clerks and another weigher. The crowd of men went through the store from front door to back, out and in as they pleased. With all their guns and their threats they could not compel the clerks to hand out

the goods to them and something kept them from helping themselves. A half drunken, big workman would throw his gun down on a clerk and tell him to hand him some of the goods and the clerk would stand leaning back against the shelf and laugh and talk him into being good natured.

It was a good natured crowd even when ugly so far as the store was concerned, but the paymaster was something else. The paymaster's office was a leanto at the side of the store. He was in there with both doors locked and their pay was in there too.

At last two men climbed on the roof, cut a hole, through and dropped a rope down, while others of the crowd were breaking down the door. They intended to put the rope around the paymasters neck and haul him up to hang from the roof while they helped themselves, but when he saw the door splintering he threw open the pay-window and said he would pay, which he did and without being too particular as to a half days time. As they were paid the men went away, men from other camps went home and all was peaceful again. In the morning early our men had followed Big Jerry as he leaped on the white horse and shouted "Come on boys!" They went as fast as they could but no horse up or down the line could keep up with Jerry's white pony. Now they came straggling back after night, tired but still

hilarious.

Soon afterward the men began to leave our camp for the work was nearly finished and many men were not needed. So singly or in groups, in wagons and on horseback they drove or rode away.

One Irish family, ready to leave, had a sick baby, and could not go. Ma heard of it and went to see if she could help. By great good luck she did know what to do and cured the baby. They wanted to pay her but of course she would take no pay. The morning they left the man came to bid her good by and thank her again. He called on every Saint in the Irish calander to bless her and when he shook hands and hurried away he left a five dollar gold piece in her hand.

Louisa and Charley were gone long since.

Aunt Docia loaded their three big wagons from their shanty and the Co. store and herself driving one, Lena and Gene the other two left for their contract on a railroad farther south.

Uncle High came to board with us until he could make settlement with the R. R. Company. He was in good spirits for on this contract though farther behind than before on the books he had come out ahead.

A contractor did not have capital to finance the building operations, so the R.R. Company paid the men, furnished

the goods in the Company store and grain for the teams. Everything used on the job was charged against the contractor. The men paid out of their wages for what they used personally and at the final settlement the contractors profit was what was left over and above expenses.

A contractor did not draw pay for his own teams for on the face of it that would be simply paying himself. But this time Uncle Highs three teams had been put on the work in Pa's name and Uncle High had the pay for them. He had drawn supplies through the Company store and of grain for horse feed as he had the right to do, but he had quietly sent them away by trusted teamsters and sold them keeping the pay. So that, while on the books he was a great deal more than bankrupt, he had made what he had lost, for there was no way the Company could collect what he owed except on another contract and as Uncle High said, there was plenty of work on other railroads.

This making money by losing it was something new to me, but it was curiously satisfying to know that Uncle High had beaten the Chicago, North-Western R. R. at its own game and made enough to give him a profit on both contracts.

In a few days he made his final settlement and followed Aunt Docia, giving Mary a handful of bills, as she sat in

her big rocking chair, when he said good by.

Ma and I had been so hurried with the work, cooking for extra men, as the camp broke up, that we had no time for sewing and alas my dresses wore out until I had no change. Mary had been wearing long dresses and was taller than I, but as she had an extra dress, I put it on. Then I pinned up my hair, because my long braids hanging got in my way and hindered the work. So there I was a young lady with long dresses and hair done up.

I was lonesome after Lena had gone and I didn't feel like singing when I milked. The cow was uneasy and would not stand still and Ma complained about my not getting as much milk as I should. Then having a thought I tried an experiment and learned that when I sang at my milking I got the usual quantity of milk, but when I did not sing the cow would not give her milk down. (Fifty years ago I learned this and just this winter an Experiment Station discovered with surprise that cows like music and that the flow of milk is increased by playing the radio while milking.)

When the work stopped, Pa was free to hunt as he had been longing to do and as the camp became quieter and the weather colder, sending them south, Silver Lake and the air above it were full of all the migratory birds.

Gulls flew against the wind over the lake in clouds; the

big, gray geese honked and swam and flew; ducks were in the water and going and coming in countless numbers. Flocks of beautiful white swans floated on the water; pelicans filled their pouches with little fish and went on their way southward; sand hill cranes lighted on rises of ground where they could watch around them and antelope herds could sometimes be seen feeding on the prairie.

So Pa went to his hunting and we feasted on geese and duck. Ma and I saved all the feathers and that fall we made a large featherbed

and four large pillows from the best of the feathers. When I was married Ma gave me two of these pillows and they are good yet, as soft as the newly bought ones. Pelicans we could not use for they smelled so strong of rotten fish in the pouch that even the feathers stank.

Pa shot one swan that measured seven feet from tip to tip of its wings. He skinned it carefully salted the flesh side and sent it to Uncle Tom to have tanned to make a swans down coat for his baby Helen.

There were only a few men left in camp now and we were feeding them for there was no other place to eat. The R. R. Surveyors were still in the house that had been built for them at the head of the lake, but they were going soon and we were moving in. The R. R. Company had hired Pa

to stay through the winter and take care of the house and tools that would be left there until work began again in the spring.

A Mr Boast was eating at our place a few days before leaving to join his wife in Iowa. They had been on the railroad all summer and had taken a homestead two miles east of the camp. When he learned that we were staying he said he would go to Iowa to bring his wife back and they would stay the winter too.

Mr Boast had sold a team to one of the men working on the grade, who promised to pay for them when he drew his pay, now he was leaving without paying.

Mr Boast told Pa about it too late for Pa to take it out of the man's pay, but Mr Boast wanted help to collect it or get the team back so they made a plan.

Dakota was a territory and the counties were not organized. There was no help to be had in that way, but Pa had some of his old Justice blanks and he made out a summons for the man and an attachment for the horses. Then they disguised a friend of Mr Boast's so the man wouldn't know him, gave him an imitation sheriff's star and sent him after the man to bring him and the team back for trial. Mr Boast went along in case the sheriff needed any help.

The man was fooled, not knowing that there were no

sheriffs or

Justices within many miles and he was glad to pay for the team and expense of sending after him and be allowed to go on his way.

Mr Boast stayed while Pa went out to the Land Office and filed on a homestead a mile south of where the town of De Smet was laid out, then he went to Iowa for Mrs Boast.

The surveyors went next, the wild birds had gone on south and in place of two hundred men with some women and children and the teams and all the noise and confusion of the camp we were left with only the abandoned shantys and the wind.

We moved at once into the surveyors house and made everything snug for the winter. Pa had laid in a supply of provisions and simple medicines to last the winter and at the last minute a man named Walter Ogden wanted to stay with us. He was taking care of several yoke of oxen for a man whose homestead was several miles to the east and had intended to stay there by himself, but didn't like the loneliness and if Pa would give him permission to keep the oxen in the old company shanty-stable and would board him, he would come and stay with us.

It seemed that it might be wise to have another man around, so Pa told him to come and he moved the cattle

and hay to feed them and just got them nicely settled before the first snow.

The surveyors house seemed very large after the railroad shanty. There was one large room, kitchen dining room and living-room in one. From one side of this opened the pantry, a bedroom and the stair door between. On the other side was a large leanto bedroom and storage room. The upstairs was all in one.

It was all very comfortable and homelike, with a good fire in the cookstove which performed the duties also of a heater, Mary in her big rocking chair in the warmest corner and the red and white checked cloth over the drop leafed table that was a kitchen table when bare of cover, a dining table with the leav[e]s up and the tablecloth and dishes on and a center table when the leaves were dropped and the best cloth over it.

An old retired preacher had been alone all summer on his claim two miles north. We thought he had gone out with the other summer people, but in one of his daily walks Pa found him still there.

He was threatened with consumption and had come out on the prairie to recover if possible leaving his family back east. He was quite feeble and not fit to stay alone and Pa and Ma did not want to be responsible nor have the care of

him through the winter. While they were worrying about it not knowing what to do a teamster came driving through, from the Jim river. Pa persuaded him to drive out to Mr Woodworth's in the hope of getting a passenger and for charity's sake. Pa helped Mr Woodworth pack his clothes, dress himself warmly and start on the way home, almost forcing him to go with the very last team going east until spring.

An old batchelor lived alone six miles away at Lake Thompson. We never saw him all winter. Other than that our neighbors were forty miles away to the east and sixty miles to the west.*

The cold shut down, the snow fell and blew and drifted into huge drifts though there were no bad blizzards. The lake froze over and was a smooth sheet of ice. At night we heard wolves howl and coyotes slipped around and picked up the crumbs where we shook the tablecloth from the door. We could see them in the moonlight and also the jack-rabbits that drifted like shadows across the snow.

On moonlight nights, Carrie and I would go sliding on the lake. We had no skates nor sled but holding hands we would run as fast as we could, then stop running and slide across the smooth ice. The faster we ran the farther we slid.

Pa had said to not go far away for there were wolves

around, he had seen their tracks, but one bright night we were so intent on our play that when we reached the end of a particularly long slide and looked up, we were at the very edge of the shadow cast by the southeast bank and on top of the bank sat a wolf. Our quick slides over were slow to the way we ran and slid back across the lake and just as we reached our home side we heard the wolf howl. As we ran for the house I gave a terrified look over my shoulder and saw the wolf still sitting on the bank, with his nose pointed at the moon. He was a black shadow against the moonlight with the lake, a sheet of silver glistening below him.

Next day, Pa found the wolf den in the bank. He said, by the tracks they were the big buffalo wolves, just a pair. Several times after that we saw or heard them. Once we saw them running across the prairie together and then they disappeared. Pa said the crowds on the railroad had frightened the buffalo herds away. That likely these two wolves had just come by to visit their old den and then followed the herds. Anyway buffalo wolves were never seen there again.

There were lots of the smaller wolves, coyotes and foxes left. Pa set his traps, visiting them every day and soon had a good many skins.

And the fiddle sang again at night.

We had all been so busy and so tired with one thing and another, since our latest coming to Walnut Grove, that Pa had hardly ever played it. Now as we were so nearly by ourselves once more alone in the vast stillness and quiet of the empty prairie, with the cold and whiteness of winter around us, Pa naturally turned again to his music and in the snugness of home with the cold shut out, the fiddle sang all the old tunes and the new ones he had heard even to the railroad ditty about the contractor “Old Stebbins On The North- Western Line,” which wasn’t music but just a song.

Pa played by ear and a tune once heard he could play and never forgot. He loved to play the hymns we had sung in the little church at Walnut Grove, “Sweet Hour of Prayer, Nearer My God to thee, Let The Lower Lights Be Burning,” but of all, “The Sweet By and By” was his favorite. (So much so that it was sung at his funeral)

Pa spent most of his days wandering over the prairie with his gun. Sometimes he would bring home a jack rabbit and always the skins from his traps.

Ma and I cooked and cleaned, washed, ironed and mended. Carrie helped with easy jobs and Mary held Grace on her lap in the warm corner. Pa made a checker board and me and he and Walter Ogden played checkers. I learned to

play and at times beat each of them.

We had some books and papers Pa had brought on his last trip out and we read aloud to Mary.

And so with work and play, with music and reading and sleeping the days and nights passed busily and happily until the night before Christmas.

It was snowing on the already deep drifts. We were sitting around the fire and the lamp on the table reading and talking. Pa had just said “Well! I guess Mrs Boast would’n’t come or Boast would have been back before this,” when we heard a shout outside.

Pa opened the door while we all crowded around and there were Mr and Mrs Boast on horseback, so chilled they could hardly get off their horses.

The roads had been bad with the snow all the way from the deep snow so that they were many days later than they had planned and at last about six miles back their sled had stuck in a snow drift. Then they had unhitched the team and ridden the horses on.

We helped them in by the fire while Walter put up the horses. While they warmed we fixed them a hot supper then sent them to bed to rest.

The next day Mr Boast and Walter went back after the sled. There was a little, one roomed office building just a

few steps from the house and when the sled was brought the things were unloaded into it and Mr and Mrs Boast moved in.

They took their Christmas dinner with us. We had jack rabbit roast, mashed potatoes, beans, warm biscuit and dried apple pie with tea.

We had stealthily made some little gifts for each other. Mary, with Ma's and my help in the hard places, had knit a pair of socks for Pa. Carrie and I had made him and Walter each a tablet of shaving papers from soft; bright colored tissue paper left by the surveyors; we had framed a little picture from a magazine for Ma, with little stars made from writing paper, and a picture book of pictures from papers for Grace.

Ma had a bit of pretty calico from the Co. store and we made Mary a new apron with pockets to hold her ball of yarn which was always rolling from her lap to the floor when she was knitting.

There was some ribbon for Carrie and for me and a bit left to give Mrs Boast and we hastily made a tablet of shaving papers for Mr Boasts [present].

The Boasts had brought some candy for us all and we had a jolly Christmas.

After Christmas the weather was much warmer and by

New Year's day the snow was nearly gone.

We all had New Year's dinner with the Boasts and it was all the more fun because their one room was so small, that with the table set, we had to go in the outside door and around to our place at the table one by one and leaving the table we must reverse the order and go out the door following the scripture that, "The first shall be last and the last first."

It was so warm we left the door open. The dinner was a treat, there were oysters and honey and sauce [from] home dried fruit the Boasts had brought with them. We told stories and joked and had a happy New Year's day.

We liked the Boasts very much. He was tall and strong, with black hair, the blackest eyes and a laugh that would have made his fortune on the stage. Hearing it, one simply had to laugh too, even though not knowing what the joke was.

She was small and plump and merry with light hair and blue eyes. She slid on the lake with Carrie and me, she exchanged cooking receipts and visited with Ma and Mary. She loaned us books and papers which we always read aloud so Mary could enjoy them too.

All our evenings were spent in our big room, listening to Pa play the violin, telling stories, playing chickers, and

always, every evening singing.

Both the Boasts were good singers and his tenor with her alto, joined with Pa's base and my soprano did make music. Hymns from the hymn book, songs from their old singing-school book, rounds — you know where one leads off and when he has reached the end of the first line another starts at the beginning and when the second has reached the end of the first line another starts at the beginning until all are singing at a different place in the words and music—

We sang, “Three blind mice, three blind mice

They all ran after the farmers wife,

She cut off their tails with the carving knife Three blind mice”

until we ended in a roar of laughter. We all laughed because it sounded funny and then the rest of us laughed to hear Mr Boast laugh until we were exhausted.

Mr Boast's favorite song was, “When I was One and Twenty Nell And You were Seventeen.” Mrs Boast's name was Ella, he called her Nell and they had been married when he was 21 and she seventeen.

And so the winter was passing quickly and merrily when along in February on another cold, snowy night we heard a shout outside the door and Pa opened the door to let in Rev. Alden, our own Rev. Alden who had started the church in

Walnut Grove, whom we had not seen for years, who was still a Home Missionary and had been sent out into the west to plant churches along the line of the new railroad. We were mutually surprised and pleased to meet again.

With him was another missionary, a small, quick, red headed Scotsman, with a slight burr to his tongue. But how he could sing!

They stayed the night, held church services the next day with a congregation of nine counting Grace and went on west. They returned after a week, stayed over night again and went on east, with the promise to return later and organize a church.

Their coming was the beginning of the spring rush. Slowly at first one a day then later in crowds they came, wagon loads, back loads, buggy loads of men stopped on their way to the forts and towns farther west, looking for locations in the new towns laid out on the line of the railroad and for homesteads on the wild lands the railroad was opening for settlement.

We had to take them in and feed them for ours was the only place they could stop in a long days travel in either direction.

It was the end of our jolly evenings and happy days for Ma and I were kept busy cooking and working for them

and the house was always full of strange men.

One day Ma was in bed all day with a sick-headache and I had to manage by myself. I got breakfast and the crowd left. I fed another crowd for dinner and when they began to come in at night, Mrs Boast came over to help me. When supper was over we carried the food and dirty dishes into the pantry and collapsed on the floor. I was so tired I could not eat, but in a few minutes I took Mary up stairs to bed. Carrie went and stayed with her while Mrs Boast and I washed up the dishes. Then she went home and I went upstairs while Pa arraigned eighteen men to sleep for the night in the one bed in the leanto and on the floor of the two rooms using the robes and blankets from their wagons to help out the bedding.

The wild geese began to come back from the South, a sure sign that spring had come. Pa went out one morning hoping to get one and Mary and I disputed about the cooking of it. It should be roasted of course, with dressing, but Mary insisted on sage in the dressing and I didn't like sage. We almost quarreled and were still disagreeing when Pa came back without the goose. As the flocks neared the line of the railroad they had seen the changes made in the landscape beneath them and the movement of men and teams. The wise, old leaders called back to their followers and all

the wild geese flew high over Silver Lake and on into the north.

Several men came and started to build on the town site. They became our regular boarders. One young man we liked very much, because he was so quiet and well mannered. He was building a business house but he never told what kind of a business he intended to start.

When his building was finished and his goods came, we learned that the first building on the actual town site of De Smet, was a saloon. The next was a grocery store and the next, to our great relief, a hotel.

Pa bought two corner business lots, diagonally across the street

from each other and sent out for lumber to build. All building materials and provisions were hauled in by teams from Brookins.

The business houses were all built one story high with a square, false front a story higher. Pa was building his with the idea of selling.

When the rough sheathing of the building was on the frame and the roof over it, we moved in for the surveyors were back to take over their house and tools.

We moved on April 3d. a nice, warm day but it turned cold in the night and the wind blew through the cracks

between the boards. I felt uncomfortable and waked just enough to know I was cold, so I pulled the covers higher to shelter my head and snuggled closer to Mary and Carrie.

The next I knew, I heard Pa singing,

“Oh I am as happy as a big sun flower

That nods and bends in the breezes

And my heart is as light as the wind that blows

The leaves from off the treeses.”

I peeped out. Everything was covered with snow and Pa was standing barefoot in it pulling on his pants. “Lie still all of you,” he said, “don’t move and mix the snow up! I’ll shovel it off in a minute.”

And he went on singing about the happy sun flower while he shook the snow off his socks and out of his shoes and put them on. Then he took a large dirt shovel and shoveled the snow off the beds as we lay under the covers, shoveled it off the floor and out doors.

When I saw how deep the snow was over us, I knew why we had all slept so warmly with the snow for an extra cover, but it wasn’t warm out in it where Pa was.

