

Garland Hamlin

# A Son of the Middle Border



Hamlin Garland

**A Son of the Middle Border**

«Public Domain»

**Garland H.**

A Son of the Middle Border / H. Garland — «Public Domain»,

## Содержание

CHAPTER I	6
CHAPTER II	11
CHAPTER III	17
CHAPTER IV	24
CHAPTER V	29
CHAPTER VI	33
CHAPTER VII	38
CHAPTER VIII	43
CHAPTER IX	46
CHAPTER X	52
CHAPTER XI	55
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	59

# Garland Hamlin

## A Son of the Middle Border

*January twenty-second.*

Dear Mrs. LeCron:

In the spring of 1898, after finishing my LIFE OF ULYSSES S. GRANT, I began to plan to go into the Klondike over the Telegraph Trail. One day in showing the maps of my route to William Dean Howells, I said, "I shall go in here and come out there," a trail of nearly twelve hundred miles through an almost unknown country. As I uttered this I suddenly realized that I was starting on a path holding many perils and that I might not come back.

With this in mind, I began to dictate the story of my career up to that time. It was put in the third person but it was my story and the story of my people, the Garlands and the McClintocks. This manuscript, crude and hasty as it was, became the basis of A SON OF THE MIDDLE BORDER. It was the beginning of a four-volume autobiography which it has taken me fifteen years to write. As a typical mid-west settler I felt that the history of my family would be, in a sense, the chronicle of the era of settlement lying between 1840 and 1914. I designedly kept it intimate and personal, the joys and sorrows of a group of migrating families. Of the four books, Volume One, THE TRAIL MAKERS, is based upon my memory of the talk around a pioneer fireside. The other three volumes are as true as my own memory can make them.

*Hamlin Garland*

## CHAPTER I

### Home from the War

All of this universe known to me in the year 1864 was bounded by the wooded hills of a little Wisconsin coulee, and its center was the cottage in which my mother was living alone – my father was in the war. As I project myself back into that mystical age, half lights cover most of the valley. The road before our doorstone begins and ends in vague obscurity – and Granma Green's house at the fork of the trail stands on the very edge of the world in a sinister region peopled with bears and other menacing creatures. Beyond this point all is darkness and terror.

It is Sunday afternoon and my mother and her three children, Frank, Harriet and I (all in our best dresses) are visiting the Widow Green, our nearest neighbor, a plump, jolly woman whom we greatly love. The house swarms with stalwart men and buxom women and we are all sitting around the table heaped with the remains of a harvest feast. The women are "telling fortunes" by means of tea-grounds. Mrs. Green is the seeress. After shaking the cup with the grounds at the bottom, she turns it bottom side up in a saucer. Then whirling it three times to the right and three times to the left, she lifts it and silently studies the position of the leaves which cling to the sides of the cup, what time we all wait in breathless suspense for her first word.

"A soldier is coming to you!" she says to my mother. "See," and she points into the cup. We all crowd near, and I perceive a leaf with a stem sticking up from its body like a bayonet over a man's shoulder. "He is almost home," the widow goes on. Then with sudden dramatic turn she waves her hand toward the road, "Heavens and earth!" she cries. "There's Richard now!"

We all turn and look toward the road, and there, indeed, is a soldier with a musket on his back, wearily plodding his way up the low hill just north of the gate. He is too far away for mother to call, and besides I think she must have been a little uncertain, for he did not so much as turn his head toward the house. Trembling with excitement she hurries little Frank into his wagon and telling Hattie to bring me, sets off up the road as fast as she can draw the baby's cart. It all seems a dream to me and I move dumbly, almost stupidly like one in a mist...

We did not overtake the soldier, that is evident, for my next vision is that of a blue-coated figure leaning upon the fence, studying with intent gaze our empty cottage. I cannot, even now, precisely divine why he stood thus, sadly contemplating his silent home, – but so it was. His knapsack lay at his feet, his musket was propped against a post on whose top a cat was dreaming, unmindful of the warrior and his folded hands.

He did not hear us until we were close upon him, and even after he turned, my mother hesitated, so thin, so hollow-eyed, so changed was he. "Richard, is that you?" she quaveringly asked.

His worn face lighted up. His arms rose. "Yes, Belle! Here I am," he answered.

Nevertheless though he took my mother in his arms, I could not relate him to the father I had heard so much about. To me he was only a strange man with big eyes and care-worn face. I did not recognize in him anything I had ever known, but my sister, who was two years older than I, went to his bosom of her own motion. She knew him, whilst I submitted to his caresses rather for the reason that my mother urged me forward than because of any affection I felt for him. Frank, however, would not even permit a kiss. The gaunt and grizzled stranger terrified him.

"Come here, my little man," my father said. – "*My little man!*" Across the space of half-a-century I can still hear the sad reproach in his voice. "Won't you come and see your poor old father when he comes home from the war?"

"My little man!" How significant that phrase seems to me now! The war had in very truth come between this patriot and his sons. I had forgotten him – the baby had never known him.

Frank crept beneath the rail fence and stood there, well out of reach, like a cautious kitten warily surveying an alien dog. At last the soldier stooped and drawing from his knapsack a big red apple, held it toward the staring babe, confidently calling, "Now, I guess he'll come to his poor old pap home from the war."

The mother apologized. "He doesn't know you, Dick. How could he? He was only nine months old when you went away. He'll go to you by and by."

The babe crept slowly toward the shining lure. My father caught him despite his kicking, and hugged him close. "Now I've got you," he exulted.

Then we all went into the little front room and the soldier laid off his heavy army shoes. My mother brought a pillow to put under his head, and so at last he stretched out on the floor the better to rest his tired, aching bones, and there I joined him.

"Oh, Belle!" he said, in tones of utter content. "This is what I've dreamed about a million times."

Frank and I grew each moment more friendly and soon began to tumble over him while mother hastened to cook something for him to eat. He asked for "hot biscuits and honey and plenty of coffee."

That was a mystic hour – and yet how little I can recover of it! The afternoon glides into evening while the soldier talks, and at last we all go out to the barn to watch mother milk the cow. I hear him ask about the crops, the neighbors. – The sunlight passes. Mother leads the way back to the house. My father follows carrying little Frank in his arms.

He is a "strange man" no longer. Each moment his voice sinks deeper into my remembrance. He is my father – that I feel ringing through the dim halls of my consciousness. Harriet clings to his hand in perfect knowledge and confidence. We eat our bread and milk, the trundle-bed is pulled out, we children clamber in, and I go to sleep to the music of his resonant voice recounting the story of the battles he had seen, and the marches he had made.

The emergence of an individual consciousness from the void is, after all, the most amazing fact of human life and I should like to spend much of this first chapter in groping about in the luminous shadow of my infant world because, deeply considered, childish impressions are the fundamentals upon which an author's fictional out-put is based; but to linger might weary my reader at the outset, although I count myself most fortunate in the fact that my boyhood was spent in the midst of a charming landscape and during a certain heroic era of western settlement.

The men and women of that far time loom large in my thinking for they possessed not only the spirit of adventurers but the courage of warriors. Aside from the natural distortion of a boy's imagination I am quite sure that the pioneers of 1860 still retained something broad and fine in their action, something a boy might honorably imitate.

The earliest dim scene in my memory is that of a soft warm evening. I am cradled in the lap of my sister Harriet who is sitting on the door-step beneath a low roof. It is mid-summer and at our feet lies a mat of dark-green grass from which a frog is croaking. The stars are out, and above the high hills to the east a mysterious glow is glorifying the sky. The cry of the small animal at last conveys to my sister's mind a notion of distress, and rising she peers closely along the path. Starting back with a cry of alarm, she calls and my mother hurries out. She, too, examines the ground, and at last points out to me a long striped snake with a poor, shrieking little tree-toad in its mouth. The horror of this scene fixes it in my mind. My mother beats the serpent with a stick. The mangled victim hastens away, and the curtain falls.

I must have been about four years old at this time, although there is nothing to determine the precise date. Our house, a small frame cabin, stood on the eastern slope of a long ridge and faced across a valley which seemed very wide to me then, and in the middle of it lay a marsh filled with monsters, from which the Water People sang night by night. Beyond was a wooded mountain.