He made us all lie still while he made a fire and warmed himself. Then he went out to shovel the snow away from the door while we got up and dressed by the hot stove.

The snow was gone again in a couple of days for it was

spring. The prairie was turning a beautiful green and everyone was very busy building a town, while the steel rails came nearer and nearer along the grade from Tracy.

New people were coming all the time putting up little buildings and moving in from their wagons. In one family was a little girl of Carrie's age. She used to come over to play every day and we thought it would be a good way to keep them quiet and out of mischief to have a few lessons each day, but when time for lessons came, Carrie ran and hid and the other girl did not come over any more, so the first school in De Smet closed before it began.

Pa sold the building and lot where we were living to give possession in a week and at once began another building on his other lot. Before the week was past we were moved into the other unfinished building.

A depot was built and the agent came, no other than Mr Woodworth, much improved in health. His eldest son Jimmie was to be telegrapher. There was another son, Ben, and Mrs Woodworth.

The first train came during the latter part of April and then De Smet was headquarters for the work farther west. Trains brought the supplies that far and teamsters loaded them on their wagons at the depot and hauled the[m] the rest of the way.

De Smet now had a bank, a lumber yard, a livery stable, drug store, drygoods store, another grocery and hotel and at last a furniture store.

Rev. Woodworth held church services at the depot on Sundays, but not many people attended.

Pa and some other of the first settlers were organizing Kingsbury County, a school district was formed and a school house was being built.

Then one day a fierce looking old man came and introduced himself to Pa as Rev. Brown, saying that Rev. Alden had sent him to organize a church.

None of us liked him, he was so rude and rough and unclean. His hair was white and thick and bushy. His whiskers were thick and long and he didn't always spit over them. His fingernails were dirty and his white shirt and collar soiled and rumped. He claimed to be a cousin of John Brown and looked like the picture of him in the history [book].

We didn't think Mr Alden could have sent us such a man, but he had a letter from Mr Alden to Pa, so Pa and Ma helped him get the people together and a Congregational church and Sunday-school were organized. The school house was finished and meetings were held there. Mr Brown was the preacher.

Then one day Rev. Alden came to organize the church

as he had all the time intended to do. He was surprised at what Mr Brown had

said and done. Mr Brown was a retired preacher going west to get a homestead. Mr Alden had given him a letter to Pa out of kindness but he had no authority to organize a church.

They talked it over and Mr. Alden decided to save a scandale in the church, he would let the organization stand and leave Mr Brown in charge.

Settlers for the surrounding country came in on the trains, some as passangers to look the country over, some with all their worldly good[s], seed grain and provisions for a year in emigrant cars.

They were coming too in covered wagons, camping around the town and on vacant lots.

An old railroader and his wife named Hunt with their son Jack, his wife and two babies camped back of our place and we became quite well acquainted. Jack had filed on a homestead several miles south of town, built a claim shanty and broke some ground. Now he was going with his father to work a few weeks on the railroad to get a little more money to use on his farm.

We saw them again the next month as they came back on their way to their homestead and the next day we heard

that Jack Hunt had been shot and died while they were bringing him back to town to take him on the train to a doctor.

The Hunts had found a claim jumper in their shanty and he refused to leave. After some words he shot Jack in the stomach.

A crowd of men went out from town to get the claim jumper but he had run away. The sheriff at Brookins caught him. At his trial he pleaded self-defense and was sentenced to only three years in prison.

After Jack was shot, Pa said we must go to our claim to live, for people were getting “too durned thick” and someone might move into our shanty. So we left town and went a mile out onto the sweet prairie.

There was only one room in the claim shanty, but a curtain across the end made a bed room. A bed was spread down at night on the floor of the kitchen-dining-room-sitting-room, By day it was spread on top of the bed in the bed room, covered with a pretty quilt and all was neat and cosy.

The first night, as Pa was sleeping, he dreamed the barber was cutting his hair and putting his hand up to his head caught a mouse in his fingers. He threw the poor mouse on the floor so hard he killed it, but in the morning there was

a patch of his hair cut close to his scalp where the mouse had been at work.

There was no cat in town and only one in all the country around but she was soon to become a mother. Everyone was speaking for a kitten until there couldn't possibly be kittens enough to go around.

Pa was early on the ground and by the use of persuasion and 25¢ came home one day with a tiny blue and white kitten, with its eyes just opened. She didn't know how to drink and we fed her with a spoon. She couldn't walk well, just crawled around, but we cuddled her and fed her often and soon she was a great pet. She caught her first mouse while still so small that the mouse fought back and kittie would cry when the mouse bit her, but she never let go and finally killed it. Later when grown she could whip any cat or dog in the country in a real fight.

Pa broke a strip of ground around the shanty, leaving a grassy door yard and we planted seeds of cottonwood trees all the way around.

He dug a well down near the edge of the big slough that lay between our place and town. When the well was six feet deep and Pa was in it digging, his feet suddenly sank in quicksand. By leaping and grasping the edge of the hole he clambered out the water following him to within two feet

of the top. It was wonderfully good water, cold and sweet and clear.

Pa broke two acres of ground and sowed [them] to turnips for ourselves and the cow and to make a place for the garden next spring after the tough sods had lain and the grass roots rotted all winter.

The prairie sods were so tough that many people used them to build their houses. In breaking the land a furrow was plowed about fourteen inches wide. This turned the sod over in long strips three inches thick, the tough roots of the prairie grass holding them together solid and tight.

To make a sod shanty these strips were cut with an ax into two foot lengths and layed up in the walls one above the other like brick.

They settled together and made a solid wall fourteen inches thick. Grass often grew over the outside. A framework of strips of lumber was put up in the inside and cloth or paper put over it, leaving an air space between it and the wall of sod. Such a house was cool in the summer, warm in the winter and could be perfectly clean. A great many sod houses were built over the prairie.

Pa had been busy all summer finishing our house in town, building the shanty, digging the well, breaking the ground and after the turnip seed was sown he began to

make hay. The wild grass, so tall and thick in the sloughs and the blue joint grass on the upland all made good hay. Pa cut and raked the hay. Ma and I helped load it on the wagon and unload and build it into the large stacks to feed our horses and two cows through the winter that was coming. Doing all this work for himself, Pa had not much time to work for pay and besides our living there had been the expense of buying the mowing machine and hay rake.

Nothing was said of money difficulties but I knew our funds must be very low and when I noticed Pa leave the table after eating very little when I knew he must still be hungry, I understood that he was leaving the food for the rest of us. Then my appetite failed me too and I followed his example of eating raw turnips between meals.

When haying was finished Pa worked at carpenter work in town, earning money to last us through the winter.

CHAPTER 7

Dakota Territory, the Hard Winter of 1880-1881

The 25th. of September the fall rains began. The first of October it cleared for a few days and we were thinking of going back to town for the winter when it began again to rain.

It was dreary and drizzly all day the 8th. and 9th. All work in town was stopped and Pa had been hunting both days, bringing in some ducks but no geese. He said the ducks and geese were not stopping to feed in the sloughs but were flying high and fast going south and he didn't like the looks of the weather.

The dull, gray days were disheartening and I didn't feel like picking and dressing the ducks but did my work as cheerfully as I could not wishing to add to the gloom.

It was raining harder when I went to sleep and there was a drip, drip of rain on the bed-covers over my shoulders where it came through a hole the wind had torn in the tar paper covering the roof.

We never paid any attention to so slight a discomfort and so I slept soundly until some time in the night. I suppose the stopping of the noise of the drip waked me, for I found it was no longer raining and was colder and, snuggling closer under the covers, I slept again.

When next I waked, Pa was building a fire and singing,

“Oh I am as happy as a big sun flower
That nods and bends in the breezes
And my heart is as light as the wind that blows
And comes and goes as it pleases.”

I glanced at the window but it seemed to be covered with a whiteness I could not see through.

When the fire was going good Ma got up, but when I started, she told me to lie still. We were all to lie still under the covers for there was no use of our all being cold and there was an awful blizzard outside.

Pa bundled up warmly and struggled through the storm to the barn going by the wagon that nearly touched the house and a big hay stack just beyond that nearly touched the barn.

When he came back, Ma gave us some warm breakfast and I insisted on getting up, but Mary, Carrie and Grace

stayed in bed all day to keep warm, while Pa, Ma and I hovered over the stove for it was frightfully cold and the wind howled and shrieked, with the sound of nothing else under heaven but a blizzard wind. Trying to look out of the window or door, we could not see an inch into the storm, which lasted all day and night and the next day and into the night. Sometime that night the wind moderated a little and on the morning of the third day we could see a short distance, for while the snow was still blowing, it was rolling along closer to the ground instead of filling all the air. We could see over it.

Just beyond the door yard were some cattle standing motionless with their heads hanging. Poor things, we thought, they are tired out.

Later when they had not moved we wondered why they didn't go to the hay stacks and because they looked strange, standing still so long with their heads hanging, Pa went out to see what was the matter with them. He found that their breath and the snow, blown into their eyelashes and the hair around their eyes, had formed ice over their eyes until they could not see at all. They were tired out by their struggle with the storm, drifting before it for no one knew how many miles. There were twenty five of them and Pa went up to one after another and tore the ice from their

eyes. As soon as they could see, they bawled and ran from him a few steps, then stopped and stood still again, they were so tired. He came in and left them standing there looking around at the desolate land with the snow blowing low across it. I suppose they were glad they could see it.

After awhile they drifted down to the shelter of a haystack where they stayed resting and eating until the next morning sometime and

then went away when we weren't noticing them.

Pa brough[t] in several birds that had fallen exhausted in the shelter of one of the stacks of hay. Some of them were strange to us, we never saw any like them before nor afterward. We kept them

where they would not freeze until they were rested and the storm was entirely over, then turned them loose.

The storm was always called "The October Blizzard." Hundreds of cattle perished in it and some people were frozen to death.

There was a nice spell of weather after it, but an old Indian passing through town warned the people that a terrible winter was coming. He said the seventh winter was always harder than those before; then the winters would be mild again until another seven, which would be harder than the first. Mild winters would follow again until the

third seven which would be much worse than either of the others. He said it had always been so; that the winter coming was the third seven and there would be “heap big snow” and the winds would blow and blow.

During the good weather we moved into town for the winter. Pa was one of the county commissioners and also a Justice of the Peace. He had his office in the front room, while we lived in the one room and the leanto room at the back, with the bedrooms upstairs. Everyone staying for the winter was living the same way in small rooms back of their places of business or upstairs over them or in the few shanty houses on the back streets.

George Masters, the eldest son of Uncle Sam Masters of Walnut Grove going through De Smet on his way to work farther west, stopped to see us and begged Ma to let his wife Maggie stay with us to be nearer him. Maggie came the next week, a large, cheerful Scotch girl. We liked her but we did not care for George who was much like his father.

A widow named Garland, with two grown daughters, Florence and Vene and a son about my age named Edward but called Cap, had built a boarding house on the street back of us. Florence was hired to teach the school which began the first of November and Carrie and I started to school again.

There were only fifteen pupils all strangers to each other, but beginning to feel acquainted, when one still, sun[n]y day as we were sitting quietly, studying[,] the school house cracked and shook from a blow of the wind that struck the northwest corner like a mighty

sledge. The sun was blotted out and all we could see from the windows was a white blur for all outside was a whirling chaos of snow.

Miss Garland looked frightened and said we would all go home; for us to put our wraps on quickly and fasten them good; that we must all stay close together and go with her.

Just as we were ready to start a man named Holms came from town to help us get safely through the storm, for the school house was three blocks west of the business street and there were no homes nor anything but bare prairie between.

We started all close together following Mr Holms and Miss Garland, but after a few minutes Cap Garland left the others and went farther to the south. We shouted at him but he disappeared in the storm running. We were blinded by the snow, buffeted by the wind until we could hardly keep our feet and awfully cold. It seemed to me that we had already gone too far and still there was no sign of buildings when suddenly we ran against the back of a building that

stood at the very end of the street, the last building in town on the north. We didn't see it until we bumped against it and if we had gone just a few feet farther north we should have missed it and been out on the open prairie lost in the blizzard.

Cap Garland went straight, told the men down town that we had gone wrong and a crowd was just starting after us when we came walking up the street beside the buildings.

For three days, the blizzard raged and no one thought of doing anything but staying safely at home. Then the sun shone on the snow, packed in hard drifts by the wind, the wind was still and people moved about again.

The snow had filled the cuts on the railroad and it was several days before the snow plows and men with shovels could clear the track so trains could run again.

Maggie Masters baby was born in her room upstairs with only Ma and Mrs Garland to help her. There was no doctor to be had. George came back from the west on the first train going east. His job was finished until spring and winter was setting in in earnest.

Storms followed storms so quickly that the railroad track could not be kept open. The Company kept men shoveling snow and snow

plows working all they could, but the snow plows stuck

in the snow and snow blew back faster than the men could shovel it out.

On the 20th. of November a train went up the line and made the trip back. The next train through was a passenger and mail train on January 4th. It went west to Huron but could not get back and stayed there the rest of the winter.

The Superintendent of the Division was much displeased at the failure of his men to get the trains through and came out to the deep cut west of Tracy to superintend the work himself.

They were using two snow plows hitched together, but the snow was packed so hard that they could drive them only a few feet when they stuck fast and had to be shoveled out.

The superintendent ordered them to put three plows on and drive them through. Then the engineer refused to drive the engine in front saying they would all be killed.

The superintendent replied that he wouldn't ask a man to do anything he wouldn't do himself and —with an oath—he'd drive the engine himself. They put the other plow on, backed the train for a mile, then came as fast as they could and struck the snow in the cut with all the power of the engines, their weight and speed. And stopped! The front engine and its plow were completely buried, even the

smoke stack covered. By a miracle the engineers were not hurt and crawled and were shoveled out. The impact, the heat and steam from the engine in front melted the snow close around it and it froze again in solid ice. When the men had shoveled the snow away so they could get to it they had to use picks to cut the ice from the wheels and gearing. It took two days, with all the men that could work around them to get the engines loose. By that time another blizzard was raging and the Superintendent ordered all work on the track stopped with the snow one hundred feet deep on the track at the Tracy cut and Twenty-five feet deep on the track in the cut just west of De Smet.

All the men in De Smet had worked at the shoveling. Most of them were glad of the \$2. a day pay, but even those who didn't need the money worked because they wanted the trains to run. The last shoveling they did took three men to get one shovel full of snow to the top of the bank. One stood at the bottom and threw it as far as he could; the man above him threw it from his shovel as high as he could. The third man could throw it to the top of the bank. Then in the night more snow fell; the wind blew and in the morning the cut was again full, tight packed with the snow to the top of the snow banks on each side which were as high as the snow fences which were supposed to hold the

snow back from the cut. At last the wind could blow the snow, across the tops of the snow fences across the snow on top of the track and away on the other side, in its age old sweep across the prairie, the man made obstacle overcome and hidden.

It did its best to blot out the town, but that it couldn't quite manage. Here in his ages long war with the elements, Man won though it was a hard, long battle. During the night the one street in town might be filled with snow packed so hard teams were driven over it and so high a man sitting on a low sled could look on a level into the second story windows of the hotel and across the roofs of the other buildings. The next night another blizzard would come and the wind striking at a little different [angle] would cut the snow away and sweep the street clean so the length of it would be bare ground in the morning.

We would lie in our beds those nights, listening to the wind howl and shriek while the house rocked with the force of it and snow sifted in around the windows and through the nail holes where nails had been withdrawn for the houses were only shells at best.

Once during the winter our little stable was entirely covered with snow and Pa had to dig a tunnel through it from the back door to the stable door to get in and care for the

stock. It had the great advantage of being a shelter for Pa going and coming and he was sorry when one night the wind swept it all away and he had to meet the full force of the storm again.

There were about 100 people in De Smet and town and country were so newly settled that no crops had been raised except a few sod potatoes.

The two grocery stores were small and started with only a little capital. Not having much money to buy with and expecting to be able to replace the stock as it was sold the store keepers had only a small supply on hand when the trains stopped running and it was too late to get more. It was the same with the coal sold at the lumber yard. Now with no way of getting more supplies of both food and fuel were running short.

The storms were so terrible and so frequent that teaming from Brookins could not be done and supplies were short even there for no train could run west of Tracy and the country was all new.

We were wondering how we would get through the winter and were so relieved when on January 4th we heard the train whistle. Everyone ran to the depot but it was only a train carrying passengers and mail. We thought surely there must be another train coming behind with food and fuel

but none came and that night there was the worst storm yet; the track was buried again, orders came over the telegraph wires to lay off all work and we knew we could expect no help from outside. We must depend on ourselves.

Anyway we had, from the last train, a letter from friends in Chicago, dated in November, saying they had sent us a Christmas barrel and they hoped we would enjoy the Christmas turkey and the warm clothing it contained.

We knew the old story of the colored man who when asked which he preferred a wreck on land or on the water replied he'd wreck on land, because "in a railroad smash up dar ye is, but in a steamboat bust up whar is ye." And we knew that, in this wreck of the railroad, there we were.

There was no meat to be had, no butter, the potatoes were nearly gone. The only fruit there had been in town was dried fruit and that was long since gone from the stores. We had a little yet and a little bit of sugar.

Coffee was gone and tea. Pa had a little wheat he had bought for seed the next spring and Ma browned that, ground it and made us a hot drink. What with the terrible cold and just dry hay to eat our cows were nearly dry. Pa got about a quart at a milking and the most of that went to Grace and Maggie on account of the baby.

Our sugar was gone and the last sack at the store had

sold for 50¢ a pound.

Then the flour was all gone the last sack of that sold for one dollar a pound.

There was no more coal nor kerosene.

For light Ma put a bit of rag around a button, tied the button in with thread and leaving the loose end of the rag standing up about two inches set the button in a saucer of axel grease that Pa had for greasing his wagon. When the end of the rag was lighted the heat of its burning drew the grease into the rag and made a sort of candle that gave a little light after a fashion. There was not much grease and we did not use the light long at night but went to bed early, saving both light and fire.

When the coal was gone we twisted the long, coarse, slough hay into sticks and burned that. It was quite a trick to take a handful of the hay[,] an end in each hand, twist it until it kinked on itself in the middle, then twisting the two sides upon each other until the ends were reached, make a sort of knot and tuck the ends in to hold it tight. If well done it made a hard twist from 18 inches to a foot long about as large around as a stick of split cook wood. We called them sticks of hay and they could be handled like sticks of wood. They made a suprisingly good fuel, a quick, hot fire, but burned so quickly that some one must be twisting hay all

the time to keep the fire going.