This doorstone must have been a favorite evening seat for my sister, for I remember many other delicious gloamings. Bats whirl and squeak in the odorous dusk. Night hawks whiz and boom, and over the dark forest wall a prodigious moon miraculously rolls. Fire-flies dart through the grass, and in a lone tree just outside the fence, a whippoorwill sounds his plaintive note. Sweet, very sweet, and wonderful are all these!

The marsh across the lane was a sinister menacing place even by day for there (so my sister Harriet warned me) serpents swarmed, eager to bite runaway boys. "And if you step in the mud between the tufts of grass," she said, "you will surely sink out of sight." – At night this teeming bog became a place of dank and horrid mystery. Bears and wolves and wildcats were reported as ruling the dark woods just beyond – only the door yard and the road seemed safe for little men – and even there I wished my mother to be within immediate call.

My father who had bought his farm "on time," just before the war, could not enlist among the first volunteers, though he was deeply moved to do so, till his land was paid for – but at last in 1863 on the very day that he made the last payment on the mortgage, he put his name down on the roll and went back to his wife, a soldier.

I have heard my mother say that this was one of the darkest moments of her life and if you think about it you will understand the reason why. My sister was only five years old, I was three and Frank was a babe in the cradle. Broken hearted at the thought of the long separation, and scared by visions of battle my mother begged the soldier not to go; but he was of the stern stuff which makes patriots – and besides his name was already on the roll, therefore he went away to join Grant's army at Vicksburg. "What sacrifice! What folly!" said his pacifist neighbors – "to leave your wife and children for an idea, a mere sentiment; to put your life in peril for a striped silken rag." But he went. For thirteen dollars a month he marched and fought while his plow rusted in the shed and his cattle called to him from their stalls.

My conscious memory holds nothing of my mother's agony of waiting, nothing of the dark days when the baby was ill and the doctor far away – but into my subconscious ear her voice sank, and the words *Grant, Lincoln, Sherman, "furlough," "mustered out,"* ring like bells, deep-toned and vibrant. I shared dimly in every emotional utterance of the neighbors who came to call and a large part of what I am is due to the impressions of these deeply passionate and poetic years.

Dim pictures come to me. I see my mother at the spinning wheel, I help her fill the candle molds. I hold in my hands the queer carding combs with their crinkly teeth, but my first definite connected recollection is the scene of my father's return at the close of the war.

I was not quite five years old, and the events of that day are so commingled with later impressions, – experiences which came long after – that I cannot be quite sure which are true and which imagined, but the picture as a whole is very vivid and very complete.

Thus it happened that my first impressions of life were martial, and my training military, for my father brought back from his two years' campaigning under Sherman and Thomas the temper and the habit of a soldier.

He became naturally the dominant figure in my horizon, and his scheme of discipline impressed itself almost at once upon his children.

I suspect that we had fallen into rather free and easy habits under mother's government, for she was too jolly, too tender-hearted, to engender fear in us even when she threatened us with a switch or a shingle. We soon learned, however, that the soldier's promise of punishment was swift and precise in its fulfillment. We seldom presumed a second time on his forgetfulness or tolerance. We knew he loved us, for he often took us to his knees of an evening and told us stories of marches and battles, or chanted war-songs for us, but the moments of his tenderness were few and his fondling did not prevent him from almost instant use of the rod if he thought either of us needed it.

His own boyhood had been both hard and short. Born of farmer folk in Oxford County, Maine, his early life had been spent on the soil in and about Lock's Mills with small chance of



schooling. Later, as a teamster, and finally as shipping clerk for Amos Lawrence, he had enjoyed three mightily improving years in Boston. He loved to tell of his life there, and it is indicative of his character to say that he dwelt with special joy and pride on the actors and orators he had heard. He could describe some of the great scenes and repeat a few of the heroic lines of Shakespeare, and the roll of his deep voice as he declaimed, "Now is the winter of our discontent made glorious summer by this son of York," thrilled us – filled us with desire of something far off and wonderful. But best of all we loved to hear him tell of "Logan at Peach Tree Creek," and "Kilpatrick on the Granny White Turnpike."

He was a vivid and concise story-teller and his words brought to us (sometimes all too clearly), the tragic happenings of the battlefields of Atlanta and Nashville. To him Grant, Lincoln, Sherman and Sheridan were among the noblest men of the world, and he would not tolerate any criticism of them.

Next to his stories of the war I think we loved best to have him picture "the pineries" of Wisconsin, for during his first years in the State he had been both lumberman and raftsman, and his memory held delightful tales of wolves and bears and Indians.

He often imitated the howls and growls and actions of the wild animals with startling realism, and his river narratives were full of unforgettable phrases like "the Jinny Bull Falls," "Old Moosinee" and "running the rapids."

He also told us how his father and mother came west by way of the Erie Canal, and in a steamer on the Great Lakes, of how they landed in Milwaukee with Susan, their twelve-year-old daughter, sick with the smallpox; of how a farmer from Monticello carried them in his big farm wagon over the long road to their future home in Green county and it was with deep emotion that he described the bitter reception they encountered in the village.

It appears that some of the citizens in a panic of dread were all for driving the Garlands out of town – then up rose old Hugh McClintock, big and gray as a grizzly bear, and put himself between the leader of the mob and its victims, and said, "You shall not lay hands upon them. Shame on ye!" And such was the power of his mighty arm and such the menace of his flashing eyes that no one went further with the plan of casting the new comers into the wilderness.

Old Hugh established them in a lonely cabin on the edge of the village, and thereafter took care of them, nursing grandfather with his own hands until he was well. "And that's the way the McClintocks and the Garlands first joined forces," my father often said in ending the tale. "But the name of the man who carried your Aunt Susan in his wagon from Milwaukee to Monticello I never knew."

I cannot understand why that sick girl did not die on that long journey over the rough roads of Wisconsin, and what it all must have seemed to my gentle New England grandmother I grieve to think about. Beautiful as the land undoubtedly was, such an experience should have shaken her faith in western men and western hospitality. But apparently it did not, for I never heard her allude to this experience with bitterness.

In addition to his military character, Dick Garland also carried with him the odor of the pine forest and exhibited the skill and training of a forester, for in those early days even at the time when I began to remember the neighborhood talk, nearly every young man who could get away from the farm or the village went north, in November, into the pine woods which covered the entire upper part of the State, and my father, who had been a raftsman and timber cruiser and pilot ever since his coming west, was deeply skilled with axe and steering oars. The lumberman's life at that time was rough but not vicious, for the men were nearly all of native American stock, and my father was none the worse for his winters in camp.

His field of action as lumberman was for several years, in and around Big Bull Falls (as it was then called), near the present town of Wausau, and during that time he had charge of a crew of

loggers in winter and in summer piloted rafts of lumber down to Dubuque and other points where saw mills were located. He was called at this time, "Yankee Dick, the Pilot."

As a result of all these experiences in the woods, he was almost as much woodsman as soldier in his talk, and the heroic life he had led made him very wonderful in my eyes. According to his account (and I have no reason to doubt it) he had been exceedingly expert in running a raft and could ride a canoe like a Chippewa. I remember hearing him very forcefully remark, "God forgot to make the man I could not follow."

He was deft with an axe, keen of perception, sure of hand and foot, and entirely capable of holding his own with any man of his weight. Amid much drinking he remained temperate, and strange to say never used tobacco in any form. While not a large man he was nearly six feet in height, deep-chested and sinewy, and of dauntless courage. The quality which defended him from attack was the spirit which flamed from his eagle-gray eyes. Terrifying eyes they were, at times, as I had many occasions to note.

As he gathered us all around his knee at night before the fire, he loved to tell us of riding the whirlpools of Big Bull Falls, or of how he lived for weeks on a raft with the water up to his knees (sleeping at night in his wet working clothes), sustained by the blood of youth and the spirit of adventure. His endurance even after his return from the war, was marvellous, although he walked a little bent and with a peculiar measured swinging stride – the stride of Sherman's veterans.

As I was born in the first smoke of the great conflict, so all of my early memories of Green's coulee are permeated with the haze of the passing war-cloud. My soldier dad taught me the manual of arms, and for a year Harriet and I carried broom-sticks, flourished lath sabers, and hammered on dishpans in imitation of officers and drummers. Canteens made excellent water-bottles for the men in the harvest fields, and the long blue overcoats which the soldiers brought back with them from the south lent many a vivid spot of color to that far-off landscape.