Pa filled the storm shed over the back door with the loose hay and he and Ma and I took turns twisting it. Carrie was too little and though she wanted to help was not allowed to do much. Mary had never been strong and we would not let her stay out in the cold storm shed.

It is times like this that test people and we were getting to know George and Maggie. We had not asked nor wanted them to stay with us, but they were out of money and had no other place to go, so they just stayed on. George promised to pay his share of the living expenses after work opened up in the spring and I'll say in passing that he paid a scanty part the next fall, though our own milk and potatoes and hay were not counted.

We could not keep the whole house warm, so we shut off the front room and kept the fire going in the kitchen stove, using it both for cooking and warmth. Mary had her rocking chair on one side, close up to the oven door and Maggie with her baby had a rocking chair in the other warm place on the other side of the stove, with the heat from the open oven door on her feet and knees and the baby in her lap.

George would crowd next to Maggie getting part of the warmth from the oven, while the rest of us did the best we could. Grace sat most of the time in Mary's lap while Ma

and Carrie and I hovered in front or crowded in at the back to stand between the stove and the wall, always giving Pa room when he came in from the chores, for Pa did all the chores while George sat by the fire.

Pa would get up in the bitter cold and start the fire singing “Oh I am as happy as a big sun flower that nods and bends in the breezes” while George lay snug and warm in bed until breakfast was nearly ready.

George was always first at the table at any meal and though the rest of us ate sparingly and fairly because food was scarce, he would gobble, not denying himself even for Maggie as we did because of her nursing the baby.

As our potatoes became scarce, he would help himself first to them and hurry to eat them so quickly that he always burned himself on them. Then clapping his hand to his mouth he would exclaim “Potatoes do hold the heat!” This happened so often the rest of us made a byword of it.

George was nearly always underfoot in his place at the stove, but Pa was quite a favorite among the other men and used to spend some time where they gathered with the Wilder boys who were batching a little way down the street or at Fuller Bros, hardware store just across the street from us. At those places there were no women or children to be first and they each had an equal chance at the fire. They

told stories and sang songs and played games. They didn't eat and drink but at least they were merry for tomorrow they might die in a blizzard.

Henry Hinze and his saloon were still there and his supplies of drink were lasting, the only supplies in town that lasted through the winter.

A man might have taken a drink occasionally but we never saw or heard of anyone drinking and no one got drunk through all the hardships.

When the thermometer stands at from 25 to 40 below zero and a blizzard wind blows most of the time it takes a good deal of twisted hay to keep an unfinished house warm enough to live in.

Everyone had been burning hay except the banker who would not condescend to such. He had bought lumber at the lumber yard for \$28. a thousand feet until he had burned it all. Now he must burn hay too or freeze. And the hay that had been stacked in town had all been burned. Hay must be brought in from the country or everyone would freeze.

A blizzard lasted three days, then there would be a clear, still day, then the next blizzard would strike. There might be a few hours less than three full days storm and again there might be less than a whole clear day. Two days between storms was a remarkable event. It gave the impression of a

malignant power of destruction wreaking havoc as long as possible, then pausing for breath to go on with the work.

Or as Pa forcably put it, “The blizzard just let go to spit on its hands.” (This is an old woodsman’s saying. Do you get it?)

During the storm, people stayed close. On the still day, they hurried here and there to do what must be done before the next storm.

So on these clear days hay must be hauled in but by whom and how.

Some of the men were afraid to go out of town at all. They might be caught in a storm, they came so suddenly sometimes. Some could not stand the cold. Besides it was very difficult to get to the haystacks which were in or beyond the Big Slough.

The snowdrifts on the uplands were hard enough to drive a team over, making only slight marks on the snow with their hoofs, but it was different in the Slough. There, in places, the tall grasses were twisted and lodged by the wind, leaving a cavity underneath. The snow had blown in and over them, forming a crust above, while the warmth from the ground and the shelter of the grass kept the snow soft underneath. A horse was heavy enough to break through the crust into these holes; the sled would be pulled in on

top of him and there was one mess. If a team fell through they were likely to injure each other floundering around, for naturally they were terrified to suddenly fall into a pit and sink into snow above their backs.

Our hay was at the farm and the Big Slough must be crossed to get it.

One of our horses was very wise and gentle with a great confidence in Pa. Him, Pa hitched to the sled alone with the traces made longer so when he fell through the snow crust, the sled would not be pulled in after him. Then with his hay fork and snow shovel on the sled he and Charley, the horse, would go after a load of hay and working together they would bring it safely home.

When Charley broke through the crust into a pit of soft snow he would be quiet while Pa shoveled the snow from in front of him, cut steps in the hard snow bank and, taking him by the bridle, helped him out. The sled meantime at the end of the long traces stood still on the hard bank. When Charley was out, he drew the sled around the hole and they went on until the snow crust broke again and the process was repeated. Arrived at the stack, snow must be shoveled again before the hay could be got at. It took all of the short winter day to make the trip. The hay would last for the stock and the fire through the blizzard that always

came at once and on the next still day the trip must be made again in the same way for the blizzard had obliterated all signs and there was no way of knowing where a hole was in the snow until Charley fell through.

The Wilder boys hauled hay in the same way for most of the other people in town. There were no more fires kept than were necessary. School had been closed soon after our experience coming home through the storm. It was not safe to be so far out even when we could get there and the fuel was needed in the homes.

When the last flour in town disappeared in the grand final at one dollar a pound was Ma discouraged? She was not. Pa brought in his seed whea[t] and we ground it in the hand coffee mill. With this whole wheat flour she made mush or biscuits raised with soda and souring made by putting a little of the flour into warm water and setting it under the stove to keep warm and sour. It made a usable substitute for sour milk.

Baking powder was not used then. The best cake makers used soda and cream of tartar in proper combination to raise their cakes. But we were not making cakes that winter.

Everyone was grinding the seed wheat, in town, the same way and using it for bread.

It was slow work grinding enough wheat to make flour

to make bread to feed eight people and whoever was not twisting hay for fuel must be grinding wheat for bread. Mary helped with this a good deal for she could sit in her warm place by the fire, hold the mill between her knees and grind.

But George and Maggie took no part in the labor.

As our supply of wheat became low, Pa used to go down to the Wilder boys place and get some of theirs. Wishing to save their seed if possible, they had boarded up their wheat bin, which was in one end of the room in which they lived, so that it looked like the end of the room and no one knew the wheat was there.

They bored a hole through the boards into the wheat which they plugged with a piece of wood. When we had to have more wheat, Pa would pull the plug let the wheat run out into his bucket the[n] put the plug back.

But soon the other supplies of wheat in town were used up and even if the Wilder boys had let their seed be used it would not have been enough. Something more had to be done.

Living twelve miles southeast was a farmer who had raised some wheat the year before and if we were all to live until spring someone must go after it.

A merchant named Loftus said he would furnish the

money to buy it and sell it out to the people as they needed it. It was dangerous to go after it and no one wanted to go, but finally the youngest Wilder boy and Cap Garland each with one horse, on a sled used to haul hay from the slough, started.

I think no one really expected them to get back, for twelve miles, a good part of it through sloughs where the horses would break through and have to be dug out, looked almost hopeless of being done in one day and it must be done between storms.

It was a clear, still, cold day and helping the horses through the

drifts as Pa did, they made the trip safely, getting back some time after dark.

A blizzard struck again before morning.

The boys had charged nothing for making the trip at the peril of their lives, but had cheerfully gone for the sake of the community. They had paid the farmer \$1.50 a bushel for the wheat, which he had not wanted to sell as it was his seed.

Now when Loftus sold it to the people he charged them \$2.50 a bushel. He had sold only a little at this price when it became generally known. Then the men in town gathered together and went to Loftus' store in a body. After they

had talked to him, he paid back the overcharge to the men who had bought the wheat at \$2.50 and he sold the rest of it at \$1.50 a bushel.

There was a yoke of cattle in town belonging to a man named French a batchelor who had moved in from his farm for the winter. They were his work team, but he was persuaded to butcher them and sell out the meat, so we had a little beef to go with our whole wheat bread.

There was in town a lawyer named Waters who had expected to go east early in the winter to be married but had got caught by the storms.

Now the wedding day was drawing near and no way to get transportation out. He decided to walk and in the middle of January he started before daylight one morning as the blizzard wind was dying down and the sky cleared.

It was a scant day's calm this time and we were afraid he was caught in the next storm, but he walked the miles to Brookins safely and after resting walked on to Tracy.

The next spring we learned that he arrived safely in time for his wedding, but both feet were so badly frozen that he was unable to walk on that day. However his feet recovered and he came back in the spring, bringing his wife with him.

January went by and February with my 15th. birthday. March was stormy still and we began to wonder if spring

would ever come. It seemed as though we had been grinding wheat and twisting hay for years. We were getting shorter tempered. Pa did not sing in the

morning about the happy sunflower and I had even told George if he was not warm enough to suit him he could go twist some hay for I was tired. And in spite of Ma's frown offered to hold the baby while Maggie washed the dishes.

One day a herd of antelope was sighted near town and all the men went hunting.

The antelope were wandering in search of food looking for places where the wind had bared the ground and they could reach the buffalo grass. They were in a little valley like depression in the surrounding prairie and the men went on horseback hoping to surround them.

All the men were on were on horseback. Those without horses had borrowed. It was agreed that each should ride so that they would reach the herd from all sides at about the same time.

French had borrowed a horse from the youngest Wilder boy. It was the fastest horse in town but afraid of the sound of a gun and French had been warned to be sure to hold her fast when he shot off his gun. But when he saw the antelope he was so excited he forgot everything. Without paying any attention to the others he ran his horse closer[;]

then, while still out of range, he jumped off let go of the reins and shot.

He didn't hit any antelope, being too far away, but he scared the horse so she ran away and in among them. The antelope bunched close around her and away they all went across the prairie. The other men dared not shoot for fear of hitting the horse so the antelope, all but one, got clear away. Pa shot one and it was divided among the crowd making only a taste apiece. My sympathy had been with the antelope. They had been having a hard winter too and I could have cried when I saw the poor, little, starved one they had brought home although our wheat was getting low again and the beef was only a pleasant memory.

The horse ran with the antelope herd for two hours before she became quiet enough to let the antelope go on without her and her master on her mate to come up and get her.

With the first of April the weather turned warmer and there were no more had storms. Bare prairie showed in spots and farmers went back to their claim shanties and began their springs work. Men were at work on the railroad too and soon the trains would be running again. But it was the 9th. of May before the first train could get through. We knew it was coming and when it whistled all the men ran to

the depot to welcome it. Our mouths watered at thought of good food for we were on short rations of even our wheat bread.

The train came rolling in while everyone cheered and then it was found that it was a whole train of farm machinery, sulkey plows, seeders, harvester, mowing machines, rakes, even a threshing machine that couldn't possibly be used before fall—all the tools necessary to raise us something to eat for next winter. In the meantime—

The mob of men came near wrecking the train and would have done so if they had not found on the very end an emigrant car.

Mr Woodworth broke open the door and divided the food among the people according to the number of persons in the family, for it had come to rationing.

In the car were provisions of all kinds enough to last the emigrants family for some time, besides seed wheat and potatoes.

Everyone went home carrying his share, a little sugar, some flour a bit of salt pork, some dried fruit a little tea.

What rejoicing there was when Pa came. I think none of us had realized the strain we had been under until it broke.

Pa got some sacks and went back for his share of the wheat and potatoes. The train could not go on until the

next day for the track through the cut west of town was not clear before then.

A train came the next day but it was a train load of telegraph poles. Unreasonable as it was I think no one who was there at that time could ever feel kindly toward a R.R. Co.

Finally food came in and at last our Christmas barrel, with the turkey still solidly frozen.

The prairie turned a beautiful green and at last the Hard Winter of 1880-81 was over.

CHAPTER 8

Dakota Territory, 1880-1885

Seeding was done by those already there as fast as seed could be obtained and emigrants came in every day to settle on the land or start a business in town.

Soon after work started on the railroad west from Huron we heard that there was going to be an Indian outbreak.

Everyone was uneasy for a couple of weeks, then we learned that everything was quiet again.

A doctor, from Chicago, stopping at Old Stebbins railroad camp on Turkey Creek had found the body of an Indian baby, carefully wrapped in soft cloths in a basket, hanging in the top of one of a grove of trees on the bank of the creek. The body was perfect and so beautifully mummified that he sent it to Chicago, for examination to discover, if possible how it had been done.

Then the family to which the baby had belonged came to the funeral grove, from the reservation, to complete the funeral rites according to their custom and found the body

was gone.

The Indian came to the R.R. camp and demanded that the body be returned. Mr Stebbins promised it should be given back and tried to find the man who had taken it, but the Dr. had left hurriedly at first sight of the party of Indians and could not be found. So Mr Stebbins did no more about it.

After repeated efforts to recover the body the Indian with his family went back to the reservation. A few days afterward the three hundred men, in the R.R. camp, waked one morning to find six hundred Indians, dressed in nothing but war paint camped near by.

As soon as they saw the men astir, the Indians leaped on their ponies, without saddle or bridle and rode furiously around and around the camp. Each Indian carried a rifle lying across the pony's back in front of him. After circling the camp a few times, they rode through it here and there and as their ponies ran would snatch up their rifles and point them quickly at a man on one side and then at a man on the other side as if to shoot him. Then they rode back to their camp and their chief came and asked for the chief of the white men. He demanded that Mr Stebbins return the body of the Indian baby and that the man who had taken it be delivered to them. If this was not done, he said, they

would massacre everyone in the camp.

Mr Stebbins had a difficult time explaining to him that the man who had stolen the body had run away and could not be found; that the body had been sent a long ways away but would surely be returned if the Indians would only wait until it could be brought back.

But at last the Chief agreed to wait, but the men must stay in camp, except the one they sent to Huron, the little railroad station forty miles east, to get the body.

Mr Stebbins sent a man out, who learned at the depot to where the mummy had been expressed and telegraphed there for its immediate return, explaining the urgency for haste.

It was ten days before the man came back to camp with the mummy and every night, of that time, the Indians had a war dance at their camp and every day they rode around and through the railroad camp threatening the men with their rifles.

When the mummy was returned to their Chief, they went quietly back to their reservation and work was resumed on the grade as usual.

The youngest Wilder boy and two other boys, Homer and Horace Heath, from near De Smet, were in the railroad camp when all this happened, so later we heard, from

them, the story.

George and Maggie went west, the middle of May to a job he had at one of the new towns. We parted friendly enough, but I at least was glad to say good by.

Pa rented the house, for a month to a new comer and we moved home again, for the farm was home to us. Town was just a place to spend the winter.

We had several neighbors now near the farm. Delos Perry owned the farm joining our 160 acres on the south and his father Mr Perry owned the one just south of his. Mr Perry had another son still at home a young man named Ernest.

Southeast of us lived a family named Ross, with a son and daughter, Gaylord and Jenny of about Mary's age. Near them lived Mr Ross's brother Dave who had married Mr Perry's daughter Fanny.

All these people passed our place to go to town and as they stopped now and then we soon got acquainted.

Pa was working in town at Carpenter work and hired Ernest Perry to break some ground for him. In that way I got acquainted with him. He was a large, strong boy and walked, with his big feet bare, in the cool, soft, black earth of the furrow behind the plow as his big horses pulled it turning the prairie sod over.

I didn't care much for all these people. I loved the prai-

rie and the wild things that lived on it, much better.

In the early morning I was always on my way to the well, at the edge of the slough, for a bucket of fresh water as the sun rose in a glory of wonderful colors throwing streamers of light around the horizon and up across the sky.

The meadow larks were singing in the dew wet grass and jack rabbits hopped here and there with their bright black eyes watching and long ears twitching nibbling the tender grass that pleased them best for breakfast.

Later in the day, when the sun shone warmly, little reddish brown and black striped gophers would pop out of their holes in the ground and sit straight up on their hind legs with their front paws down close at their sides, so motionless they could hardly be distinguished among the grasses and if seen looking like a stick stuck up in the ground. With their bright eyes they looked, with their sharp ears, they listened for danger. At a sharp sound, a quick motion, or the shadow of a large bird overhead, they slipped back into their holes like a flash, but if all seemed safe to them, they scurried away, through the grass, about their business.

When corn was planted the striped gophers would follow the row, dig down, with their little paws, till they got the kernels and eat them or run off with them to their hole in the ground. They never made the mistake of digging

anywhere in the row except where the corn was planted, though how they could tell where the grains were when the ground was all soft plowed was a mystery.

The little garter snakes came out in the warm sunshine too and slithered across the path. They [were] perfectly harmless not poison at all and lived [on] grasshoppers and bugs. I thought they were very pretty and graceful and we never killed them.

It was fun to explore the farm and surprising how much variety and how many things of interest could be found on 160 acres that at a careless glance looked like all the rest of the prairie.

Pa had built an addition to the little slant roofed claim shanty so that the roof had its other half and we had two very small bedrooms. The house was in the N. W. corner of the farm.

The cottonwoods we had planted around it were growing splendidly.

The stable was west of the house, dug into the side of a little rise in the prairie.

The stable was roofed with the long slough hay and banked around with hay in cold weather. The rise of ground behind the barn was a little sand hill where the grass grew sparcely because the soil was so thin. On the northwest

corner the grass had not been able to make its way against the strong wind that whittled away at the hill cutting the soil away from the grass roots and shifting the sand.

Just beyond the sand hill was the western line of our farm and the country road to town which was just a wagon track across the prairie.

South of the house, about half way across the farm, was an old buffalo wallow of about two acres.

It was grassed over and early in the spring the whole hollow was covered with beautiful purple violets, so fragrant that one would smell them before reaching the hollow and a saucerful of the blossoms would perfume a room.

The grass grew well in this little natural meadow and when haying time came Pa cut it for hay.

The east side of the farm was just level prairie, but the Big Slough lay all along the north line just beyond the well.

Our road to town led straight north across the Big Slough, but all the sloughs were full of water after the big snows and we had to go first south along our west line then west from our south line and cross the slough much farther from the lake. Later in the summer we would go straight across.

Again I cared for the cows. We kept them on long picket ropes, pulling the picket pins morning and night after milking and driving them in a different place so the cows

would have fresh grass each day and night. Their calves were on short picket ropes near by.

Ma and I milked the cows, changed the picket pins, carried the milk to the house and strained and set it in pans in the cellar under the house.

Then while Ma got breakfast, I took the skimmed milk out and fed the calves and changed their picket pins.

After breakfast Pa went to his work and Ma and I and Carrie washed dishes made beds, swept, scrubbed, washed or ironed or baked or churned as the task might be, usually following the old rule for housework, “Wash on Monday, iron on Tuesday, churn on Wednesday, clean on Friday and bake on Saturday,” with mending and sewing and knitting scattered along through the week mixed with the care of the hens and little chickens, working in the garden and feeding the pig. Feeding the pig followed work in the garden no matter how many other meals he had for being kept in a pen, the pig always got all the weeds we pulled or hoed from the garden.

Sometime during the day we led the cows to water at the well.

So much water in the sloughs mad[e] a wonderful breeding place for mosquitoes and at night we had to build a smudge for the cows, a fire that smoked heavily so placed

that the smoke would drift over the two cows and their calves. We had doors and windows screened with mosquito bar to keep them out of the house, but any one crossing the slough after sundown would be badly bitten by them.

In June the wild roses bloomed. They were a low-growing bush and, when in bloom, the blossoms made masses of wonderful color, all shades of pink, all over the prairie. And the sweetest roses that ever bloomed.

(You are their namesake, my dear.)

There were grass flowers, may flowers, thimble flowers, wild sweet Williams, squaw pinks, buffalo beans and wild sunflowers, each blooming in its season. There were several different kinds of grass. Slough grass grew in all the low places. On the uplands was blue-joint or blue-slem a tall grass and buffalo grass which never grew tall. It was short and grew thick and curly. Instead of drying up when it ripened and losing its goodness, it cured standing, retaining its food values and made wonderful pasture for stock or wild game through the winter. It got its name from buffalo feeding on it.

There was an ugly grass that ripened in July early in the fall. It was called Spanish needles.

The seeds had a fine, very hard, needle like point an eighth of an inch long. The seed pod itself was one inch

long with stiff hairs over it all pointing back from the point [and] at the opposite end from the point was a strong, tough, twisting beard, like a barley beard, about four inches long.

When the seeds were ripe, if anything brushed against the grass, they would brush the beards which would pull the seeds loose. The needle like point would stick in and once started the stiff hairs on the seed would prevent its falling out, while the screw like beard would twist it ever farther in. These needles would work through our clothing like a needle in sewing. If stock got them in their mouths they made painful sores and had to be cut out. If sheep got them in their wool they would work through it into the body and through the body often killing them.

Farmers killed out the Spanish Needle grass later by burning it over at just the right time.

There was a fourth of July celebration in town with speeches and singing and reading of the Declaration of Independence in the morning and after noon horse and foot races.

Pa and Carrie and I took a picnic dinner in a basket and walked in for the day. Ma stayed with Mary and Grace at home.

It was a tiresome day, I thought. The best part of it was eating our dinner in our empty house and afterward set-

ting off a bunch of firecrackers a lawyer named Barnes had given Pa for us. I didn't like the crowd and would much rather be home where it was quiet.

But it seemed I couldn't stay there. At one of the dry-goods stores the merchant and his wife, with her mother, lived in two rooms at the back and the attic.

The mother-in-law made shirts as ordered from goods in the store and she needed help, so I sewed for her for 25¢ a day, slept with her in the attic and ate with them in the kitchen. Mrs Clancy quarreled constantly with her son-in-law, so that at times it was unpleasant.

For some reason, there was a scare about the Catholics getting control of the government and the awful things they would do to protestants. The daughter would wring her hands and pace the floor declaring that the Catholics should never take her Bible away from her. Then a comet appeared in the sky and both women thought it meant the end of the world and were more frightened than ever. But I couldn't see how I could be afraid of both comet and Catholics at the same time so I worried about neither.

The store was across the street from the saloon and as we sat sewing we could look across and up and down the street. I often saw Bill O'Connell go into the saloon and was sorry. His father had brought him west onto a farm

hoping to break him from drinking. Bill was very tall, and when he was drunk would walk very straight and dignified stepping as far as he could with his long legs. One day I saw him come out of the saloon, turn, and solemnly and deliberately put his foot through the screen door that had swung shut behind him. Facing out again, he met Tom Power, the tailor. He was a very short little man, but extremely dignified too when drunk as he was now. He and Bill linked arms and walked up and down the sidewalk, Tom trying to keep pace with Bill's long stride and chanting at the top of his voice "My name is T. P. Power and I'm drunk." While Bill wouldn't say his name was Power, he would every time chime in with his bass voice, "And I'm drunk," sounding like a bullfrog in a pond. Sorry as I was about Bill I laughed until I cried. I was very glad when I could go home again away from all these people, funny and otherwise.

Pa had planted corn on the land Ernest Perry had broken. It grew surprisingly rank and strong and a vivid green.

When the ears were large enough to roast, great flocks of the most wonderful black birds came and helped themselves.

There were thousands of them, just the common blackbirds and yellow headed blackbirds and red headed blackbirds with a spot of red on each wing. The red headed and yellow headed birds were much larger than the others.

It looked as though they would destroy the whole field. Pa shot them and drove them off, but they only rose, whirled in clouds, then came drifting back and settled down again.

At first Pa shot them and let them lie where they fell. Our kitten, grown up, brought some to her kittens, but they were so full of mice and gophers they couldn't eat the birds.

Then Pa brought several in and asked us to cook them. Said he had never heard of any one eating them but they looked good.

So Ma and I dressed a frying pan full. We split them down the back and fried them whole. They were so fat they fried themselves and were tender and delicious. We understood why four and twenty blackbirds made a dish fit to set before a king.

After that we ate all we could of them every day and by much shooting Pa saved most of his corn.

When haying time came, Pa stopped work in town long enough to put up his hay with Ma's and my help.

All summer we had been talking about sending Mary to the Iowa College for the Blind at Vinton, Iowa, and after haying Ma and I got Mary's clothes ready for she was really going.

Jennie and Gaylord Ross were to stay with Carrie, Grace

and me while Ma and Pa went with Mary and got her settled. Gaylord would do the chores and Jennie would look after us all.

Pa and Ma were gone only a week but it seemed an awfully long time. I didn't like either of the Rosses. Gaylord was just unpleasant in a way I couldn't explain, but Jennie was much worse. She told dirty stories that I only half understood, tormented our pet cat and was lazy and quarrelsome besides. She and Gaylord were always quarreling. Carrie and I were very glad when Pa and Ma came walking in from town one night and Jenny and Gaylord went home in the morning.

We were all happy too that Mary was where she would be warm and comfortable, with good food and good company and that she could go on with her studies. She had always loved to study, had been the bright one always while I had been slower and stupid at my books. Now Mary would have a college education and a manual training besides. She would learn music and sewing even cooking and housework. Ma said it was wonderful what they learned to do without seeing.

In hunting for something a few days after Pa and Ma came home, I found where Ma had hidden it a beautiful book of Scotts' Pomes. Because it was hidden, I knew I was

not expected to know about it and so said nothing. It was awfully hard to leave it alone but I did. Ma gave it to me for my Christmas present. She had brought it from Vinton, Iowa, for me.

Our school was opened again in the fall and Carrie and I walked in. The teacher was Eliza Wilder a sister of the Wilder boys.

We liked walking to school except that on the way we had to pass several cows and a pure bred Jersey bull belonging to the banker Ruth. They were allowed to run loose and in the morning and at night would be beside our road, just out of town. The bull would lower his head, bellow and paw the dirt at us. His horns looked awfully sharp and I was afraid to pass him, not so much for myself. I had the feeling I could outrun him, but Carrie had never been strong, was very thin and spindly and I was afraid I could not take her with me fast enough.

One night, going home, we saw him beside the road and went far to one side and into the Big Slough on a path we followed until the tall grass was away above our heads so we could not be sure just where we were coming out.

We knew the road we traveled in the spring went through the slough still farther over and if we kept on we must come to it. So we went until we came out of the grass onto

a mowed place. There we saw a team hitched to a load of hay. A tall man on the ground was pitching more hay up onto the load. On top of the load a big boy or young man lay on his stomach, kicking up his heels and just as we saw them, the man on the ground pitched a great forkful of hay square on top of the other. We passed by saying good evening while the man on top of the load scrambled out from under the hay and looked at us.

As we went on, I said to Carrie. ‘That man on the ground was Wilder, The other must be the youngest Wilder boy.’ I had never seen him before.

When we told Pa how Ruth’s Jersey bull had pawed and bellowed at us so that we came the long way home, Pa was angry.

I never saw Pa angry but two or three times. When he was, his intensely blue, eyes seemed to flash sparks of fire and his voice always a bass grew deeper. This time he only said, ‘I’ll speak to Ruth.[’]’

He took us to school the next morning, past the cattle and we never saw the Jersey again.

There were several new girls at school. Mr Brown had brought his wife and adopted daughter Ida out in the spring.

Then there was Mary Power daughter of the tailor Tom Power, and Genieve Masters from Walnut Grove. Uncle

Sam Masters had come out with his whole family in the spring and taken a homestead west of town.

There was Minnie Johnson and Laura Remington among the younger girls.

There was quite a large school this time and they were all strangers except some of the smaller children and Genieve.

It was hard for me to meet the strange girls and the strange teacher and Genieve was the last unbearable straw.

She was not changed in disposition since the Walnut Grove days but had grown tall and slim with a beautiful complexion and was always dressed in pretty clothes.

was still a roly, polly, half pint of cidar and my clothes were nothing to speak of. There had been no money nor time for my clothes and though they were good enough they were not attractive.

It seemed some mornings as though I simply could not face the crowd on the school grounds and the palms of my hands would glow moist and sticky on my my books.

But there was Carrie no better dressed and no more used to people than I. She must not be made to feel badly, so I stiffened my courage and no one not even Carrie ever knew how I felt.

It was strange considering all this that I should become a leader in the school. Ida brown was my seatmate and

both she and Mary Power were my good friends. They both for some strange reason looked to me to decide whatever questions came up. The younger children all liked me and would come running to me to settle their disputes or tell them what to play. There were no big boys in school, they were all working.

Ida, Mary and I did try to be friendly to Genieve but she still thought that being from New York made her far above common people, but after some slighting remarks and elevations of the nose we left her alone. Then she became “teachers pet,” spending all the playtime with her.

School had not been going on many days until it became plain that though Miss Wilder was well educated she had no idea how to govern a school. She had no sense of fairness and was uncertain as to temper. What she allowed one day she might punish severely the next.

Of course she lost control of the school, the children all became unruly.

I was a little sorry for Miss Wilder and really wanted to study so I tried to be her friend. All my influence was used to help her and a look from me would quiet the children quicker than a word from their teacher. At recess I would persuade them against plots to annoy her. When Ida or Mary or even Genieve would propose something to bother

her for fun, I would sa[y] ‘Oh! Lets don’t[’] and we didn’t. This was perhaps easier for me to say, because I felt certain Genieve would have gone straight to the teacher with it, to get us into trouble. She did try to get us to say things that she could repeat and was not alway[s] particular to repeat truthfully. We knew this from what we happened to over-hear and what Miss Wilder would say to us later.

We moved to town directly after Pa and Ma came back from Iowa so it was easier going to school. The school was rapidly going from bad to worse. Miss Wilder had it firmly fixed in her mind, by Genieve, I thought, that I expect to be favored because Pa was a school director, while Pa was cautioning me all the time to behave myself and I was helping her all I could.

Her ill feeling included Carrie and I began to see that she watched her and at every chance said cutting, insulting things to her.

The seat where Carrie and her seatmate sat had become unfastened from the floor and as they sat studying their lessons, one day, they rocked it gently back and forth. It made a little soft thud, but they were really studying and tipping the seat rather unconsciously. Their seat was ahead of mine and I was looking at them when Miss Wilder said “You girls seem to like to rock that seat. You may put away

your books and just rock it!”

They put away their books but after a minute the other girl sat over in an empty seat just across the aisle, leaving Carrie to rock the heavy seat alone. Miss Wilder paid no attention to the girl who left although she had been equally at fault with Carrie, but she would not let Carrie slacken the motion in the least.

I knew it was too much for Carrie's strength and that Miss Wilder must know it too for Carrie once in awhile fainted quietly away, so I expected Miss Wilder to stop her any minute.

Then she said to her, “Rock harder Carrie!” and I saw Carrie slowly turning white.

I leaped to my feet and said “Miss Wilder if Carrie isn't rocking that seat hard enough to suit you, let me do it!

“You may do just that,” she said pouncing on me joyfully it being the first chance she had been able to get at me in all the time she had been watching for one.

So I went over to the seat and sat down by Carrie, whispering to her to sit perfectly still and rest.

Then I rocked the seat, no gentle rocking and soft sounds, but thud, thud, back and forth I sent the seat with as much noise as I could manage to make.

There was no studying possible in the room and by all

signs it was making teacher's head ache. I kept my eyes steadily fixed on her and rocked. She tried to stare me down, but couldn't face the blaze I knew was in my eyes and looked away.

After about twenty minutes she said we should stop rocking and go home and, with a final thud, we did.

Pa shook his head when I told him about it and said I was to go back in the morning and "behave myself," but neither he nor Ma said I shouldn't have done as I did.

We went back in the morning and I did behave myself, but I left everyone else to behave as they pleased. And they did!

Boys played leap frog down the aisles during school hours; they threw spit balls and whistled between their teeth.

The girls and boys both drew pictures and wrote messages on their slates and passed them up and down among the seats, while I sat trying to study.

It is hard to describe or to imagine if one has never seen thirty children from seven to sixteen completely out of hand.

During the first of the term, Miss Wilder had been unwise enough to tell us all that when she went to school the other children, to tease her, had called her "lazy, lousey, Liza Jane," her name being Eliza Jane.

One day Ida Brown drew on her slate the picture of a woman, which was anything but pretty and wrote under it, “Who would go to school to Lazy, Lousey Liza Jane. [”]

I erased what she had written and wrote in its place.

‘Going to school is lots of fun
By laughter we have gained a ton
For we laugh until we have a pain
At lazy, lousey, Liza Jane.’

This was my sole contribution to the general disorder. I have no excuse to make. I should have been whipped. But there you are!

Ida passed the slate around and at recess the doggrel was shouted and sung all over the school yard.

This state of affairs had not come on all at once, but every day, since Carrie and I had rocked the seat, was worse than the one before, until we were surprised one day by the school board, in a body, walking in to look us over.

The teacher told her sad tale and said that I had made her trouble from the start, that everything would have been all right but for me and went into details that were also untrue, though very skillfully twisted from the truth.

I raised my hand, hut Pa shook his head at me and put

his finger on his lips. I subsided.

The school board one after the other told us we must be good, mind the teacher and study hard.

They told Miss Wilder they would stand by her and see that she was obeyed until the month was finished. At the end of the month a Mr Clewett took the school to finish out the term.

When cold weather began, the big boys came. There were Cap Garland, Ben Woodworth, Frank Harthorn and Arthur Johnson. School became more interesting. Again I played baseball. Ida Brown and Mary Power played with me but Genieve stayed in the house. Afraid of spoiling her complexion, we said.

But she was always on hand when Cap brought candy as he often did, a little paper bag full. She asked for it the first time so he gave it to her, with an apologetic look from his blue eyes, under their white lashes, at Mary and me. Genieve passed it once and gobbled the rest.

After that she would simply take it, pretending she thought it was for her even when he had offered it to Mary, and keeping up a stream of flattering talk. "Cappie was such a dear boy. He was so tall and strong" etc. Cap tried for several days to give the candy to Mary and every time he had to let Genieve have it or be very rude.

One time I said ‘Oh Cap! That’s nice of you,’ and took it fairly out of Geneives fingers. Mary and I and Ida ate it all that time and Cap grinned.

Genieve always made fun of Cap behind his back and going home that night she did so saying among other things, “I like Cap’s candy, but Cap! Faugh![”] with a curl to her lip and a sniff.

Then she didn’t like the things I told her and we had our only violent quarrel.

Among other things she called attention to my being fat and made fun of my clothes. In return for which I explained to her about the size of her feet, they were very large, and said that at least my clothes were my own and not my aunt’s and cousins cast off garments sent to me because I was a poor relation. Mrs Masters and Nannie at Walnut Grove, did send Mrs Sam Masters their old clothes and she

made them over, which explained the fine, beautiful materials of Genieve’s dresses.

It was then I learned, many years ahead of the scientific discovery, that anger poisoned one, for I went home and to bed sick at my stomach and with a violent headache.

We studied hard with Mr Clewett and played hard too. When the snow came, we snowballed and rode on hand sleds with the boys pulling them, for there was no hill so

we couldn't coast.

Once the four big boys coaxed us four girls into a hand cart that was all too small so that we were piled up with feet sticking out at all angles. Then they ran away with us taking us down-town on a run. Only my personal appeal to Cap saved us from being hauled the length of main street in our ridiculous positions.

Ben Woodworth had a birthday party. He came with a sleigh, gathered us all up and took us over to the depot wher the Wood- worths lived upstairs. It was my first party and I felt very awkward.

There were nine of us, our four from school and Jimmie Wood- worth. The long dining table was set and ready when we got there. It was beautiful with its silver and china its beautiful linen tablecloth and napkins.

At each place, on a pretty little plate was an orange standing on end with the peel sliced in strips half way down and curled back making the orange look like a golden flower. I thought them the most beautiful thing I had ever seen, even prittier than the birthday cake in the center of the table.

The oranges were a real treat too. We finished peeling them laying the peeling on the plate, then separated the sections, one at time, daintly with our fingers and ate them,

putting the seeds on the plate with the peel. (There were plenty of seeds in oranges those days and the membrane between the section was tough so they separated easily without spilling a drop of juice.[])

After we had eaten our orange we were served hot oyster soup and crackers. After that the cake was cut and we were each helped to a generous piece.

When supper was over we went down into the waiting room of the depot and played games. Jimmie arranged us all in a circle holding hands and gave us a shock, that made us tingle, from his telegraph instrument. We went home early well pleased with the evening.