All the children of our valley inhaled with every breath this mingled air of romance and sorrow, history and song, and through those epic days runs a deep-laid consciousness of maternal pain. My mother's side of those long months of waiting was never fully delineated, for she was natively reticent and shy of expression. But piece by piece in later years I drew from her the tale of her long vigil, and obtained some hint of the bitter anguish of her suspense after each great battle.

It is very strange, but I cannot define her face as I peer back into those childish times, though I can feel her strong arms about me. She seemed large and quite middle-aged to me, although she was in fact a handsome girl of twenty-three. Only by reference to a rare daguerreotype of the time am I able to correct this childish impression.

Our farm lay well up in what is called Green's coulee, in a little valley just over the road which runs along the LaCrosse river in western Wisconsin. It contained one hundred and sixty acres of land which crumpled against the wooded hills on the east and lay well upon a ridge to the west. Only two families lived above us, and over the height to the north was the land of the red people, and small bands of their hunters used occasionally to come trailing down across our meadow on their way to and from LaCrosse, which was their immemorial trading point.

Sometimes they walked into our house, always without knocking – but then we understood their ways. No one knocks at the wigwam of a red neighbor, and we were not afraid of them, for they were friendly, and our mother often gave them bread and meat which they took (always without thanks) and ate with much relish while sitting beside our fire. All this seemed very curious to us, but as they were accustomed to share their food and lodging with one another so they accepted my mother's bounty in the same matter-of-fact fashion.

Once two old fellows, while sitting by the fire, watched Frank and me bringing in wood for the kitchen stove, and smiled and muttered between themselves thereat. At last one of them patted my brother on the head and called out admiringly, "Small pappoose, heap work – good!" and we were very proud of the old man's praise.

## CHAPTER II

### The McClintocks

The members of my mother's family must have been often at our home during my father's military service in the south, but I have no mental pictures of them till after my father's homecoming in '65. Their names were familiar – were, indeed, like bits of old-fashioned song. "Richard" was a fine and tender word in my ear, but "David" and "Luke," "Deborah" and "Samantha," and especially "Hugh," suggested something alien as well as poetic.

They all lived somewhere beyond the hills which walled our coulee on the east, in a place called Salem, and I was eager to visit them, for in that direction my universe died away in a luminous mist of unexplored distance. I had some notion of its near-by loveliness for I had once viewed it from the top of the tall bluff which stood like a warder at the gate of our valley, and when one bright morning my father said, "Belle, get ready, and we'll drive over to Grandad's," we all became greatly excited.

In those days people did not "call," they went "visitin'." The women took their knitting and stayed all the afternoon and sometimes all night. No one owned a carriage. Each family journeyed in a heavy farm wagon with the father and mother riding high on the wooden spring seat while the children jounced up and down on the hay in the bottom of the box or clung desperately to the sideboards to keep from being jolted out. In such wise we started on our trip to the McClintocks'.

The road ran to the south and east around the base of Sugar Loaf Bluff, thence across a lovely valley and over a high wooded ridge which was so steep that at times we rode above the tree tops. As father stopped the horses to let them rest, we children gazed about us with wondering eyes. Far behind us lay the LaCrosse valley through which a slender river ran, while before us towered wind-worn cliffs of stone. It was an exploring expedition for us.

The top of the divide gave a grand view of wooded hills to the northeast, but father did not wait for us to enjoy that. He started the team on the perilous downward road without regard to our wishes, and so we bumped and clattered to the bottom, all joy of the scenery swallowed up in fear of being thrown from the wagon.

The roar of a rapid, the gleam of a long curving stream, a sharp turn through a pair of bars, and we found ourselves approaching a low unpainted house which stood on a level bench overlooking a river and its meadows.

"There it is. That's Grandad's house," said mother, and peering over her shoulder I perceived a group of people standing about the open door, and heard their shouts of welcome.

My father laughed. "Looks as if the whole McClintock clan was on parade," he said.

It was Sunday and all my aunts and uncles were in holiday dress and a merry, hearty, handsome group they were. One of the men helped my mother out and another, a roguish young fellow with a pock-marked face, snatched me from the wagon and carried me under his arm to the threshold where a short, gray-haired smiling woman was standing. "Mother, here's another grandson for you," he said as he put me at her feet.

She greeted me kindly and led me into the house, in which a huge old man with a shock of perfectly white hair was sitting with a Bible on his knee. He had a rugged face framed in a circle of gray beard and his glance was absent-minded and remote. "Father," said my grandmother, "Belle has come. Here is one of her boys."

Closing his book on his glasses to mark the place of his reading he turned to greet my mother who entered at this moment. His way of speech was as strange as his look and for a few moments I studied him with childish intentness. His face was rough-hewn as a rock but it was kindly, and though he soon turned from his guests and resumed his reading no one seemed to resent it.

Young as I was I vaguely understood his mood. He was glad to see us but he was absorbed in something else, something of more importance, at the moment, than the chatter of the family. My uncles who came in a few moments later drew my attention and the white-haired dreamer fades from this scene.

The room swarmed with McClintocks. There was William, a black-bearded, genial, quick-stepping giant who seized me by the collar with one hand and lifted me off the floor as if I were a puppy just to see how much I weighed; and David, a tall young man with handsome dark eyes and a droop at the outer corner of his eyelids which gave him in repose a look of melancholy distinction. He called me and I went to him readily for I loved him at once. His voice pleased me and I could see that my mother loved him too.

From his knee I became acquainted with the girls of the family. Rachel, a demure and sweet-faced young woman, and Samantha, the beauty of the family, won my instant admiration, but Deb, as everybody called her, repelled me by her teasing ways. They were all gay as larks and their hearty clamor, so far removed from the quiet gravity of my grandmother Garland's house, pleased me. I had an immediate sense of being perfectly at home.

There was an especial reason why this meeting should have been, as it was, a joyous hour. It was, in fact, a family reunion after the war. The dark days of sixty-five were over. The Nation was at peace and its warriors mustered out. True, some of those who had gone "down South" had not returned. Luke and Walter and Hugh were sleeping in The Wilderness, but Frank and Richard were safely at home and father was once more the clarion-voiced and tireless young man he had been when he went away to fight. So they all rejoiced, with only a passing tender word for those whose bodies filled a soldier's nameless grave.

There were some boys of about my own age, William's sons, and as they at once led me away down into the grove, I can say little of what went on in the house after that. It must have been still in the warm September weather for we climbed the slender leafy trees and swayed and swung on their tip-tops like bobolinks. Perhaps I did not go so very high after all but I had the feeling of being very close to the sky.

The blast of a bugle called us to dinner and we all went scrambling up the bank and into the "front room" like a swarm of hungry shotes responding to the call of the feeder. Aunt Deb, however shooed us out into the kitchen. "You can't stay here," she said. "Mother'll feed you in the kitchen."

Grandmother was waiting for us and our places were ready, so what did it matter? We had chicken and mashed potato and nice hot biscuit and honey – just as good as the grown people had and could eat all we wanted without our mothers to bother us. I am quite certain about the honey for I found a bee in one of the cells of my piece of comb, and when I pushed my plate away in dismay grandmother laughed and said, "That is only a little baby bee. You see this is wild honey. William got it out of a tree and didn't have time to pick all the bees out of it."

At this point my memories of this day fuse and flow into another visit to the McClintock homestead which must have taken place the next year, for it is my final record of my grandmother. I do not recall a single word that she said, but she again waited on us in the kitchen, beaming upon us with love and understanding. I see her also smiling in the midst of the joyous tumult which her children and grandchildren always produced when they met. She seemed content to listen and to serve.

She was the mother of seven sons, each a splendid type of sturdy manhood, and six daughters almost equally gifted in physical beauty. Four of the sons stood over six feet in height and were of unusual strength. All of them – men and women alike – were musicians by inheritance, and I never think of them without hearing the sound of singing or the voice of the violin. Each of them could play some instrument and some of them could play any instrument. David, as you shall learn, was the finest fiddler of them all. Grandad himself was able to play the violin but he no longer did so. "'Tis the Devil's instrument," he said, but I noticed that he always kept time to it.

Grandmother had very little learning. She could read and write of course, and she made frequent pathetic attempts to open her Bible or glance at a newspaper – all to little purpose, for her days were filled from dawn to dark with household duties.

I know little of her family history. Beyond the fact that she was born in Maryland and had been always on the border, I have little to record. She was in truth overshadowed by the picturesque figure of her husband who was of Scotch-Irish descent and a most singular and interesting character.