Just after the party, the aid society gave a social at Mrs Tinkham's where she lived over their furniture store. It cost 10¢ to go and each one was served a dish of ice cream, home made of course and frozen with the natural ice of which there was plenty out doors. Mary Power and I went together, but it was a very stupid time and we left early wishing we had saved our 10¢.

The grown people organized a literary society that met at the school house every Friday night.

They spelled down, spoke pieces and had debates.

One night "Mrs Jarleys Wax Works" were shown. They were people we knew, dressed and made up to resemble

wax figures, who when described and called upon by “Mrs Jarley” went through stunts with stiff, jerky movements, like wooden men and women.

That same night a vaudavill sketch was given by some men blacked up as negro minstrels, “The Mulligan Guards.” They went through a clog dance while they sang.

“Oh Talk about your Mulligan Guards
These darkey’s can’t be beat
We step in time and cut a shine
Just watch this darky’s feet.”

Gerrald Fuller was the star performer. Charlton and Gerald Fuller were twin brothers owning one of the hardware stores. Charlton was very tall and thin and dignified a typical Englishman, while Gerald was short and square, not fat, with no dignity whatever[,] a rough, tough, disgrace to his family, but good hearted, generous, kind, a regular clown at times, always a good fellow and liked by everybody, except his twin brother Charlton.

Gerald was a good singer and there were several others. Mrs Bradley, the druggists wife and Mr Trousdale the drayman and Mrs Sassie with Gerald Fuller made a quartett that furnished the music for the meetings of the literary society.

I often saw the Wilder boys and their hired man Oscar Rhuel sitting in a front corner of the room. Oscar Rhuel was a romantic figure. At his home in Sweden he had fallen in love with and become enga[g]ed to a girl, whose parents objected, Oscar being poor and they rich.

They had taken their daughter to America to keep her away from him and were settled in California as far away as they could get.

Oscar had followed but his money would bring him only so far and he was now working to get money to go on to California, where his girl was waiting for him. Later he did go on and marry her. But at this time we girls felt a great sympathy for him and I thought him quite handsome.

On one of these entertainment nights a young lawyer name Alfred Thomas came in and stayed and kept on staying for no reason that I could see, until I was afraid Pa and I would be late. At last he asked Pa if he were going to the meeting and to my surprise Pa said “No!” Then he asked me if I were going and I thinking if Pa didn’t go of course I wouldn’t said ‘No!’ too.

So Mr Thomas went away alone and then Pa laughed at me and said all Thomas had come for was to take me. I had refused my first offer of an escort and I was indignant. If he wanted to take me why couldn’t he say “Come go with

me!” and not be such a coward. Not that I wanted to go with him, but I hated to miss the fun and now Pa and I couldn’t go, but sat home all the evening.

The church and Sunday-school were going along nicely, and Mr Brown dropped in unexpectedly whenever he could to eat with us.

One noon Ma had prepared a kettle of beans with only the small piece of meat necessary to cook with them. As we sat down at the table Mr Brown came. Being company the food was passed to him first. After helping himself to a huge plate of beans, he took the plate of meat, looked at it and around the table, then scooped all the meat onto his own plate saying, “Might as well take it. There ain’t much of it anyway.” The church women met at Mrs Browns and organized a Women’s Christian Temperance Union (W.C.T.U.). Their next meeting was at our house and they insisted I should join. Ida Brown had joined and because of that the[y] urged me harder, but I refused for no very good reason. I just had a distaste for everyone at the meeting except Ma.

Again I worked at my old trade, taking care of a baby at night so its mother could be gone. I often stayed with Mrs Barnes baby so they could go to church in the evening. They were very strict church people. One week Mr Barnes

was away and did not get back on Saturday. Sunday morning at Sunday-school, Ma said to Mrs Barnes that perhaps Mr Barnes would come on the morning train. Mrs Barnes was horrified and said "Oh No!" She was sure he would not. He would never do so wicked a thing as to travel on Sunday. And just then Mr Barnes came from the depot off the morning train.

(Later Barnes was attorney for Zion City, near Chicago, and helped organize it.)

The new church building was finished and the women gave a New England Supper in it. Two tables were set the length of the room and the food placed on them. A little roast pig with an apple in its mouth was given the place of honor. Roast chicken with dressing[,] cold ham, sausage, baked beans & bread were scattered along the tables. There was cake and pumpkin, mince and dried apple pies and coffee. Everyone sat down at the table and helped themselves. The price was fifty cents.

Ernie Perry came in from the farm one morning and asked me to go, with him, to a party at Ross's that night. I liked Ernie and was glad to go.

There were sixteen young folks there, all country people. We danced square dances and played games, "Drop The Handkerchief, London Bridge, Miller Boy, Postoffice,

Spat them Out, Snap and Catch 'Em" and Forfeits. I didn't like the kissing games and always managed to let the kiss land on my ear.

I could have danced waltzes, polkas or shottishes as Pa had taught me so long ago, but had never learned the square dances, so I went through them awkwardly. But the sleighride home across the moonlit snow was pleasant so I really had a good time.

The next week Ernest came for me again. This time I liked the crowd and the kissing games less than before. I went through the square dances better with Ernest's help but Jennie and Gaylord spoiled them for me by the remarks they made about us.

Going home, Ernest pulled the robes higher around me and forgot to take his arm away. I was too shy and embarrassed to do anything about it but I made up my mind not to go again. Anyway I didn't want to go in that country crowd and it was time to stop, (a snob even then)

When Ernest came again the next week, I told him that I didn't like the games and couldn't dance, so I didn't care to go. I was sorry to hurt his feelings and thanked him for the invitation, smoothing my refusal the best I could. After awhile the crowd surprised me by having a party at our house and that was the end of that. (Ernest Perry went

to Oregon with the rest of the Perrys a few years later and stayed a batchelor for the sweet sake of his ideal of me until just a few years ago.)

A revival meeting was started soon afterward and we attended nearly every night. It did not seem, to me, so interesting as those we used to have in Walnut Grove, but I had a brown dress that I liked and a brown velvet turban, with a touch of red, that was very becoming.

I sat demurely with Pa and Ma, well up toward the front, but I did notice the Wilder boys, Oscar Rhuel and Cap Garland always in the same place at the back of the church. To be perfectly truthful I was noticing Cap.

Passing them one night on our way out, I felt a touch on my arm and some one said in my ear, "May I see you home?"

It was the youngest Wilder boy, Liza Janes brother. In sheer astonishment I made no reply, but he took my arm and dropped into step beside me, behind Pa and Ma. Ma looked around, but Pa propelled her gently on and we went out the door and home. I'm sure not a dozen words were said on the way, I was tongue tied wondering why he of all people should pay any attention to me.

Later I learned that Oscar had dared him to ask the girl who walked just behind me and they had made a bet that

he would not see her home, but Oscar did not make it plain which girl he meant, so although he knew perfectly well[,] the Wilder boy asked me as he had intended and collected the bet from Oscar, by claiming a misunderstanding. After that it was the usual thing for him to “see me home.”

Before the meetings were ended, Mr Boast came to see us bringing a Mr Bouchie, a friend and distant relative who lived twelve and a half miles south of town. Mr Louis Bouchie was looking for some one to teach the little school in his district and Mr Boast had recomended me. Two months was all their district could afford to have and \$20. a month all they could pay.

Pa told them I was not old enough to get a certificate. One must be sixteen and I would not be that old until February. But Mr Boast and Mr Bouchie said they would fix that with the county suprentendent if I would go and I promised to teach the school if I could get a certificate. When I went to the suprentendent I passed the examination and he did not ask my age. So I got my certificate and went out to Bouchie’s the first of December to begin the first school in their district.

There were five scholars, Marth and Charles Patterson, and Clarence, Ruby and Tommy Bouchie, brothers and sister of Louis Bouchie, who lived with their parents close by

the school house.

The school house was an abandoned claim shanty, one thickness of boards with cracks between, through which the snow blew. There were six seats with desks, a huge heating stove, a small blackboard, a little table and a chair for the teacher.

I boarded at Louis Bouchie's, one half mile across the prairie and no road.

Mr Bouchie took me out the day before school was to begin and I was nearly sick, with my dread of being among strangers, when we reached the house.

Mrs Bouchie was quiet and sullen, putting supper on the table and her little boy was crying. Supper was eaten almost in silence and soon after, I went to bed.

My bed was on a sofa so narrow that, even asleep, I kept my mind on not falling off. It was curtained off with calico from the rest of the room where the Bouchies slept. The one other room was kitchen, dining and sitting room.

Mornings, before breakfast, Mr Bouchie would go build a fire in the school-house. After breakfast I walked the half mile through the snow carrying my dinner bucket, and at night walked back again.

Mrs Bouchie was never pleasant, she was always sullen and seldom spoke. Breakfast was a silent meal and I was

glad to be gone all day.

At night, before bed time, I had a refuge in my books for I was keeping up with my class, still in school. Sometimes after I went to bed, I could hear Mrs Bouchie raging, seemingly perfectly able to talk.

At school, Martha and Charles were good but stupid. Martha studied, but Charles would sit day-dreaming with his book open before him and his eyes on the pages that I knew he was not seeing. In class he did just well enough to pass. I tried my best to get him interested in his studies, but I couldn't wake him up. They were both taller than I. Martha was fourteen and Charles sixteen years old.

I much preferred Clarence Bouchie who, though a mischievous, trouble making boy, was at least awake and quick. He could learn his lessons well and still have plenty of time to pinch Ruby, stick a pin in Charles and pull Martha's hair and he did them all. My sympathies were strongly with him and the pin.

He would do whatever I asked him but always his manner was a rebellion. It said plainly that he did not have to mind a teacher who was smaller and younger than he. For he was already sixteen and I would not be sixteen for two months yet.

Struggling with these problems at school, going back

at night to the Bouchies and the unpleasantness there [,] a week passed.

All day Friday I couldn't keep my thoughts off the next two days, how could I endure Saturday and Sunday all of the two long days with Mrs Bouchie?

I dreaded to dismiss school, but when we were putting on our wraps, there was a jingle of sleigh bells and a prancing team hitched to a cutter (small sleigh) drove up to the door.

Clarence rushed out and then put his head back to shout, "Some one after you teacher!"

To my surprise it was the youngest Wilder boy and when I came out the door, he asked me if I would like to go home for over Sunday. Would I like to go home!

We drove to Bouchie's where I got the things I wished to take with me and then away over the snowy road with the horses dancing and the sleigh bells ringing. In an hour we were at home to the surprise of the home folks.

As he left me Wilder, as Pa called him, said he would take me back to school Sunday afternoon.

So after Saturday and Sunday were short days and the drive back to Bouchie's was much too short, for every step of the horses took me nearer there.

After that, for two months, "teacher's beau," as Clarence

called him never failed to be waiting outside the school house when school closed on Friday night, to take me home, nor to bring me back on Sunday afternoon.

I felt that he was going to a lot of trouble and that the long, cold drives could be no pleasure to him. We were so bundled up to keep warm that talking was not easy. I was no good at talking anyway and with a thick hood over my ears and a thick brown veil over my face I was no beautiful thing to look at.

Much as I wanted to go home, I did not want to be unfair nor deceitful. I was only going with him for the sake of being home over Sunday and fully intended to stop as soon as my school was out.

So one day on the road I took fast hold on my courage and told him so. [‘]I am going with you,’ I said, ‘because I want to get home, but when I am home to stay, I’ll not go with you any more. So if you want to stop now and save yourself these long, cold drives, you can.’

“Well!” he answered. “It is quite a while before school will be out anyway.”

It was cold, though it was nothing like the Hard Winter, still it was bad enough. The thermometer ranged from twenty to thirty below zero.

On a Thursday morning, Mr Bouchie came running

back from building the fire at the school house. He dashed into the house, tore off his boots and began violently rubbing his feet, which had nearly frozen before he could get home. He forbid my going to school at all that day. When I wanted to go for fear the children would come, he said he had made a fire and if they did come, they could get warm, but he didn't think anyone would come on such a day.

The next morning was still frightfully cold but everyone was at school as usual.

All day the snow blew low across the prairie and toward night it grew colder still.

I did not have any hope of going home, the storm was so bad and the cold so intense and I wanted so much to get away for Mrs Bouchie had made up for being a little pleasanter the day before, by being in an awful temper at breakfast time.

With my mind made up to staying, I did not listen for the sleigh bells as I always did when four o'clock drew near. I usually heard them while they were still some distance away, but disappointment had so dulled my hearing that I was completely taken by surprise when there was a dashing jingle of bells at the door and as we all looked out of the window, Clarence Bouchie exclaimed aloud, "That Wilder is a bigger fool than I even thought he was!"

It lacked twenty minutes to four but I said, 'Put away your books! School is dismissed. [']

It was too cold for anyone or the horses to stay outside waiting. It was growing colder every minute and the sooner everyone got home, the better.

When we stopped at the house Mr Bouchie tried to dissuade me from going, but Mr Wilder was going back and I would go with him if I froze for it. There was danger at that of the storm thickening and our becoming lost.

I was dressed warmly, high necks and long sleeves in both underclothes and dress, two warm petticoats woolen stockings, and high shoes. I wore a heavy coat, a thick, wool, knit hood, two thicknesses of woolen veil over my face the ends wrapped and tied around my neck.

There was a heavy blanket under the buffalo robe over our laps and tucked tightly in around us and a lighted lantern underneath among our feet which added a great deal to the warmth.

And so we started into the north facing the wind.

There was no loitering on the way to make the drive last longer. We drove as fast as possible and not hurt the horses but had to be careful of that for they were trotting into the wind.

About every two miles the frost from the horses' breath

would become frozen over their nostrils so they could not breathe. Then we would stop and Mr Wilder would climb out into the cold and the snow, cover each nose with his hands an instant and then he could strip the ice off[f], climb back into the cutter and we would go on. At times he would slip one hand beneath the robes, out of the wind into the warmth from the lantern, for a few minutes.

It seemed that the twelve and a half miles would never end that day.

Mr Wilder told me on the way that he had hesitated to go, but that, as his team stood blanketed at a hitching post in town, Cap Garland had passed him, looked at the team and simply saying, “God hates a coward,” had passed on. Then he had taken the blankets off the horses and gone.

It was forty-five below zero when he left town. Thermometers were frozen so they wouldn’t tell how cold it was soon after he started and it grew colder steadily after that, and the wind blew harder.

I had sensed no feeling of cold for some time before we got home and when Mr Wilder would anxiously enquire if I were cold would answer ‘No!’ but when I tried to get out of the cutter at [the] door of home, I would have fallen if Ma had not caught me and could not walk into the house without help.

(There used to be an old story of a man who found his sweetheart frozen to death at the end of some such drive)

The next week the county superintendent visited my school.

He sat by the red hot stove while snow drifted in through the cracks in the wall. He listened to the children recite their lessons. He saw me let one after the other come to the fire, when they would ask, "Please may I come and warm?"

Then as he was about to go, when I asked him if he had anything to say, he said, "Yes!"

He rose to the full height of his six feet, while my heart stood still. Had I done anything wrong? (After all I wasn't sixteen yet)

Then with his head almost touching the ceiling he smiled at us all and said, "Whatever you do keep your feet warm!" And with another smile and a handshake he was gone.

The days were so cold that I had the children crowd on the front seats, or stand by the stove to keep warm, moving around as they pleased, just so they were quiet and studied their lessons during school hours.

And now surprisingly Clarence Bouchie began to behave well and even go out of his way to be kind to me, sharpening my pencils and fixing the fire without being asked.

He had been making me trouble from the beginning until

it seemed as though I must punish him or have the school ruined.

Every week, when I went home, Pa would ask me about him and when I would threaten to punish Clarence in some way, Pa would say I'd better be patient, try not to tell him to do things, unless I felt that he would do as I asked and just manage him. "For," Pa would say, "you can't whip him, he is bigger than you. There is no other way you can punish him for he wouldn't have to take a punishment of any kind. Better just manage!"

So I had done my best and to my surprise had made a friend of him and a sort of partner. For instance at first he often would not study the whole lesson and at recitation time would say "I didn't study that. The lesson was too long," when I knew that it was not.

I learned to assign his lesson and then say, 'or is that too long Clarence? Perhaps it is and better take only to here. I really don't think you could learn so far as I first said.' And he would exclaim, "Oh yes I can teacher." He had now gotten to the point where he would add a little more to my first suggestion and learn it too, to prove that he could. This is just a sample of how I handled him.

Pa would laugh when I told him these things and say "I knew you could manage him if you tried."

If it had only been pleasant at Bouchie's I would not have been so terribly homesick as I was.

At first every night I counted the days of school that had gone by.

Then, when half the time had passed, I began counting the other way and every night would say to myself, 'only so many days left.'

There were only eleven more days to go when at night I was waked by Mrs Bouchie screaming in fury. "You kicked me," she screamed, "You kicked me."

"No I didn't," Mr Bouchie answered. "I didn't kick you. I only pushed you off with my foot, but go put up that butcher knife or I will!"

I peeped between the curtains, I was so terrified I must see, and Mr Bouchie lay on his back on the bed, with one foot out from under the covers. He seemed to be lying quietly but I could see that every muscle was tensed.

Mrs Bouchie stood beside the bed with a large butcher knife in her hand. This was the picture for just an instant, then she turned and took the butcher knife to the kitchen, muttering a jumble of words as she went. I lay awake the rest of the night.

And this was one thing I didn't tell when I went home for badly as I hated to go out there again, there was only

one more week and I wanted to finish my school.

Things were still very wrong as I saw at once when I went into the house on getting back that last Sunday night. Mrs Bouchie didn't speak to me, the little boy had been crying and Mr Bouchie was out at the barn. He didn't come in until supper was almost ready and when he had his outdoor things off and sat down by the stove, Mrs Bouchie snatched her shawl from the nail where it hung and went out into the cold slamming the door behind her.

The minutes went by and I grew uneasy wondering if she would stay out until she froze or if she had gone at that time of night to some neighbors leaving us alone and if so what, for I knew that would be a dreadful thing.

Mr Bouchie seemed unconcerned, played with the little boy and after some time finished making the supper and put it on the table. I was making myself as small as possible pretending to study my history, but when Mr Bouchie said to come to supper, I sat up at the table. When supper was nearly over Mrs Bouchie came in, hung up her shawl and stood by the stove. She had been gone an hour. I never knew what she was so furious about nor where she spent the hour, but Mr Bouchie appeared to be used to such spells.