He was a mystic as well as a minstrel. He was an "Adventist" – that is to say a believer in the Second Coming of Christ, and a constant student of the Bible, especially of those parts which predicted the heavens rolling together as a scroll, and the destruction of the earth. Notwithstanding his lack of education and his rude exterior, he was a man of marked dignity and sobriety of manner. Indeed he was both grave and remote in his intercourse with his neighbors.

He was like Ezekiel, a dreamer of dreams. He loved the Old Testament, particularly those books which consisted of thunderous prophecies and passionate lamentations. The poetry of *Isaiah*, The visions of *The Apocalypse*, formed his emotional outlet, his escape into the world of imaginative literature. The songs he loved best were those which described chariots of flaming clouds, the sound of the resurrection trump – or the fields of amaranth blooming "on the other side of Jordan."

As I close my eyes and peer back into my obscure childish world I can see him sitting in his straight-backed cane-bottomed chair, drumming on the rungs with his fingers, keeping time to some inaudible tune – or chanting with faintly-moving lips the wondrous words of *John* or *Daniel*. He must have been at this time about seventy years of age, but he seemed to me as old as a snow-covered mountain.

My belief is that Grandmother did not fully share her husband's faith in The Second Coming but upon her fell the larger share of the burden of entertainment when Grandad made "the travelling brother" welcome. His was an open house to all who came along the road, and the fervid chantings, the impassioned prayers of these meetings lent a singular air of unreality to the business of cooking or plowing in the fields.

I think he loved his wife and children, and yet I never heard him speak an affectionate word to them. He was kind, he was just, but he was not tender. With eyes turned inward, with a mind filled with visions of angel messengers with trumpets at their lips announcing "The Day of Wrath," how could he concern himself with the ordinary affairs of human life?

Too old to bind grain in the harvest field, he was occasionally intrusted with the task of driving the reaper or the mower – and generally forgot to oil the bearings. His absent-mindedness was a source of laughter among his sons and sons-in-law. I've heard Frank say: "Dad would stop in the midst of a swath to announce the end of the world." He seldom remembered to put on a hat even in the blazing sun of July and his daughters had to keep an eye on him to be sure he had his vest on right-side out.

Grandmother was cheerful in the midst of her toil and discomfort, for what other mother had such a family of noble boys and handsome girls? They all loved her, that she knew, and she was perfectly willing to sacrifice her comfort to promote theirs. Occasionally Samantha or Rachel remonstrated with her for working so hard, but she only put their protests aside and sent them back to their callers, for when the McClintock girls were at home, the horses of their suitors tied before the gate would have mounted a small troop of cavalry.

It was well that this pioneer wife was rich in children, for she had little else. I do not suppose she ever knew what it was to have a comfortable well-aired bedroom, even in childbirth. She was practical and a good manager, and she needed to be, for her husband was as weirdly unworldly as a farmer could be. He was indeed a sad husbandman. Only the splendid abundance of the soil and the manual skill of his sons, united to the good management of his wife, kept his family fed

and clothed. "What is the use of laying up a store of goods against the early destruction of the world?" he argued.

He was bitterly opposed to secret societies, for some reason which I never fully understood, and the only fury I ever knew him to express was directed against these "dens of iniquity."

Nearly all his neighbors, like those in our coulee, were native American as their names indicated. The Dudleys, Elwells, and Griswolds came from Connecticut, the McIlldowneys and McKinleys from New York and Ohio, the Baileys and Garlands from Maine. Buoyant, vital, confident, these sons of the border bent to the work of breaking sod and building fence quite in the spirit of sportsmen.

They were always racing in those days, rejoicing in their abounding vigor. With them reaping was a game, husking corn a test of endurance and skill, threshing a "bee." It was a Dudley against a McClintock, a Gilfillan against a Garland, and my father's laughing descriptions of the barn-raising, harvestings and railsplittings of the valley filled my mind with vivid pictures of manly deeds. Every phase of farm work was carried on by hand. Strength and skill counted high and I had good reason for my idolatry of David and William. With the hearts of woodsmen and fists of sailors they were precisely the type to appeal to the imagination of a boy. Hunters, athletes, skilled horsemen – everything they did was to me heroic.

Frank, smallest of all these sons of Hugh, was not what an observer would call puny. He weighed nearly one hundred and eighty pounds and never met his match except in his brothers. William could outlift him, David could out-run him and outleap him, but he was more agile than either – was indeed a skilled acrobat.

His muscles were prodigious. The calves of his legs would not go into his top boots, and I have heard my father say that once when the "tumbling" in the little country "show" seemed not to his liking, Frank sprang over the ropes into the arena and went around the ring in a series of professional flip-flaps, to the unrestrained delight of the spectators. I did not witness this performance, I am sorry to say, but I have seen him do somersaults and turn cart-wheels in the door-yard just from the pure joy of living. He could have been a professional acrobat – and he came near to being a professional ball-player.

He was always smiling, but his temper was fickle. Anybody could get a fight out of Frank McClintock at any time, simply by expressing a desire for it. To call him a liar was equivalent to contracting a doctor's bill. He loved hunting, as did all his brothers, but was too excitable to be a highly successful shot – whereas William and David were veritable Leather-stockings in their mastery of the heavy, old-fashioned rifle. David was especially dreaded at the turkey shoots of the county.

William was over six feet in height, weighed two hundred and forty pounds, and stood "straight as an Injun." He was one of the most formidable men of the valley – even at fifty as I first recollect him, he walked with a quick lift of his foot like that of a young Chippewa. To me he was a huge gentle black bear, but I firmly believed he could whip any man in the world – even Uncle David – if he wanted to. I never expected to see him fight, for I could not imagine anybody foolish enough to invite his wrath.

Such a man did develop, but not until William was over sixty, gray-haired and ill, and even then it took two strong men to engage him fully, and when it was all over (the contest filled but a few seconds), one assailant could not be found, and the other had to call in a doctor to piece him together again.

William did not have a mark – his troubles began when he went home to his quaint little old wife. In some strange way she divined that he had been fighting, and soon drew the story from him. "William McClintock," said she severely, "hain't you old enough to keep your temper and not go brawling around like that and at a school meeting too!"

William hung his head. "Well, I dunno! – I suppose my dyspepsy has made me kind o' irritable," he said by way of apology.

My father was the historian of most of these exploits on the part of his brothers-in-law, for he loved to exalt their physical prowess at the same time that he deplored their lack of enterprise and system. Certain of their traits he understood well. Others he was never able to comprehend, and I am not sure that they ever quite understood themselves.

A deep vein of poetry, of sub-conscious celtic sadness, ran through them all. It was associated with their love of music and was wordless. Only hints of this endowment came out now and again, and to the day of his death my father continued to express perplexity, and a kind of irritation at the curious combination of bitterness and sweetness, sloth and tremendous energy, slovenliness and exaltation which made Hugh McClintock and his sons the jest and the admiration of those who knew them best.

Undoubtedly to the Elwells and Dudleys, as to most of their definite, practical, orderly and successful New England neighbors, my uncles were merely a good-natured, easy-going lot of "fiddlers," but to me as I grew old enough to understand them, they became a group of potential poets, bards and dreamers, inarticulate and moody. They fell easily into somber silence. Even Frank, the most boisterous and outspoken of them all, could be thrown into sudden melancholy by a melody, a line of poetry or a beautiful landscape.

The reason for this praise of their quality, if the reason needs to be stated, lies in my feeling of definite indebtedness to them. They furnished much of the charm and poetic suggestion of my childhood. Most of what I have in the way of feeling for music, for rhythm, I derive from my mother's side of the house, for it was almost entirely Celt in every characteristic. She herself was a wordless poet, a sensitive singer of sad romantic songs.

Father was by nature an orator and a lover of the drama. So far as I am aware, he never read a poem if he could help it, and yet he responded instantly to music, and was instinctively courtly in manner. His mind was clear, positive and definite, and his utterances fluent. Orderly, resolute and thorough in all that he did, he despised William McClintock's easy-going habits of husbandry, and found David's lack of "push," of business enterprise, deeply irritating. And yet he loved them both and respected my mother for defending them.

To me, in those days, the shortcomings of the McClintocks did not appear particularly heinous. All our neighbors were living in log houses and frame shanties built beside the brooks, or set close against the hillsides, and William's small unpainted dwelling seemed a natural feature of the landscape, but as the years passed and other and more enterprising settlers built big barns, and shining white houses, the gray and leaning stables, sagging gates and roofs of my uncle's farm, became a reproach even in my eyes, so that when I visited it for the last time just before our removal to Iowa, I, too, was a little ashamed of it. Its disorder did not diminish my regard for the owner, but I wished he would clean out the stable and prop up the wagon-shed.

My grandmother's death came soon after our second visit to the homestead. I have no personal memory of the event, but I heard Uncle David describe it. The setting of the final scene in the drama was humble. The girls were washing clothes in the yard and the silent old mother was getting the mid-day meal. David, as he came in from the field, stopped for a moment with his sisters and in their talk Samantha said: "Mother isn't at all well today."

David, looking toward the kitchen, said, "Isn't there some way to keep her from working?"

"You know how she is," explained Deborah. "She's worked so long she don't know how to rest. We tried to get her to lie down for an hour but she wouldn't."

David was troubled. "She'll have to stop sometime," he said, and then they passed to other things, hearing meanwhile the tread of their mother's busy feet.

Suddenly she appeared at the door, a frightened look on her face.

"Why, mother! – what is the matter?" asked her daughter.

She pointed to her mouth and shook her head, to indicate that she could not speak. David leaped toward her, but she dropped before he could reach her.

Lifting her in his strong arms he laid her on her bed and hastened for the doctor. All in vain! She sank into unconsciousness and died without a word of farewell.

She fell like a soldier in the ranks. Having served uncomplainingly up to the very edge of her evening bivouac, she passed to her final sleep in silent dignity.



## CHAPTER III

### The Home in the Coulee

Our postoffice was in the village of Onalaska, situated at the mouth of the Black River, which came down out of the wide forest lands of the north. It was called a "boom town" for the reason that "booms" or yards for holding pine logs laced the quiet bayou and supplied several large mills with timber. Busy saws clamored from the islands and great rafts of planks and lath and shingles were made up and floated down into the Mississippi and on to southern markets.

It was a rude, rough little camp filled with raftsmen, loggers, mill-hands and boomsmen. Saloons abounded and deeds of violence were common, but to me it was a poem. From its position on a high plateau it commanded a lovely southern expanse of shimmering water bounded by purple bluffs. The spires of LaCrosse rose from the smoky distance, and steamships' hoarsely giving voice suggested illimitable reaches of travel. Some day I hoped my father would take me to that shining market-place whereto he carried all our grain.

In this village of Onalaska, lived my grandfather and grandmother Garland, and their daughter Susan, whose husband, Richard Bailey, a quiet, kind man, was held in deep affection by us all. Of course he could not quite measure up to the high standards of David and William, even though he kept a store and sold candy, for he could neither kill a bear, nor play the fiddle, nor shoot a gun – much less turn hand-springs or tame a wild horse, but we liked him notwithstanding his limitations and were always glad when he came to visit us.

Even at this time I recognized the wide differences which separated the McClintocks from the Garlands. The fact that my father's people lived to the west and in a town helped to emphasize the divergence.

All the McClintocks were farmers, but grandfather Garland was a carpenter by trade, and a leader in his church which was to him a club, a forum and a commercial exchange. He was a native of Maine and proud of the fact. His eyes were keen and gray, his teeth fine and white, and his expression stern. His speech was neat and nipping. As a workman he was exact and his tools were always in perfect order. In brief he was a Yankee, as concentrated a bit of New England as was ever transplanted to the border. Hopelessly "sot" in all his eastern ways, he remained the doubter, the critic, all his life.

We always spoke of him with formal precision as Grandfather Garland, never as "Grandad" or "Granpap" as we did in alluding to Hugh McClintock, and his long prayers (pieces of elaborate oratory) wearied us, while those of Grandad, which had the extravagance, the lyrical abandon of poetry, profoundly pleased us. Grandfather's church was a small white building in the edge of the village, Grandad's place of worship was a vision, a cloud-built temple, a house not made with hands.

The contrast between my grandmothers was equally wide. Harriet Garland was tall and thin, with a dark and serious face. She was an invalid, and confined to a chair, which stood in the corner of her room. On the walls within reach of her hand hung many small pockets, so ordered that she could obtain her sewing materials without rising. She was always at work when I called, but it was her habit to pause and discover in some one of her receptacles a piece of candy or a stick of "lickerish root" which she gave to me "as a reward for being a good boy."

She was always making needle rolls and thimble boxes and no doubt her skill helped to keep the family fed and clothed.

Notwithstanding all divergence in the characters of Grandmother Garland and Grandmother McClintock, we held them both in almost equal affection. Serene, patient, bookish, Grandmother Garland brought to us, as to her neighbors in this rude river port, some of the best qualities of

intellectual Boston, and from her lips we acquired many of the precepts and proverbs of our Pilgrim forbears.

Her influence upon us was distinctly literary. She gloried in New England traditions, and taught us to love the poems of Whittier and Longfellow. It was she who called us to her knee and told us sadly yet benignly of the death of Lincoln, expressing only pity for the misguided assassin. She was a constant advocate of charity, piety, and learning. Always poor, and for many years a cripple, I never heard her complain, and no one, I think, ever saw her face clouded with a frown.

Our neighbors in Green's Coulee were all native American. The first and nearest, Al Randal and his wife and son, we saw often and on the whole liked, but the Whitwells who lived on the farm above us were a constant source of comedy to my father. Old Port, as he was called, was a mild-mannered man who would have made very little impression on the community, but for his wife, a large and rather unkempt person, who assumed such man-like freedom of speech that my father was never without an amusing story of her doings.

She swore in vigorous pioneer fashion, and dominated her husband by force of lung power as well as by a certain painful candor. "Port, you're an old fool," she often said to him in our presence. It was her habit to apologize to her guests, as they took their seats at her abundant table, "Wal, now, folks, I'm sorry, but there ain't a blank thing in this house fit for a dawg to eat – " expecting of course to have everyone cry out, "Oh, Mrs. Whitwell, this is a splendid dinner!" which they generally did. But once my father took her completely aback by rising resignedly from the table – "Come, Belle," said he to my mother, "let's go home. I'm not going to eat food not fit for a dog."

The rough old woman staggered under this blow, but quickly recovered. "Dick Garland, you blank fool. Sit down, or I'll fetch you a swipe with the broom."

In spite of her profanity and ignorance she was a good neighbor and in time of trouble no one was readier to relieve any distress in the coulee. However, it was upon Mrs. Randal and the widow Green that my mother called for aid, and I do not think Mrs. Whitwell was ever quite welcome even at our quilting bees, for her loud voice silenced every other, and my mother did not enjoy her vulgar stories. – Yes, I can remember several quilting bees, and I recall molding candles, and that our "company light" was a large kerosene lamp, in the glass globe of which a strip of red flannel was coiled. Probably this was merely a device to lengthen out the wick, but it made a memorable spot of color in the room – just as the watch-spring gong in the clock gave off a sound of fairy music to my ear. I don't know why the ring of that coil had such a wondrous appeal, but I often climbed upon a chair to rake its spirals with a nail in order that I might float away on its "dying fall."

Life was primitive in all the homes of the coulee. Money was hard to get. We always had plenty to eat, but little in the way of luxuries. We had few toys except those we fashioned for ourselves, and our garments were mostly home-made. I have heard my father say, "Belle could go to town with me, buy the calico for a dress and be wearing it for supper" – but I fear that even this did not happen very often. Her "dress up" gowns, according to certain precious old tintypes, indicate that clothing was for her only a sort of uniform, – and yet I will not say this made her unhappy. Her face was always smiling. She knit all our socks, made all our shirts and suits. She even carded and spun wool, in addition to her housekeeping, and found time to help on our kites and bows and arrows.

Month by month the universe in which I lived lightened and widened. In my visits to Onalaska, I discovered the great Mississippi River, and the Minnesota Bluffs. The light of knowledge grew stronger. I began to perceive forms and faces which had been hidden in the dusk of babyhood. I heard more and more of LaCrosse, and out of the mist filled lower valley the booming roar of steamboats suggested to me distant countries and the sea.