I didn't rest well nights that last week, but the children were sorry to see me go when Friday night came and told

me so. I enjoyed that ride home more than any before for I was going home to stay, but Mr Wilder was more silent than usual.

(I never heard of any of those school children when the[y] grew up, except Clarence. Many years later, when we were living in the little house behind the church, he came through town on his way home for a visit and Manly saw him. Clarence told Manly that he never appreciated until he was grown, how hard I tried to teach him something that winter, but that he had always been sorry he made it so hard for me. Clarence was a fireman in Chicago and soon after Manly saw him he died a hero, saving people from a burning building)

CHAPTER 9

Dakota Territory, 1881-1888

The next day was bright and beautiful. The weather had moderated until it was only 20 below and there was hardly any wind.

Sleigh bells were ringing and laughing people in sleighs and cutters drove up and down the street while I sat at home looking out of the window. Home was a fine place to be, but I didn't want to stay exactly in the house all the time, not when everyone else was out sleigh riding.

Sunday afternoon was just as beautiful weather and again the bells were ringing and gay laughter floating on the wind. I did want to be out with the others, but I had been away for two months, a long time at sixteen, and they all seemed to have forgotten me.

Mary Power and Cap Garland went by in a cutter built for two. I hadn't seen Cap for a long time. He might have taken me this once, I thought. There were Frank Harthorn and May Bird, Alfred Ely and Laura Remington, Fred Gilbert and Minnie Johnson, Arthur Johnson and Hattie

Dorchester. They were all having such a good time while I sat at home and looked on until the afternoon was nearly gone.

It seemed as though I couldn't bear it any longer and when I heard a jingle of bells that stopped at the door I went quickly and opened it.

There stood the team, hitched to the same little cutter, with the same driver that had taken me so many times over the road to Bouchie's.

“Would you like to go sleigh riding?” asked the driver and I went as soon as I could put on my coat and hat, not the hood and veil.

It was only when we were will mixed with the gay crowd that I remembered and when I did, I laughed aloud with pure enjoyment of the joke even though it was on myself.

[‘]Why did you come for me,’ I asked, ‘when I told you out at Bouchie's that I wouldn't go with you after school was out?’

“I thought you'd have changed your mind and be ready to go by now, after watching the rest of the crowd so long,” he answered.

‘I fully intended not to go with you any more,’ I said. ‘I was going to stay home until some one else asked me, but now I'm here, what am I going to call you? I'm tired of say-

ing Mr Wilder and then explaining that I mean the youngest Wilder boy and the crowd will laugh at me if I call you Mr Wilder to them. [']

He told me his folks called him Manzo except his brother Roy who called him Mannie.

‘Manzo is ugly’, I said. [‘I’ll call you Manly like Roy does’ and when he had told me of my mistake I said I would call him Manly anyway for Mannie was silly.

“And what shall I call you?” Manly asked. “I have a sister Laura and I never did like the name. What is your second name.”

So I said the old nursery rhyme, “Elizabeth Elisbeth, Betsy and Bess went over the river to seek a birds nest. They found one with three eggs in. They each took one and left two in” and he said he would call me Bessie.

We were going, with the crowd, the length of the street, around the circle on the prairie where the street ended, back down the length of the street around the circle at the other end and repeat, laughing and shouting from one sleigh to another, while sleigh bells rang their merry chimes, sleigh runners squeaked on the cold snow, the wind blew, but not too hard and we were happy and gay for it was only twenty below zero and the sun shone.

On Monday I went back to school and found that I had

gone ahead of my class in my studies, but I was glad to go over the lessons again with them. On pleasant Sunday afternoons there was always the sleigh ride, sometimes with Cap and Mary Mary in a two seated sleigh but more often by ourselves in the cutter, which Manly had made himself and that was the nicest one in town. The team he drove was the best too and much the prettiest, tall, slim, brown horses, with slender legs and dainty feet, heads held high and proudly tossing as the sleigh bells sang.

Uncle Tom made us a surprise visit this winter. He was the same dear Uncle Tom that I remembered in Wisconsin, a small, quiet, kind man with a pleasant smile that made me feel at home with him. It didn't seem reasonable that for years his business had been handling log drives and the rough men who made them on the Mississippi river.

But he handled both fearlessly. Once although unable to swim, he had plunged in among the floating logs and by clinging to a log had dragged an injured man out of the water to safety.

He still looked young and Manly[,] stopping for me on Sunday afternoon, seeing him through the door asked ferociously as soon as we were in the sleigh "Who is that young fellow?"

Mary Power and I were delighted and laughed at Manly

as we drove away.

This was one of the times we were in the two seated sleigh with Cap and Mary on the front seat.

It was a jolly ride. We teased each other and laughed and joked. Finally Cap began pulling the hairpins out of Mary's hair to her consternation, for Mary had hardly any hair of her own and wore a switch. With too many pins out it would surely drop off. When Mary could not stop him and I saw what was going to happen, I picked up a hard piece of snow, that had landed in the sleigh from the horses flying feet, and threw it past Cap's shoulder hitting one of the horses. Then both Cap's hands were needed on the reins and he had something to think about besides hairpins. (Local color)

When I came back from Bouchie's I had rather hoped to leave Manly and go with Cap, but when one day Cap drove up to the door and asked me to go sleigh riding I discovered that I didn't want to make the change, so I told him I would go if he would take Mary too and he did and that was that. Then Arthur Johnson took me home from church one night when Manly was not there and I found I didn't want to go with him either.

So I kept on going with Manly and people began to take it seriously. Rebecca Newhall told me at school one day

that her Mother said I'd "marry Wilder yet, for he meant business. No old batchelor would go with a young girl like that unless he did."

Becky Newhall's father kept the first Leghorn hens I ever saw.

They were small and brown, looked like birds and laid very, very small eggs, so small that the merchants objected to their size in buying them. Mr Newhall answered in his whining voice, "I know they are small but they lay so many of them.[""]

The teacher at school was a man named Seeley. He was a very good teacher, but made one feel that he was not quite clean.

It was a habit of his to chew the end of his pointer as he sat listening to recitations. At intervals as he felt the urge, he would run the pointer inside his collar and down, sometimes almost its length to scratch his back, then withdraw it and resume chewing the point.

We girls grew more and more disgusted, until one of us proposed that we doctor the pointer.

So one day we came back early at noon each bringing something unpleasant to the taste. My contribution was cayenne pepper.

We put all these things into the little kettle of water kept

on the heating stove, stirred up the fire then held the end of the pointer in the mess and boiled it.

We had it dried off and back in its place, the kettle emptied and refilled with clear water, when Mr Seeley came.

It was not long before he put the end of the pointer in his mouth, rolling it around his mouth and chewing it. He took it out of his mouth quickly, spat on the floor and looked at the point. Then he touched it experimentally with his tongue, looked up quickly at me where I was innocently diagramming a sentence on the blackboard, spat again and laid the pointer down.

Cousin Alice and her husband Arthur Whiting made us a weeks visit. We had not seen Alice since we left the Zumbro river to go to Iowa.

She was much as she used to be[,] like Mary very quiet and sober. Arthur was very pleasant. Alice and Ella had married brothers Arthur and Lie Whiting. They lived near Mitchell, sixty miles south of De Smet.

We were having good reports of Mary. She had been very happy in her college life ever since she had gone there. She could write very well in the usual way and also in Braille, a system of writing, through a slate or frame divided into squares; by making raised dots in different orders in the squares with a stylus. This writing the blind read with their

fingers as they did the raised print of their books.

Ma and I were busy after school and Saturdays now making some new clothes to send her and a Mrs McKee, wife of the man who ran the lumber yard, was helping us. Mrs Mc Kee did a great deal of sewing for other people and I often helped her, so that we got to be very good friends.

Mr Mc Kee had taken a homestead near Manchester, the next town west and by spring the family must go live on it or they would lose it. A family must not be away from their homestead for more than six months or they could not get their deed from the government.

Mr Mc Kee would have to stay with his lumber business, but Mrs McKee said, if I would go with her, she and Mary, her ten year old girl, would go and live on the claim.

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It was arranged that we would go early in March. As we got on the train on our way to Manchester, the brakeman who helped us on kept hold of my arm[,] guided me to a seat and sat down beside me saying, "Hullo Laura! How are you?" I looked at him and when he smiled I knew him. He was Will Barnes from Walnut Grove, whom I hadn't seen since we left.

Mrs Mc Kee, Mary and I would have to stay in the hotel at Manchester until her things could be hauled by team

from the depot to the claim. We found we would have to wait all day and the next night before we could get a teamster to take them.

He sat with us at the supper table that night and was so overcome by the presence of two strange women that he could hardly eat.

In his anxiety to show good table manners, he spread a whole large slice of bread with butter, then laid it in his plate, cut it up with his knife and fork and shoveled the pieces into his mouth with the knife. As he worried at it his plate worked nearer and nearer to the edge of the table and while I was torn with a desire to warn him, it over-balanced as, with both elbows up, he cut down on the bread and plate and bread fell into his lap.

To say that his face was crimson doesn't tell it, and knowing just how he felt I suffered with him. But Mrs McKee, Mary, and I laughed about it as long as I stayed with them.

In the morning we were wakened by the hotel-keeper and his wife quarreling, but this time it was the man whose voice I heard.

“I will not get up and build the fire,” he said. “Do it yourself! You're just like you dammed old mother, but I'll not wait on you.”

We rode out on the load of household goods and had an

anxious time crossing a large slough, for the ground, in the sloughs, was still soft from melting snow and the spring rain. But the teamster handled his horses better than he did his knife and fork and we came safely through.

When we came to the house, he set up the stove for us and two bedsteads, one in each room, then drove away and left us at home.

The house had only the two rooms, but was new and tight. There was a small stack of hay at the back for our summer fuel, for we had taught others the trick we learned in the Hard Winter.

Mr Mc Kee came Saturday and stayed until Sunday afternoon, when we all walked the two miles to Manchester with him and he took the train back to his work.

Sunday's were stupid for Mr McKee was a very strict Scotch Presbetrian. Mary and I were not allowed to play, there must be no reading other than the Bible and we must not laugh aloud.

He used to lecture me for the good of my soul, trying to persuade me to join the church and at the same time explaining to me his doctrine of foordination.

My reply, varied a little, always was, if that were true, I was already saved, or not saved, so why bother about it and he would shake his head and say "Oh! My! My! That Laura

Ingalls!”

He used often to talk to us about how wicked it was to get angry. When his own temper, which was quick, got the better of him, I would look at him and grin. Then he would swallow his wrath and say a man had a right to his “righteous indignation.” But there would be a twinkle in his eye. He was a very human man trying to live at peace with his Scotch conscience and really trying to help us all along the straight and narrow way.

All the week while Mr Mc Kee was away, we played and laughed, ate and slept and worked when and how we pleased.

Mrs Mc Kee often said to me, “You’ll marry that Wilder boy yet, because you’ll be afraid you’ll hurt his feelings if you say no.” And when I would reply that he’d likely never give me the chance to say no, she would say, “Oh yes he will! A man of his age doesn’t fool around with a girl so long for nothing.”

But I thought there was no danger and if it did happen, I would surely say no, for I was still writing to Clarence Huealett, the red headed Irish boy, I had known so long ago in Wisconsin.

The first of June I was home again on the farm and glad to be there, though I had liked the Mc Kee’s.

It was good to help with the cows again, to drink all I wanted of fresh, sweet milk and to hunt for eggs where the hens hid their nests around the hay stacks and in the thick grass.

The little kitten we had bought for 25¢ was a grandmother now as well as a mother once again and thought she must hunt for the whole family. She would bring in striped gophers for them until they were stacked in piles.

I had been home only a little while when I began sewing for the milliner and dressmaker in town, Miss Florence Bell.

Every morning I walked to her shop taking my dinner and being there by seven o'clock. I sewed all day, with only a few minutes off at noon, until six o'clock. Miss Bell paid me fifty cents a day. Of course I got tired and my back sometimes ached but I liked to sew and once on a rush order, I made twenty medium sized button holes, staying, overcasting and working them in thirty minutes and Miss Bell said it was a good job.

I worked for Miss Bell through June, July and August. Manly's other sister Laura worked there too a part of the time and that way I got acquainted with her. She and Eliza lived together on Eliza's homestead north and a little west of town. Manly and Roy each lived on his homestead north

of town.

In September Carrie and I began school again, walking in from the farm.

Seeley was teaching again and school went on much the same as ever, except that the big boys of our classes had quit school and were working. Frank Harthorn and May Bird were married and Frank was a full partner in his father's grocery store. Cap Garland was working here and there with his team. Ben Woodworth was working at the depot. Arthur Johnson had gone to the farm with his folks.

Ida Brown and I were still seatmates as were Mary Power and Genevieve Masters.

Genevieve was not popular any more. It was a common saying that, "her tongue is hung in the middle and runs at both ends" and not much attention was paid to anything she said.

Carrie had been helping with the chores and the housework through the summer. I hadn't been any help even after I came back from Manchester because from seven to six were long hours and when I walked home after six o'clock there wasn't much time left for working.

Of course the money I earned had gone into the home fund and now that Carrie and I both were going to school, we helped with the chores and the housework night and

morning.

Pa had been working very hard all summer at Carpenter work and on the farm. He and Ma had put up the hay and now he was harvesting his little fields of wheat and of oats with the old hand cradle, because he couldn't afford a harvester and the fields were too small to pay to have one. Pa was very thin and tired from the hard work of harvesting but strong and hard as nails.

I think though that he was not very happy. People had crowded in too thick for him some time before. He wanted to go to Oregon.

The man who had left western Minnesota in grasshopper times, because "even a bee couldn't make a living" there had written him to come on out, the country was fine. Although he and Pa had seen each other only the one night we camped on his place on our way to Uncle Peter's the grasshopper plague had been a bond between them and they had written each other once in awhile ever since.

He wanted Pa to come and Pa wanted to go, but Ma said she was tired of wandering around "from pillar to post" and would not go.

We moved back to town when cold weather came so that we could be nearer school and Pa's work.

Mr Seeley had been asked to resign from the school be-

cause of conduct unbecoming “a gentleman and a scholar[”] and Mr Ven Owen was finishing out his term.

It was a pleasure to study now. Mr Owen was neat rather dapper in fact quick and sharp and all for the business in hand.

One of the smaller boys in school was coming to be thought of as foolish. He had not been at first, but had learned to bring a perfectly blank, witless expression to his face when unable to answer a question in class. Teachers would stare at him aghast and let him go unpunished.

Then he tried it at recess for the amusement of the other boys. He seemed to make his mind a blank at the same time, unhinge it and leave it flapping. At last he was in such a condition that he was actually becoming foolish. He was falling behind in his studies and the other children were beginning to call him a fool.

The first time Will Bennet became a blank before Mr Owen he looked at him curiously and let it pass. The second time it happened, Mr Owen took his flat ruler from his desk, said “Will come with me!” and walked out into the entry, Will following. Then we heard shrieks from the entry and soon they came back. Will sat down in his seat very carefully.

The next day the scene was gone through again, but that

was the last time. After that Mr Owen had only to look at Will and the blank look would disappear before it had quite arrived.

Will kept control of his face and his mind recovered almost at the same time. He became an ordinarily bright boy.

Charley Power, Mary's younger brother had to try out the new teacher. Charley was a black-haired, droll, Irish boy who could keep a perfectly straight face while making others rock with mirth.

He bent a pin and put it in his own seat. When school was called, he sat lightly on the pin and leapt wildly, clear off the floor with a yelp. His yell and his leap were so comical that the whole school shrieked with laughter.

Mr Owen said quietly, "Come here Charley" and when he came

Charley was laid neatly across Mr Owens knee and the ruler applied where the pin had failed to stick.

That night, Pa said to Charley, "I hear you got a whipping for sitting on a pin."

"Oh no!" said Charley, "I got whipped for getting off it."

After that we could give our full attention to our studies for there were no more disturbances.

Some people named Gilbert lived on a farm north and

east of town. There were Pa and Ma Gilbert, Al and Fred and Stella and Leona Gilbert.

They had come early in the spring after the hard winter and by the next winter Ma Gilbert had become bedridden and had not been out of her bed since though she looked well enough, with bright eyes and color in her cheeks.

Stella and her father did the work and cared for Leona who had been born since her mother refused to try to get up.

I got acquainted with Stella at Sunday-school and had been out to the house and seen the rest of the family. Now Fred was going to school and seemed to want to be very attentive to me.

There was a dancing club in town with dances every Friday night and I had been thinking I would like to go, but when Fred told me he had bought a membership and asked me to go with him, I couldn't bear to think of being with Fred so much and refused. He was nice enough for anything I could explain, even to myself, but he was a green country boy and I didn't like his style, nor the Gilbert family.

(Later the Gilberts went to Oregon bought land in just the right place and became millionaires on the rise in value)

Speaking of style —we girls all began to wear hoops that

fall. Walking to school in the wind, the wires would creep up and up until they would all be bulging in a circle above our knees, taking our skirts with them. That would never do and we learned to walk a little way, then whirl around and around like a top to let them fall down. So on our way to school we would walk a little way and then twirl, walk and twirl, all the way.

We wore full draped skirts over our hoops, tight waists and sleeves and a thick fringe of bangs across our foreheads.

Once out at Gilberts, Fred was bringing Stella and me to town. He helped Stella into the buggy. She sat down and he helped me in and I sat down. Our bulging hoops touched each other and filled the buggy full. Fred looked at them and said helplessly “But where am I going to sit?” We crowded the hoops to the sides until he could sit down between us, but when he did nothing of his feet or legs from the knee down could be seen.

(You may put in here Manly’s story of the girl in hoops who jumped from the buggy—if you wish to do so)

The school gave an exhibition in the church building the last night before the Christmas holidays.

We all sang “The Star Spangled Banner,” while the littlest one waved the flag. There were other songs and dialogues and pieces spoken, but the main feature of the exhibition

was given by the history class which was Ida Brown and I.

We had just finished the history and two thirds of the book was assigned to me the rest to Ida.

Each of us had written and committed to memory a synopsis of her portion giving dates and names and all important events. With the pointer we indicated the illustrations of our stories in maps and pictures hung on a curtain across the end of the church.