My father believed in service. At seven years of age, I had regular duties. I brought firewood to the kitchen and broke nubbins for the calves and shelled corn for the chickens. I have a dim memory of helping him (and grandfather) split oak-blocks into rafting pins in the kitchen. This

seems incredible to me now, and yet it must have been so. In summer Harriet and I drove the cows to pasture, and carried "switchel" to the men in the hay-fields by means of a jug hung in the middle of a long stick.

Haying was a delightful season to us, for the scythes of the men occasionally tossed up clusters of beautiful strawberries, which we joyfully gathered. I remember with especial pleasure the delicious shortcakes which my mother made of the wild fruit which we picked in the warm odorous grass along the edge of the meadow.

Harvest time also brought a pleasing excitement (something unwonted, something like entertaining visitors) which compensated for the extra work demanded of us. The neighbors usually came in to help and life was a feast.

There was, however, an ever-present menace in our lives, the snake! During mid-summer months blue racers and rattlesnakes swarmed and the terror of them often chilled our childish hearts. Once Harriet and I, with little Frank in his cart, came suddenly upon a monster diamond-back rattler sleeping by the roadside. In our mad efforts to escape, the cart was overturned and the baby scattered in the dust almost within reach of the snake. As soon as she realized what had happened, Harriet ran back bravely, caught up the child and brought him safely away.

Another day, as I was riding on the load of wheat-sheaves, one of the men, in pitching the grain to the wagon lifted a rattlesnake with his fork. I saw it writhing in the bottom of the sheaf, and screamed out, "A snake, a snake!" It fell across the man's arm but slid harmlessly to the ground, and he put a tine through it.

As it chanced to be just dinner time he took it with him to the house and fastened it down near the door of a coop in which an old hen and her brood of chickens were confined. I don't know why he did this but it threw the mother hen into such paroxysms of fear that she dashed herself again and again upon the slats of her house. It appeared that she comprehended to the full the terrible power of the writhing monster.

Perhaps it was this same year that one of the men discovered another enormous yellow-back in the barnyard, one of the largest ever seen on the farm – and killed it just as it was moving across an old barrel. I cannot now understand why it tried to cross the barrel, but I distinctly visualize the brown and yellow band it made as it lay for an instant just before the bludgeon fell upon it, crushing it and the barrel together. He was thicker than my leg and glistened in the sun with sinister splendor. As he hung limp over the fence, a warning to his fellows, it was hard for me to realize that death still lay in his square jaws and poisonous fangs.

Innumerable garter-snakes infested the marsh, and black snakes inhabited the edges of the woodlands, but we were not so much afraid of them. We accepted them as unavoidable companions in the wild. They would run from us. Bears and wildcats we held in real terror, though they were considered denizens of the darkness and hence not likely to be met with if one kept to the daylight.

The "hoop snake" was quite as authentic to us as the blue racer, although no one had actually seen one. Den Green's cousin's uncle had killed one in Michigan, and a man over the ridge had once been stung by one that came rolling down the hill with his tail in his mouth. But Den's cousin's uncle, when he saw the one coming toward him, had stepped aside quick as lightning, and the serpent's sharp fangs had buried themselves so deep in the bark of a tree, that he could not escape.

Various other of the myths common to American boyhood, were held in perfect faith by Den and Ellis and Ed, myths which made every woodland path an ambush and every marshy spot a place of evil. Horsehairs would turn to snakes if left in the spring, and a serpent's tail would not die till sundown.

Once on the high hillside, I started a stone rolling, which as it went plunging into a hazel thicket, thrust out a deer, whose flight seemed fairly miraculous to me. He appeared to drift along the hillside like a bunch of thistle-down, and I took a singular delight in watching him disappear.

Once my little brother and I, belated in our search for the cows, were far away on the hills when night suddenly came upon us. I could not have been more than eight years old and Frank was five. This incident reveals the fearless use our father made of us. True, we were hardly a mile from the house, but there were many serpents on the hillsides and wildcats in the cliffs, and eight is pretty young for such a task.

We were following the cows through the tall grass and bushes, in the dark, when father came to our rescue, and I do not recall being sent on a similar expedition thereafter. I think mother protested against the danger of it. Her notions of our training were less rigorous.

I never hear a cow-bell of a certain timbre that I do not relive in some degree the terror and despair of that hour on the mountain, when it seemed that my world had suddenly slipped away from me.

Winter succeeds summer abruptly in my memory. Behind our house rose a sharp ridge down which we used to coast. Over this hill, fierce winds blew the snow, and wonderful, diamonded drifts covered the yard, and sometimes father was obliged to dig deep trenches in order to reach the barn.

On winter evenings he shelled corn by drawing the ears across a spade resting on a wash tub, and we children built houses of the cobs, while mother sewed carpet rags or knit our mittens. Quilting bees of an afternoon were still recognized social functions and the spread quilt on its frame made a gorgeous tent under which my brother and I camped on our way to "Colorado." Lath swords and tin-pan drums remained a part of our equipment for a year or two.

One stormy winter day, Edwin Randal, riding home in a sleigh behind his uncle, saw me in the yard and, picking an apple from an open barrel beside which he was standing, threw it at me. It was a very large apple, and as it struck the drift it disappeared leaving a round deep hole. Delving there I recovered it, and as I brushed the rime from its scarlet skin it seemed the most beautiful thing in this world. From this vividly remembered delight, I deduce the fact that apples were not very plentiful in our home.

My favorite place in winter time was directly under the kitchen stove. It was one of the old-fashioned high-stepping breed, with long hind legs and an arching belly, and as the oven was on top, the space beneath the arch offered a delightful den for a cat, a dog or small boy, and I was usually to be found there, lying on my stomach, spelling out the "continued" stories which came to us in the county paper, for I was born with a hunger for print.

We had few books in our house. Aside from the Bible I remember only one other, a thick, black volume filled with gaudy pictures of cherries and plums, and portraits of ideally fat and prosperous sheep, pigs and cows. It must have been a *Farmer's Annual* or State agricultural report, but it contained in the midst of its dry prose, occasional poems like "*I remember, I remember,*" "*The Old Armchair*" and other pieces of a domestic or rural nature. I was especially moved by *The Old Armchair*, and although some of the words and expressions were beyond my comprehension, I fully understood the defiant tenderness of the lines:

I love it, I love it, and who shall dare  
To chide me for loving the old armchair?

I fear the horticultural side of this volume did not interest me, but this sweetly-sad poem tinged even the gaudy pictures of prodigious plums and shining apples with a literary glamor. The preposterously plump cattle probably affected me as only another form of romantic fiction. The volume also had a pleasant smell, not so fine an odor as the Bible, but so delectable that I loved to bury my nose in its opened pages. What caused this odor I cannot tell – perhaps it had been used to press flowers or sprigs of sweet fern.

Harriet's devotion to literature, like my own, was a nuisance. If my mother wanted a pan of chips she had to wrench one of us from a book, or tear us from a paper. If she pasted up a section of

*Harper's Weekly* behind the washstand in the kitchen, I immediately discovered a special interest in that number, and likely enough forgot to wash myself. When mother saw this (as of course she very soon did), she turned the paper upside down, and thereafter accused me, with some justice, of standing on my head in order to continue my tale. "In fact," she often said, "it is easier for me to do my errands myself than to get either of you young ones to move."

The first school which we attended was held in a neighboring farm-house, and there is very little to tell concerning it, but at seven I began to go to the public school in Onalaska and memory becomes definite, for the wide river which came silently out of the unknown north, carrying endless millions of pine logs, and the clamor of saws in the island mills, and especially the men walking the rolling logs with pike-poles in their hands filled me with a wordless joy. To be one of these brave and graceful "drivers" seemed almost as great an honor as to be a Captain in the army. Some of the boys of my acquaintance were sons of these hardy boomsmen, and related wonderful stories of their fathers' exploits – stories which we gladly believed. We all intended to be rivermen when we grew up.

The quiet water below the booms harbored enormous fish at that time, and some of the male citizens who were too lazy to work in the mills got an easy living by capturing cat-fish, and when in liquor joined the rivermen in their drunken frays. My father's tales of the exploits of some of these redoubtable villains filled my mind with mingled admiration and terror. No one used the pistol, however, and very few the knife. Physical strength counted. Foot and fist were the weapons which ended each contest and no one was actually slain in these meetings of rival crews.

In the midst of this tumult, surrounded by this coarse, unthinking life, my Grandmother Garland's home stood, a serene small sanctuary of lofty womanhood, a temple of New England virtue. From her and from my great aunt Bridges who lived in St. Louis, I received my first literary instruction, a partial offset to the vulgar yet heroic influence of the raftsmen and mill hands.

The school-house, a wooden two story building, occupied an unkempt lot some distance back from the river and near a group of high sand dunes which possessed a sinister allurements to me. They had a mysterious desert quality, a flavor as of camels and Arabs. Once you got over behind them it seemed as if you were in another world, a far-off arid land where no water ran and only sear, sharp-edged grasses grew. Some of these mounds were miniature peaks of clear sand, so steep and dry that you could slide all the way down from top to bottom, and do no harm to your Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes. On rainy days you could dig caves in their sides.

But the mills and the log booms were after all much more dramatic and we never failed to hurry away to the river if we had half an hour to spare. The "drivers," so brave and skilled, so graceful, held us in breathless admiration as they leaped from one rolling log to another, or walked the narrow wooden bridges above the deep and silently sweeping waters. The piles of slabs, the mounds of sawdust, the intermittent, ferocious snarl of the saws, the slap of falling lumber, the never ending fires eating up the refuse – all these sights and sounds made a return to school difficult. Even the life around the threshing machine seemed a little tame in comparison with the life of the booms.

We were much at the Greens', our second-door neighbors to the south, and the doings of the men-folks fill large space in my memory. Ed, the oldest of the boys, a man of twenty-three or four, was as prodigious in his way as my Uncle David. He was mighty with the axe. His deeds as a railsplitter rivaled those of Lincoln. The number of cords of wood he could split in a single day was beyond belief. It was either seven or eleven, I forget which – I am perfectly certain of the number of buckwheat pancakes he could eat for I kept count on several occasions. Once he ate nine the size of a dinner plate together with a suitable number of sausages – but what would you expect of a man who could whirl a six pound axe all day in a desperate attack on the forest, without once looking at the sun or pausing for breath?

However, he fell short of my hero in other ways. He looked like a fat man and his fiddling was only middling, therefore, notwithstanding his prowess with the axe and the maul, he remained

subordinate to David, and though they never came to a test of strength we were perfectly sure that David was the finer man. His supple grace and his unconquerable pride made him altogether admirable.

Den, the youngest of the Greens, was a boy about three years my senior, and a most attractive lad. I met him some years ago in California, a successful doctor, and we talked of the days when I was his slave and humbly carried his powder horn and game bag. Ellis Usher, who lived in Sand Lake and often hunted with Den, is an editor in Milwaukee and one of the political leaders of his state. In those days he had a small opinion of me. No doubt I *was* a nuisance.

The road which led from our farm to the village school crossed a sandy ridge and often in June our path became so hot that it burned the soles of our feet. If we went out of the road there were sand-burrs and we lost a great deal of time picking needles from our toes. How we hated those sand-burrs! – However, on these sand barrens many luscious strawberries grew. They were not large, but they gave off a delicious odor, and it sometimes took us a long time to reach home.

There was a recognized element of danger in this road. Wildcats were plentiful around the limestone cliffs, and bears had been seen under the oak trees. In fact a place on the hillside was often pointed out with awe as "the place where Al Randal killed the bear." Our way led past the village cemetery also, and there was to me something vaguely awesome in that silent bivouac of the dead.

Among the other village boys in the school were two lads named Gallagher, one of whom, whose name was Matt, became my daily terror. He was two years older than I and had all of a city gamin's cunning and self-command. At every intermission he sidled close to me, walking round me, feeling my arms, and making much of my muscle. Sometimes he came behind and lifted me to see how heavy I was, or called attention to my strong hands and wrists, insisting with the most terrifying candor of conviction, "I'm sure you can lick me." We never quite came to combat, and finally he gave up this baiting for a still more exquisite method of torment.

My sister and I possessed a dog named Rover, a meek little yellow, bow-legged cur of mongrel character, but with the frankest, gentlest and sweetest face, it seemed to us, in all the world. He was not allowed to accompany us to school and scarcely ever left the yard, but Matt Gallagher in some way discovered my deep affection for this pet and thereafter played upon my fears with a malevolence which knew no mercy. One day he said, "Me and brother Dan are going over to your place to get a calf that's in your pasture. We're going to get excused fifteen minutes early. We'll get there before you do and we'll fix that dog of yours! – There won't be nothin' left of him but a grease spot when we are done with him."

These words, spoken probably in jest, instantly filled my heart with an agony of fear. I saw in imagination just how my little playmate would come running out to meet his cruel foes, his brown eyes beaming with love and trust, – I saw them hiding sharp stones behind their backs while snapping their left-hand fingers to lure him within reach, and then I saw them drive their murdering weapons at his head.

I could think of nothing else. I could not study, I could only sit and stare out of the window with tears running down my cheeks, until at last, the teacher observing my distress, inquired, "What is the matter?" And I, not knowing how to enter upon so terrible a tale, whined out, "I'm sick, I want to go home."

"You may go," said the teacher kindly.

Snatching my cap from beneath the desk where I had concealed it at recess, I hurried out and away over the sand-lot on the shortest way home. No stopping now for burrs! – I ran like one pursued. I shall never forget as long as I live, the pain, the panic, the frenzy of that race against time. The hot sand burned my feet, my side ached, my mouth was dry, and yet I ran on and on and on, looking back from moment to moment, seeing pursuers in every moving object.

At last I came in sight of home, and Rover frisked out to meet me just as I had expected him to do, his tail wagging, his gentle eyes smiling up at me. Gasping, unable to utter a word, I frantically dragged the dog into the house and shut the door.

"What is the matter?" asked my mother.

I could not at the moment explain even to her what had threatened me, but her calm sweet words at last gave my story vent. Out it came in torrential flow.

"Why, you poor child!" she said. "They were only fooling – they wouldn't dare to hurt your dog!"

This was probably true. Matt had spoken without any clear idea of the torture he was inflicting.

It is often said, "How little is required to give a child joy," but men – and women too – sometimes forget how little it takes to give a child pain.

## CHAPTER IV

### Father Sells the Farm

Green's Coulee was a delightful place for boys. It offered hunting and coasting and many other engrossing sports, but my father, as the seasons went by, became thoroughly dissatisfied with its disadvantages. More and more he resented the stumps and ridges which interrupted his plow. Much of his quarter-section remained unbroken. There were ditches to be dug in the marsh and young oaks to be uprooted from the forest, and he was obliged to toil with unrelenting severity. There were times, of course, when field duties did not press, but never a day came when the necessity for twelve hours' labor did not exist.

Furthermore, as he grubbed or reaped he remembered the glorious prairies he had crossed on his exploring trip into Minnesota before the war, and the oftener he thought of them the more bitterly he resented his up-tilted, horse-killing fields, and his complaining words sank so deep into the minds of his sons that for years thereafter they were unable to look upon any rise of ground as an object to be admired.

It irked him beyond measure to force his reaper along a steep slope, and he loathed the irregular little patches running up the ravines behind the timbered knolls, and so at last like many another of his neighbors he began to look away to the west as a fairer field for conquest. He no more thought of going east than a liberated eagle dreams of returning to its narrow cage. He loved to talk of Boston, to boast of its splendor, but to live there, to earn his bread there, was unthinkable. Beneath the sunset lay the enchanted land of opportunity and his liberation came unexpectedly.

Sometime in the spring of 1868, a merchant from LaCrosse, a plump man who brought us candy and was very cordial and condescending, began negotiations for our farm, and in the discussion of plans which followed, my conception of the universe expanded. I began to understand that "Minnesota" was not a bluff but a wide land of romance, a prairie, peopled with red men, which lay far beyond the big river. And then, one day, I heard my father read to my mother a paragraph from the county paper which ran like this, "It is reported that Richard Garland has sold his farm in Green's Coulee to our popular grocer, Mr. Speer. Mr. Speer intends to make of it a model dairy farm."

This intention seemed somehow to reflect a ray of glory upon us, though I fear it did not solace my mother, as she contemplated the loss of home and kindred. She was not by nature an emigrant, — few women are. She was content with the pleasant slopes, the kindly neighbors of Green's Coulee. Furthermore, most of her brothers and sisters still lived just across the ridge in the valley of the Neshonoc, and the thought of leaving them for a wild and unknown region was not pleasant.