It was a great success. Ida and I covered ourselves with glory and Mr Owen told Pa that I had a wonderful mind and memory and ought to be given every chance for an education.

He knew nothing of the trick I had learned of repeating any lesson to a corner of the bedroom just before I fell asleep and of finding it there by looking at the corner when I waked in the morning. Not knowing this he would never think that as I talked so quietly in the church, I was seeing that corner of my bedroom instead of the faces of the crowd.

For Ven Owen too, our class wrote our first compositions. The subject given the class was "Ambition."

Not having been at school the day before, I did not know what was expected of us until a few minutes before recitation. The others had prepared their papers at home the

night before.

I couldn't make a start and in despair went to the dictionary to see what it had to say about ambition, hoping to get an idea.

I wrote my whole composition from the dictionary definition of ambition, closing with the quotation from Shakespear it included, "Cromwell I charge thee fling away ambition. By that sin fell the angels."

Mr Owen looked sharply at me when I had finished reading it and said, "You have written compositions before."

"Oh no Sir!" said I, "This is my first."

"Well you should write more of them," he said. "I wouldn't have believed any one could have done so well the first time."

I had not seen Manly all summer, but since the snow came I had seen him a few times with Cap in the cutter driving the prettiest, wildest pair of brown horses I had ever seen.

And one day after he and Cap had driven all over town he came for me and I went for a sleigh ride.

The horses were so wild that we couldn't talk very well, but he told me that he had been working on his farm all summer. He had no buggy and no driving team but he had broken these colts to be ready to drive on the cutter when

snow came.

After this time we went for sleighrides quite often but not long ones and he never came for me until he had driven the colts quite awhile first. They were so high lified he didn't think it safe but I often wished I might go first instead of waiting while all the boys in town rode with him to take the edge off the team.

As usual we went out to the farm early in the spring and I left school before the term was finished to teach the Perry school in April, May and June.

The Perry schoolhouse was on a corner of Delos Perry's farm, just a little way from our south line.

It was a new little school-house with nice desks and teacher's table and a big Websters unabridged dictionary but there were never more than three scholars and a part of the time only one, little Clyde Perry, seven years old.

I did enjoy those three months. In my walk to school in the morning, I passed close by the little violet-covered meadow, so close that I could smell the perfume from the blossoms.

Then I had most of the long, quiet day for my own studies, with the big dictionary to help me. At recess and noon-time I knitted lace and there was plenty of time to watch the cloud shadows chasing each other across the grass outside

the windows.

The children were all good and bright too, so that helping them with their lessons was a pleasure. After a long, happy day there was a pleasant walk home at four o'clock and for this I was drawing \$25. a month.

On Saturdays I sometimes walked across the prairie to Mr Brown's. It was a long walk but pleasant and usually Ida and I extended it by going to the highest point of a rise of ground behind their house, from which we could see the Wessington Hills, sixty miles away, looking like a blue cloud on the horizon.

Mrs Brown was literary and wrote for several church papers, neglecting her personal appearance and her house which was always in a dirty disorder.

Ida worked hard and was always cheerful. She couldn't do all the work and keep the house while she walked two miles each way to school every day. I disliked both Mr & Mrs Brown, but I did like Ida, who was no relation to them but had been adopted from a Home.

Mary graduated from college in June and came home. She was much happier than when she went away, with pleasant college memories to dwell upon, able to sew and knit and make beadwork, to read her raised-print books and to play the organ that Pa and I together had bought for her as a

surprise when she came home. All my school money went for the organ and Pa made up the rest. We couldn't afford it but we all felt that it was little to do for Mary and we wanted her to be happy at home. Pa had als[o] built another room on the end of the house so we had a sitting room that could be turned into a bedroom at night by opening up the home-made cot.

One Sunday in May a team and buggy came dashing around the corner of the livery barn, in town and out along the road across the

Big Slough. I could see it plainly from the dooryard where I happened to be.

The buggy was new for the sun flashed and sparkled from the wheels and top. The horses were brown and beautiful as they trotted so evenly and swiftly.

I wondered who it could be as I saw the team turn in toward the house. Then I saw it was Manly.

“Would you like to go for a buggy ride?” he asked.

So we tried out the new buggy and the beautiful horses, whose mother was a purebred Morgan and their father a Thoroughbred and who though still nervous and high-strung were gentle and kind.

We drove to Lake Henry, around the lake and home in the moonlight, a drive of forty miles altogether and the

horses were still fresh, still needing to be restrained a little.

I had not seen Manly since the sleighing had gone, nearly three months, but he had come as soon as he could buy a buggy.

I hadn't known that I missed him, but it was good to see him again, gave me a homelike feeling.

After all we had been through blizzards, near-murder and danger of death together and those things do create a "tie that binds," more or less. He told me that he had been working hard on his farm all spring, but as soon as he could get the buggy he had come to see if I still liked driving. We decided that we did and after that every Sunday afternoon, his team on the top buggy would come swinging around Pearson's livery barn and with manes and tails flying in the wind come trotting across the Big Slough after me.

Sometimes we drove to Lakes Henry and Thompson again we would go to Spirit Lake and drive along the shore, watching the waves lap against the rocks. In June when the prairie roses bloomed we would stop and gather them filling the buggy with their fragrant blossoms.

Often we went to make the Boasts a call where they lived on their farm. On one such call I spoke of going home, early in the evening, Mr Boast insisted that we stay until the moon came up, thinking to play a joke on us, for

he knew the moon didn't rise till morning.

He did fool us for we had not kept track of the moon, but when we saw we had been fooled we kept on staying waiting for the moon.

Poor Mr Boast went to sleep in his chair and Mrs Boast could hardly keep her eyes open.

We thought the joke was on Mr Boast when the moon came up at two A.M. and we went home. We did drive quickly home and as quietly as possible up to the door. A light was burning in the sitting room. I slipped in quietly and blew it out hoping to get to bed without waking any one, but Ma's voice asked "What time is it Laura?"

"Oh! I didn't look at the clock," I replied. "We stayed too long at Boast's," I added and no more was said.

That spring, I bought, from Miss Bell, a sage-green, rough straw, poke bonnet, lined with shirred silk, blue the color of my eyes.

With the hat, I wore a brown silk, open work, dress a present from the friends in Chicago.

The dress was made with a skirt that fitted smoothly around the top, bustles were out, and was of the lining material only to within a foot of the bottom which reached the ground. The last twelve inches was covered with a flounce of the material. Where it was sewed to the skirt, the seam

was covered with a strip of plain brown silk an inch wide and the bottom of the flounce was bound with an inch wide of the same silk. The skirt was gored so the bottom would go over my hoops.

With the skirt was a polanise, fitting tightly at the waist, smoothly over the hips and buttoned all down the front with brown silk buttons. The polanise was bound at the bottom with a band of the plain brown silk and reached to the flounce on the underskirt. The sleeves fitting my arms easily, were smooth and long with a narrow strip of plain brown silk at the wrists. The neck was high with a smooth band of the plain silk around the throat. Over the neck band I wore a blue ribbon, matching the hat trim, about two inches wide pinned together at the throat with Ma's pearl, bar pin. The ends of the ribbon fell to my waist.

Hoops had been improved. There were now tapes across the front almost to the knees, letting the dress lie close in front. There was a wire bustle attached at the back and a tape fastened to it by one end at each side. If a bustle was wanted these tapes were buckled together at the back underneath the bustle, the size of the bustle being regulated by how tightly the tapes were drawn. If no bustle was wanted the tapes were buckled together tightly in front, holding the wires of the bustle tight and smooth against the back.

The hoops were a great nuisance, though Ma said they were not nearly so large as the ones she used to wear.

I had begun wearing corsets the first spring we were in De Smet, but I refused to wear them at any time except when I was dressed up and never would wear them as tight as the other girls did or as Ma thought I ought to, if I were to have a pretty waist.

Pa could span her waist with his hands when they were married, she said and when I said I did not want any ones hands around my waist she shook her head at the girls of to day, but let me do as I pleased.

Of course I wore my brown silk dress, hoops, corsets sage-green bonnet and all on Sunday afternoons, but I always tied the bustle down tight and smooth. My stockings were white cotton open-work and my shoes were black and high and buttoned.

Our usual Sunday afternoon drive was around forty miles. We had the top of the buggy up to shade us from the sun, or shelter us from the rain if a shower should come up, and when it rained we buttoned on the side curtains, fastened the rubber laprobe to the dashboard, drew it over our laps, buttoned it to the ends of the seat and rode all snug and dry.

When the sun set, we put the top down so that the beau-

tiful moon-drenched or star-spangled sky was directly over our heads.

The sunsets were gorgeous, flaming spectacles; the night winds were soft and sweet; little animals scurried across the road ahead of us; now and then a night bird called and once two little black and white spotted skunks played along beside the buggy as we drove slowly.

Sometimes we drove over to Gilbert's and took Stella with us. Manly said the poor girl worked so hard it would be nice to give her a good time.

I didn't object to her going with us but I did think of how she lay

in bed in the morning and let her father get the breakfast, of how she was often too sick to work and lay in bed all day, but would get up at night and go to a dance. But I said nothing about all this. If she had worked on his sympathy, what did I care.

One Sunday we were coming home rather late on a road that led by our house first, so naturally I got out and Manly took Stella on home by herself. The next Sunday, he picked Stella up first as his farm was much nearer Gilbert's than ours. We went on South from our place to Lake Henry and again came back so that I stopped first.

The next Sunday again Stella came with Manly after

me. I went pleasantly enough, but Stell's smugness gave her scheme away to me. She was trying her best to edge me out of the drives. It was even more plain when she made plans for the next Sunday's drive and kindly (?) included me in them.

Never, thought I, did I try to hold any one that wanted to go and I'll not enter into any competition for Manly. But I wanted a clean break and to do it myself not just hang on until sometime they neglected to come by for me.

I maneuvered that drive. Let's go this road I would say, indicating one that would swing us toward Gilbert's. Stella could have no reason to object. "Let's go by Boasts now we are so near," I said. That brought us across the railroad track and north of my home. I suggested one more turn and then we were nearer Gilbert's than my home so we went that way and left Stella.

The ride from there home was quiet. Manly got out of the buggy and helped me down. As we stood there, Manly said, "Well, I suppose we'll all go next Sunday?"

"No!" I answered "We'll not all go. If you want Stella, take her. You need not think you have to come by for me. Good night!" and I went in and shut the door.

I had cause for speculation as to the outcome when next Sunday afternoon came, but promptly at 2 o'clock the brown

horses came dashing around the corner by the livery barn, with Manly alone in the buggy and we did not go by for Stella nor was she mentioned on that afternoon. Neither was she included any more in our drives. Well anyway it was much more comfortable on hot summer days with only two in the seat.

We took Mary for a short drive once in a while but she did not care to go far.

Manly sold his beautiful gentle team in July and bought another. One of the team was a large, rangy brown horse with white spots on his sides and one on his neck, which in connection, with a waving white streak in his mane to form the tail, resembled a rooster, with the use of only a little imagination. This horse had never been known to walk a step, though he had been around town for a year. He would trot or run or leap around, or stand up on his hind legs and, with his front feet pawing the [air], hop like a kangaroo, but walk he would not.

Because of his actions and his spots, because he was a whole circus in himself, Manly named him Barnum.

Barnum's mate, Skip, was a bay, a little smaller not quite so raging, but a good second to anything Barnum might do and determined to run away.

Manly was staying in town now boarding at Garland's

and Cap always helped him hitch up the team and held them by the head until Manly got in the buggy and sat down, being very careful not to move the top which was always down.

When Cap let go of them the horses would leap and go on the run, running all the way to our house. When I saw them coming, I would put on my hat and be out the door when he drove up.

He never stopped the horses, for then would have been a circus indeed. It really was not safe so soon after starting. He didn't stop them, but as he passed the door he would turn the buggy to make a greater space between the wheels and check the horses just a little. Just the little check and Barnum would rear up and, reaching as high as he could with his front feet, paw the air. Skip would plunge and rear, while I made a leap for the buggy.

If I calculated the time exactly right and were quick enough, I would touch the step with one foot as I jumped and land in the buggy.

If I failed, Manly would drive around the house and I would try again. Once he drove around three times before I succeeded, but practice made perfect and I soon got so that I would leap in easily and away we would go as fast as the horses could run for several miles. Then they would

settle down to a fast trot.

Whenever we came to a bit of water in the road, a little creek, or a narrow wash, they jumped it taking the buggy with them clear over it.

We extended our drives going fifty and even sixty miles. The buggy top was left down until about half the way was passed, then we would, both together, raise the top and quickly so that Manly could get both hands back on the reins, for when the top came up both horses were frantic and would try their best to run away. There wasn't a man in town would ride behind the team. Ma said Manly was trying to kill me, but it was the greatest fun I'd ever had.

Fourth of July came with a grand celebration in De Smet. I had made a new dress for the occasion. It was of lawn, a very pale tint of pink, with a little spray of blue and rose flowers scattered over it.

The waist was tight, buttoned down the front with small pearl buttons. On each side [of] the closing and on each side down the back were two tucks a half inch wide. The neck was high with a band, the sleeves were long and close fitting.

The skirt was made of straight breadths, very full, so full that the gathers had to be crowded and packed into the waist band. There were half inch tucks running around the

skirt about three inches apart, the full length of the skirt and a three inch hem at the bottom. It just touched the ground and the hoops held it out beautifully.

I had a new hat to go with this dress. It was of cream colored straw, with a ribbon a little darker in shade around the crown and three ostrich tips, shading from the light cream of the straw to a little darker than the ribbon, standing upright at one side. The hat sat on top of my head and had a narrow brim with a little roll to it.

My hair was worn, these days, combed smoothly back and braid [ed] in a thick braid that was wound around and around at the back of my head covering the whole back and pinned snugly in place.

My bangs had grown out.

Manly and I did not go to hear the speeches but in the afternoon we drove in to see the races. I wore my new outfit but alas no one got to see it but Manly. Barnum and Skip were so wild that we dared not drive them into the crowd. We had to keep them moving and so we drove them around and around the crowd, out on the prairie and back, with their manes and tails flying in the wind, their feet beating a tattoo on the hard ground or their front feet flailing the air as they danced on their hind ones, when the crowd cheered.

A particularly violent jump of the horses combined with

the wind that blew strongly, tore the bunch of ostrich tips from my hat and I just barely caught them as they were sailing away.

“Put them in my pocket!” Manly said between his teeth, as he struggled with the plunging team and I tucked them into the coat pocket nearest me.

When we went home, he left me at the door with the understanding that we would go to the fireworks in the evening.

I was angry as I showed my damaged hat to Ma. [‘]If you want anything done,’ I said ‘do it yourself. I never sewed a feather on, for Miss Bell, that would come loose.’

We saw the fireworks from the buggy well on the outside of the crowd, with plenty of room around us.

When a rocket went up, the horses would leap and as Manly turned them to circle away from the crowd ahead, we would see it burst, which made the horses wild. Manly would swing them in a wide circle and bring them facing the fireworks in time to see the next rocket go up. Then we would swing on another circle.

But we saw them all and then drove home in the starlight, with the horses seeming almost to fly, so swiftly and so smoothly they trotted.

Cousin Ella and her husband Lee Whiting drove up one

Saturday and stayed three days.

Sunday afternoon when Manly drove up the horses were worse than usual and Ma didn't want me to go. But Lee told her I was safe enough. "That fellow knows how to handel horses," he said.

But that night he said to me, "Don't trust the driver too far, Laura, It isn't always safe."

I laughed and answered, 'if the driver fails me, I can do the driving myself.'

Soon after this Manly sold Skip and the buggy and drove Barnum single on a new buggy.

We did not make such long drives with one horse and we had driven all the roads so many times that we were a little tired of them, so we were glad when a singing school was started. It was held in the church every Friday night.

We drove Barnum. I sat in the buggy and held the reins while Manly tied him tightly to a strong hitching post. Then we went inside and sang the scales and the rounds and "We're All Here, Don't Leave The Farm Boys, The Sleighing Glee, Dearest May, Don't Go Out Tonight My Darling, Blame Yourself If You're Sold, We All Have A Very Bad Cold[,] Wine I[s] A Mocker," and others.

(If you want the spirit of these times, you should read over these old songs.)

We always had to leave at recess, for we must get Barnum away without a crowd around. We would slip quietly out, and I would get into the buggy, while Manly stood at Barnum's head. I would unwind the lines from around the whip, without letting Barnum feel my touch on the reins, for as soon as he felt that he would jump.

Then while I sat with the reins loose but tightly in my hands, tensed and ready, Manly would untie Barnum and with the tie strap in his hand, wait while I turned Barnum on his Jump, so the buggy would not strike the post, and make a flying leap for it as it went by. Sometimes he missed and when I brought Barnum around to pass him again, would make another try. Usually it took several times trying before he could get in the buggy and once Singing school was over and the people coming out of the church before we got away.

One Sunday afternoon, Manly came for me to go driving, with Barnum single on a new buggy. I took the reins to drive before we got to town, for Barnum and I had become used to each other and a certain sympathy passed between us over the lines.

He had been acting in his usual manner, but I had driven him only a little way, when, of himself, he dropped into a walk.

I hardly dared breathe and I kept trying to feel quiet and cool so it would get to him over the lines. He was nervous and I felt his impulse now and then to jump and make a dash, but still he walked with no pulling on the reins, only a firm hold.

And that way, I drove him the whole length of main street, while everyone in sight stopped and stared at Barnum and me. Manly had started to exclaim at the first but stopped and sat without saying a word, while I talked quietly about how Barnum and how nice it was to have him walking.

Going home in the twilight Barnum walked for Manly and he had time to ask me how I liked the new buggy.

I said I liked it but the back of the seat was not quite so high as in the old buggy. Then he laid his arm along the top of the back of the seat behind my shoulders and asked if that were better.

I shrugged my shoulders and said I didn't think it was any improvement 'and you'd better,' said I 'tend to your driving,' for Barnum jumped. So he took his arm away suddenly.

Shortly after that Manly sold Barnum and got a quiet team that he could hitch and stay to supper and for the evening at times. And when we went anywhere we could stay until other people left if we wanted to.

We went one night, to an Aid society, ice cream social

at the church, but it was stupid and we left early going the long way, around the Big Slough, home.

There was wind enough so the misquotoes didn't bother and we drove quietly along under the stars. Manly was very quiet, the horses feet beat rythmacy on the hard prairie road while I sang softly.

“In the starlight, in the starlight,
At the daylight's dewy close,
When the nightengale is singing
His last love song to the rose.
In the calm, clear night of summer,
When the breezes gently play,
In the starlight, in the starlight
Let us softly steal away.
Where the silver waters murmur,
By the margin of the sea,
In the starlight, in the starlight
Let us wander gay and free.
In The starlight, in the starlight,
We will wander, we will wander.
In the starlight, in the starlight,
We will wander gay and free.[”]

When I stopped signing, the horses were stepping slow and softly and there was silence under the starlight.

Manly was so still I wondered if he had dropped asleep.

‘A penny for your thoughts,’ said I.

“I was wondering if you wanted an engagement ring,” he answered.

I gave a startled gasp. ‘That would depend,’ I said, [‘]on who offered it to me?[']

“Would you take it from me?” he asked and I said ‘Yes!’

Then we drove on in some more silence until I got down at the door.

I started to go in, then stopped and asked, ‘Arn’t you going to kiss me good night.’

“I was afraid you wouldn’t like it,” he said.

Then he kissed me good night and I went in the house, not quite sure if I were engaged to Manly or to the starlight and the prairie.

But I was sure, when Manly brought me a beautiful pearl and garnet engagement ring, the next time he came.

When I showed it to Ma she said “Pa and I havent been blind. We’ve been expecting it” and she kissed me. Pa said nothing when he saw the ring, he just smiled at me.

The bad storms seemed to have changed their time of coming from winter to summer this year. Early in the spring

as Pa was walking across the prairie, he saw what looked like a ball of fire, as large as a wagon wheel, inside a cloud whirling along the ground behind him. As he watched it swung to one side and moved off out of sight across the bare prairie. Pa said it was electricity. All summer there had been terrible storms of thunder and lightening. We often saw funnel shaped clouds, dip toward the ground and rise, dip and rise as the body of the cloud rolled by.

There were terrible wind storms and often Pa would wake us in the night and send us down in the cellar, while he prowled around outside, watching the clouds, ready to drop down into the cellar himself, if the cyclone really came.

One Sunday afternoon there was such a bad storm that Manly did not drive out, but sat with Cap Garland in their room upstairs and watched the Catholic church lifted from its foundations and set down at one side with a smash, while several dwelling houses were twisted around.

We were all watching the storm when Pa shouted to run down cellar. We thought all De Smet was blowing away and we ran, but the bad part of the storm did not hit our place, though the cottonwood trees that had grown tall and beautiful around the house were blown nearly flat to the ground.

One night after an unusually hot day a storm was com-

ing up and we did not go to bed when bedtime came, but watched the storm to see if it was going to be a cyclone.

The black clouds rolled and tumbled showing plainly as the lightening played over and through them, while the thunder pealed and crashed.

The cloud seemed coming directly over us and the wind blew harder and harder while the cottonwood trees around the house thrashed wildly, bending almost to the ground.

Pa said to go to the cellar and they all went but me. I didn't like to go sit in the cellar and I wanted to see the storm, too. I thought I could get down as quick as Pa could. And I proved it!

When a dull roaring filled all the air, I dashed for the cellar and Pa was just behind me.

And in the cellar we all covered on the floor in a corner, while we heard that awful roaring pass over our heads and on.

In a few minutes the rain fell in torrents and Pa went up stairs saying the danger was over when the rain came. In a few minutes we all followed him and went to bed.

The cyclone struck, to the east of us we learned later, but did not do much damage and no one was hurt.

One afternoon we saw a bad storm rising in the northwest. It came up for awhile, then turned and swung around

passing to the west of us going south. The large bank of clouds was first black, then turned a queer greenish, purple color and from it a funnel shaped cloud dropped down until its point touched the ground. With its point on the ground and the large end of the funnel in the cloud above it began whirling and traveled southward with the purple green cloud above it.

Then a second funnel point dropped, touched the ground and followed the first, then another and there were three under the cloud and traveling swiftly with it.

The wind was almost still where we were and we stood in the dooryard and watched the cloud and its funnels pass on the west of us.

This storm did a great deal of damage and killed some people. Two boys were caught as they were riding a span of mules home, from where they had just finished stacking the grain on their farm.

One boy and both mules were killed with every bone in their bodies broken, the clothes stripped off the boy and the harness of [f] the mules, no sign of clothes or harness was ever found.

The boy who came through alive and unhurt, said they started home with the mules hitched together, he riding one mule, his brother the other. When the storm struck,

the wind lifted them and carried them around in a large circle and up higher and higher, with straw blowing thickly all around them.

They went around so swiftly that he grew dizzy. He called to his brother to hang [on] to the mule and just then, they were snatched apart and he was plucked off his mule.

He didn't see his brother or the mules again and after awhile he felt that he was floating down around a circle instead of rising. As he went around close to the ground he tried to spring up and then struck the ground running ran a few steps and fell.

After a few minutes he got up unhurt, but with no shred of clothing on him, not even his shoes. The great stacks of wheat, the whole years crop had disappeared.

A door, belonging to a house that had been destroyed at one oclock floated down into the street of a nearby town at 4 oclock and never told where it had been for three hours.

School began in September, but it was moved into the new, large schoolhouse and changed into a high school.

Ven Owen was still teacher, only now he was the principal and Gussie Masters, Genieve's older, oh much older sister, taught the downstairs room of little children.

Ida Brown and I were still seatmates and she had an engagement ring too. She was going to marry a Mr McConnell

who had worked all summer for Mr Brown, but who had a homestead of his own several miles away.

Carrie and I walked in to school through September and October.

The first of November, Manly and his brother Roy started south with a covered hack and a stock of notions to sell on the road. They expected to travel through Nebraska into and through Iowa and come to Spring Valley where their father lived to spend the winter.

It was lonesome after Manly left. There were no more drives nor evenings out somewhere, but I was studying hard at school hoping to graduate from high school in the spring.

A roller skating rink had been opened in town and one afternoon I went to try the skates, instead of staying at school.

As luck would have it a great many others in school did the same that same afternoon, so the next morning all who had been absent were asked to stand and tell where and why.

It became funny as one after the other said, "At the rink, to skate," and Mr Owen's remarks were not pleasant. I was last being on the back seat and when I said 'At the rink,' a wave of amusement went over the school, but I could see

that Mr Owen was surprised, but he only said “You usually set a good example Laura.”

I was distressed, for I was the best scholar in school and had taught the downstairs room for two days when Gussie Masters could not be there, but certainly I had not set a good example that time.

Pa rented the house in town and we stayed on the farm that winter. When it grew cold and the snow came Pa took us to school and came after us at night with the horses and sleigh. Sometimes it was bitterly cold and Pa froze the tip of his nose or his ears. He made a joke of it saying that every time they froze they grew larger.

I took one drive for pleasure but failed to find it.

Roy had left his pet horse, Lady, for Pa to take care of while he was gone and told me I might drive her whenever I wanted to.

One day I started for Boast's, when I was a little over half way there, Lady went lame[,] so lame that I hated to drive her. It was nearer Boasts than home and I went on hoping Mr Boast could find the trouble.

He could find nothing wrong and when after a couple of hours I started home Lady went perfectly. There was no sign of lameness whatever all the way hom[e] and she wanted to go much faster than I did.

Manly told me afterward that it was a trick of hers to pretend she was lame when she didn't want to go.

Sunday night before Christmas was cold and stormy and I was feeling blue, because I had just had a letter from Manly reproaching me for not writing. I had written but the letter had not reached him.

We were sitting around the lamp reading when someone rapped at the door. I went and opened it and there stood Manly, huge in his big overcoat covered with snow, for it was storming. "I couldn't stay away all winter," he said and kissed me before all the folks.

He had no bells on his horses and had driven up and hitched them in the shelter of the stable, without our hearing him.

He had brought me a very pretty gold bar-pin for Christmas. The rest of the winter went swiftly. We had a few sleigh rides, over to see Stella sometimes and down to Boasts, but Sunday evenings we spent by the fire in the sitting room.

The folks left us alone about nine o'clock, but we knew that Manly was expected to leave when the clock struck eleven. He always did except one stormy night when he stopped the clock just before it struck and started it again when his watch said twelve, so that it struck eleven just as

he left. I hastily pushed the hands ahead to nearly twelve blew out the lamp and went to bed in the dark.

Manly and Roy were batching together in the harness room of their new barn, near the schoolhouse and after Pa left Carrie and me at school he would drive his horses into the shed there, blanket them and go in and warm himself and sometimes eat buckwheat cakes with Manly and Roy at their breakfast. He did not freeze himself any more because he got thoroughly warm before he drove home.

We only had a few bad storms during the winter and when a blizzard was blowing in the morning we stayed at home.

One blizzard came just before time for school to close, but Pa and the horses together followed the road and we got home safely.

At a country school eight miles north of De Smet, the teacher brought his children to school in a sleigh, stayed all day and drove home at night. The other children lived very near the school-house. In this storm the nearby children got safely home, but the teacher, with his load, was lost on the prairie.

When he knew that he couldn't find his way, he unhitched, unharnessed the horses and turned them loose. Then he spread part of the robes on the ground had the

children sit on them, wrapped the rest of the robes around them and turned the sleigh bottom up over them. Then he crawled underneath the sleigh himself and there they huddled together while the snow blew and drifted over the sled keeping out the wind. Their bodies warmed the air in their little cave and they all survived the storm. No one was frozen except the teacher whose hands and feet were frozen, but not badly.

The horses found shelter beside a haystack several miles away and came through safely too.

(“No Sir! The storms are not what they used to be! Now in the Hard Winter”-)

As spring drew near I talked to Mr Owen about graduating. He said he would have no graduation exercises that spring. The class was not ready as I was the only one who could pass the examinations.

I was very much disappointed but didn't fuss. Instead I took [the] teachers examination and having secured my second grade certificate, with honorable mention, I applied for the Wilkins' school north west of school and being elected signed the contract to teach a three months school beginning the first of April, for thirty dollars a month. This made it necessary that I leave school before the term was finished.

On my last day of school, on my way out carrying my books, I stopped to say good by to Ven Owen. He wished me good luck with my school and then I told him this was good by to him as a teacher for I would be married in the fall and was not coming back to school any more.

When he understood, the tears came in his eyes and he begged me to give up teaching that spring and finish the term. He said he had not been fair to me to hold me back for the rest of the class as he had done all winter and if I would stay he would graduate me from high school by myself, that we still had time and I could do it.

I told him it was too late that there was not time for the Wilkins' school to find another teacher, I had signed the contract and school began next Monday.

Florence Wilkins was one of my classmates. She had hoped to teach the school herself but failed to get a certificate.

She lived with her father, mother, little sister, married brother and his wife and baby within a few rods of the school house where I was to teach. I liked Florence very well but had never seen any of her people and I did dread to go to live again in a houseful of strangers. It seemed as though I just could not.

But Sunday afternoon, Manly came and took me over to Mr Wilkins' and I opened school bright and early on

Monday morning.

For scholars there were Jimmie and Mamie and Danny Glover, Irish children as full of mischief as they could hold but bright and quick. There were Mary and Charley and Tommy Webb good and bright enough, but slow minded. Then there was Georgie Dwight, who was the littlest, with his brand new primer.

At first Georgie did not seem to be any obstacle to the success of the school. I started hopefully to teach him his letters and found that he could not learn them. He seemed to try, but from his first lesson in the morning to the next before noon he couldn't remember and tell A. from B.

I tried with all patience. Whenever the other children were not reciting I would have him come to me and I did everything I knew to fix in his mind the first few letters of the alphabet. He wrote them on his slate; He made them on the blackboard with a beautiful long piece of chalk, he read them to me over and over, but he did not learn one of them so he knew it the next time he saw it. This went on for two weeks.

Then I remembered Ven Owen and the boy everyone called a fool and I brought a switch to school one morning.

When he came to me to struggle with the alphabet again, I said, meanwhile toying with the switch in my hand, 'Now

Georgie, we will try again the first four letters. If you don't learn them so you can tell them to me the next time, I will whip you.'

Just after recess, I called him up again. There was a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach. I didn't want to whip the poor little rat.

But Glory Be! He knew them! He could write them as I asked, frontwards, backwards or mixed. He could find them anywhere in his primer. I praised him and told him he might go out doors and play in the shade until noon.

In the afternoon we went over them again and in the morning he remembered them and we learned four more.

Carefully reviewing so not to lose any of them and always with the switch in sight, we learned the alphabet. It took the term of three months for him to learn the alphabet and begin the words, but the thing of greatest value that he learned was to begin to use his mind.

The children all walked together about a quarter of a mile on their way home before they separated. At first all was pleasant and they had merry times coming and going. Then they divided along family lines and began to quarrel and fight. It was the Irish against the Dutch and it kept growing worse. Each side came to me with complaints of the other.

Then as I dismissed school at night I went with them to the door. 'You must not walk together any more['] I said. [']You Jimmie and Mamie don't go in a straight line, but start from here directly toward your house. Mary and Charley and Tommy, you start directly toward your house from the doorstep.' As the Glovers lived to the southeast and the Webbs to the northeast, every step they took separated them farther and by the time they were beyond my control they were too far apart to fight. They became so eager to be together when it was forbidden, that they were good friends at the schoolhouse where before they had often quarreled. The going home rule lasted the rest of the term.

One night a prairie fire came through where the grass had not been burned the fall before and Florence and I got up and helped fight it away from the buildings and the school house.

I was sick and delirious so that Mr Wilkins went down and dismissed the school.

Manly took me home every Friday night and brought me back Sunday night, quite like old times only now it was the beautiful spring time with no cold wind blowing and I had no intention of quitting him when school was out.

I was soon home again with \$60. that after all had been

easily earned. The other \$30. could not be paid me until some time in the fall.

(This was the \$30. that bought the colt, that was sold to buy the sheep that with their increase were sold for the money that bought Rocky Ridge)

One Sunday morning Pa took Mary and me to church. I wore my lucked lawn dress. It was a warm day and the church door stood open.

As the preacher was earnestly preaching a stray kitten came walking up the aisle and stood arching its back and rubbing its side against a corner of the pulpit. Just then a stray dog came in the door

and walked up the aisle toward pulpit and kitten. The kittens tail grew large, the hair on its back stood up and spitting it disappeared, while the little dog went hunting it.

While the dog was still hunting, I felt a gentle swaying of my hoop skirt and looking down saw the tip of the kittens tail disappearing under the hem of my dress. It had taken refuge under my skirts and was climbing up my hoops on the inside, like a monkey on the bars of his cage. I had a sudden vision of the dog discovering the kitten and what the consequences might be so that I shook with silent laughter.

Mary, who had missed it all, punched me with her elbow and whispered savagely, "Behave yourself!" which didn't

help me any.

When it was time to go, the kitten had disappeared once more and outside I found Manly waiting to drive me home to dinner.

He had been very busy all summer putting in his crops and building a house on the tree claim. He had already proved up on his homestead so we did not have to live there and he thought it would be a pleasant place to live among the trees of the ten acres he had planted and must cultivate to get title to the 160 acres he had filed on as a tree claim. The two claims made him 320 acres of land.

The house was nearly done and this Sunday he told me that his sister Eliza and his mother were planning a big wedding for us in the church. That he had not been able to persuade them out of the idea and unless we were married before fall, they would be out and surely have their way.

Manly didn't want that kind of a wedding. He said he could not afford what it would cost him.

I knew Pa couldn't afford to give me that kind of a wedding either, so I agreed that as soon as the house could be finished, we would drive quietly to Mr Brown's and be married.

Ma and I made my wedding dress of black cashmere, a tight fitting basque, pointed at the bottom front and back,

lined and boned with a high collar and plain sleeves rather full at the top, also lined. There was a shirring around the front of each armhole making a fullness over the breast that was taken up by the darts below and it was buttoned straight down the front with imitation jet buttons. The skirt was long just escaping the floor as I stood straight. It was plain at the top, but gored so it was full at the bottom. It was lined through with cambric dress lining and interlined with crinolin from the bottom to as high as my knees.

(You know the dress. It was still my best dress when we came to Missouri)

I had besides a black and fawn color striped silk dress a present from the Chicago friends. It was made very plainly, with a gored skirt and polanaise without any trimming whatever. My brown open work silk dress and my tucked lawn were still good.

On the morning of August 25th. 1885 at half past ten o'clock, Manly drove up to the house and drove away with me in the buggy, for the last time in the old way.

We were at Mr Brown's at eleven and were married at once with Ida Brown and Elmer McConnell as witnesses.

Mr Brown had promised me not to use the word "obey" in the ceremony and he kept his word.

At half past eleven we left Mr Brown's and drove home

to dinner, which Ma had ready and waiting for us.

Then with good wishes from the folks and a few tears we drove over the road we had traveled so many times, across the Big Slough, around the corner by Pearson's livery bam, through De Smet and then out two miles north to the new house on the tree claim, where Manly had taken my trunk the day before.

There were three rooms in the house and a leanto over the back door.

The front door opened into the main room, which was dining and sitting room. At the right hand, as one went in the front door, was the door into the bedroom and a little farther along the door into a most wonderfully shelved pantry, with many drawers of many sizes and a broad shelf across the far end under the window.

Manly's batchelor, kitchen stove was in the leanto over the back door, which was opposite the front door. The dishes Manly had used in his housekeeping were on the pantry shelves, his table in the dining room, and his bed in the bedroom. A neighbour woman had been in and put all in order.

There were provisions of all kinds in the pantry with bread a pie and a cake that Manly had bought from the neighbor.

When the new home had been looked over and admired inside and out, I got supper and washed up the dishes.

Later I was to learn that we owed \$500. on the house, which we were never able to pay until we sold the farm.

But that was nobodys fault and is another story anyway.

Afterward we sat on the doorstep in the moonlight and looked out across the prairie.

“The moon is at its full and riding high
floods the calm fields with light.

The winds that hover in the summer sky
are all asleep to-night.”

The horses were comfortably resting in their stalls in the stable back of the house. We could hear them move now and again.

The cow Pa had given me was lying in the barn-yard chewing her cud and Old Shep, Manly’s dog lay at our feet.

I was a little awed by my new estate, but I felt very much at home and very happy and among the other causes for happiness was the thought that I would not again have to go and live with strangers in their houses. I had a house and a home of my own.

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