To my father, on the contrary, change was alluring. Iowa was now the place of the rainbow, and the pot of gold. He was eager to push on toward it, confident of the outcome. His spirit was reflected in one of the songs which we children particularly enjoyed hearing our mother sing, a ballad which consisted of a dialogue between a husband and wife on this very subject of emigration. The words as well as its wailing melody still stir me deeply, for they lay hold of my sub-conscious memory — embodying admirably the debate which went on in our home as well as in the homes of other farmers in the valley, — only, alas! our mothers did not prevail.

It begins with a statement of unrest on the part of the husband who confesses that he is about to give up his plow and his cart —

Away to Colorado a journey I'll go,  
For to double my fortune as other men do,



*While here I must labor each day in the field  
And the winter consumes all the summer doth yield.*

To this the wife replies:

Dear husband, I've noticed with a sorrowful heart  
That you long have neglected your plow and your cart,  
Your horses, sheep, cattle at random do run,  
And your new Sunday jacket goes every day on.  
*Oh, stay on your farm and you'll suffer no loss,  
For the stone that keeps rolling will gather no moss.*

But the husband insists:

Oh, wife, let us go; Oh, don't let us wait;  
I long to be there, and I long to be great,  
While you some fair lady and who knows but I  
May be some rich governor long 'fore I die,  
*Whilst here I must labor each day in the field,  
And the winter consumes all the summer doth yield.*

But wife shrewdly retorts:

Dear husband, remember those lands are so dear  
They will cost you the labor of many a year.  
Your horses, sheep, cattle will all be to buy,  
You will hardly get settled before you must die.  
Oh, stay on the farm, – etc.

The husband then argues that as in that country the lands are all cleared to the plow, and horses and cattle not very dear, they would soon be rich. Indeed, "we will feast on fat venison one-half of the year." Thereupon the wife brings in her final argument:

Oh, husband, remember those lands of delight  
Are surrounded by Indians who murder by night.  
Your house will be plundered and burnt to the ground  
While your wife and your children lie mangled around.

This fetches the husband up with a round turn:

Oh, wife, you've convinced me, I'll argue no more,  
I never once thought of your dying before.  
I love my dear children although they are small  
And you, my dear wife, I love greatest of all.

**Refrain (both together)**

We'll stay on the farm and we'll suffer no loss  
For the stone that keeps rolling will gather no moss.

This song was not an especial favorite of my father. Its minor strains and its expressions of womanly doubts and fears were antipathetic to his sanguine, buoyant, self-confident nature. He was inclined to ridicule the conclusions of its last verse and to say that the man was a molly-coddle – or whatever the word of contempt was in those days. As an antidote he usually called for "O'er the hills in legions, boys," which exactly expressed his love of exploration and adventure.

This ballad which dates back to the conquest of the Allegheny mountains opens with a fine uplifting note,

Cheer up, brothers, as we go  
O'er the mountains, westward ho,  
Where herds of deer and buffalo  
Furnish the fare.

and the refrain is at once a bugle call and a vision:

Then o'er the hills in legions, boys,  
Fair freedom's star  
Points to the sunset regions, boys,  
Ha, ha, ha-ha!

and when my mother's clear voice rose on the notes of that exultant chorus, our hearts responded with a surge of emotion akin to that which sent the followers of Daniel Boone across the Blue Ridge, and lined the trails of Kentucky and Ohio with the canvas-covered wagons of the pioneers.

A little farther on in the song came these words,

When we've wood and prairie land,  
Won by our toil,  
We'll reign like kings in fairy land,  
Lords of the soil!

which always produced in my mind the picture of a noble farm-house in a park-like valley, just as the line, "Well have our rifles ready, boys," expressed the boldness and self-reliance of an armed horseman.

The significance of this song in the lives of the McClintocks and the Garlands cannot be measured. It was the marching song of my Grandfather's generation and undoubtedly profoundly influenced my father and my uncles in all that they did. It suggested shining mountains, and grassy vales, swarming with bear and elk. It called to green savannahs and endless flowery glades. It voiced as no other song did, the pioneer impulse throbbing deep in my father's blood. That its words will not bear close inspection today takes little from its power. Unquestionably it was a directing force in the lives of at least three generations of my pioneering race. Its strains will be found running through this book from first to last, for its pictures continued to allure my father on and on toward "the sunset regions," and its splendid faith carried him through many a dark vale of discontent.

Our home was a place of song, notwithstanding the severe toil which was demanded of every hand, for often of an evening, especially in winter time, father took his seat beside the fire, invited us to his knees, and called on mother to sing. These moods were very sweet to us and we usually

insisted upon his singing for us. True, he hardly knew one tune from another, but he had a hearty resounding chant which delighted us, and one of the ballads which we especially like to hear him repeat was called *Down the Ohio*. Only one verse survives in my memory:

The river is up, the channel is deep,  
The winds blow high and strong.  
The flash of the oars, the stroke we keep,  
As we row the old boat along,  
Down the O-h-i-o.

Mother, on the contrary, was gifted with a voice of great range and sweetness, and from her we always demanded *Nettie Wildwood*, *Lily Dale*, *Lorena* or some of Root's stirring war songs. We loved her noble, musical tone, and yet we always enjoyed our father's tuneless roar. There was something dramatic and moving in each of his ballads. He made the words mean so much.

It is a curious fact that nearly all of the ballads which the McClintocks and other of these powerful young sons of the border loved to sing were sad. *Nellie Wildwood*, *Minnie Minturn*, *Belle Mahone*, *Lily Dale* were all concerned with dead or dying maidens or with mocking birds still singing o'er their graves. Weeping willows and funeral urns ornamented the cover of each mournful ballad. Not one smiling face peered forth from the pages of *The Home Diadem*.

Lonely like a withered tree,  
What is all the world to me?  
Light and life were all in thee,  
Sweet Belle Mahone,

wailed stalwart David and buxom Deborah, and ready tears moistened my tanned plump cheeks.

Perhaps it was partly by way of contrast that the jocund song of *Freedom's Star* always meant so much to me, but however it came about, I am perfectly certain that it was an immense subconscious force in the life of my father as it had been in the westward marching of the McClintocks. In my own thinking it became at once a vision and a lure.

The only humorous songs which my uncles knew were negro ditties, like *Camp Town Racetrack* and *Jordan am a Hard Road to Trabbel* but in addition to the sad ballads I have quoted, they joined my mother in *The Pirate's Serenade*, *Erin's Green Shore*, *Bird of the Wilderness*, and the memory of their mellow voices creates a golden dusk between me and that far-off cottage.

During the summer of my eighth year, I took a part in haying and harvest, and I have a painful recollection of raking hay after the wagons, for I wore no shoes and the stubble was very sharp. I used to slip my feet along close to the ground, thus bending the stubble away from me before throwing my weight on it, otherwise walking was painful. If I were sent across the field on an errand I always sought out the path left by the broad wheels of the mowing machine and walked therein with a most delicious sense of safety.

It cannot be that I was required to work very hard or very steadily, but it seemed to me then, and afterward, as if I had been made one of the regular hands and that I toiled the whole day through. I rode old Josh for the hired man to plow corn, and also guided the lead horse on the old McCormick reaper, my short legs sticking out at right angles from my body, and I carried water to the field.

It appears that the blackbirds were very thick that year and threatened, in August, to destroy the corn. They came in gleeful clouds, settling with multitudinous clamor upon the stalks so that it became the duty of Den Green to scare them away by shooting at them, and I was permitted to follow and pick up the dead birds and carry them as "game."

There was joy and keen excitement in this warfare. Sometimes when Den fired into a flock, a dozen or more came fluttering down. At other times vast swarms rose at the sound of the gun with a rush of wings which sounded like a distant storm. Once Den let me fire the gun, and I took great pride in this until I came upon several of the shining little creatures bleeding, dying in the grass. Then my heart was troubled and I repented of my cruelty. Mrs. Green put the birds into potpies but my mother would not do so. "I don't believe in such game," she said. "It's bad enough to shoot the poor things without eating them."

Once we came upon a huge mountain rattlesnake and Den killed it with a shot of his gun. How we escaped being bitten is a mystery, for we explored every path of the hills and meadows in our bare feet, our trousers rolled to the knee. We hunted plums and picked blackberries and hazelnuts with very little fear of snakes, and yet we must have always been on guard. We loved our valley, and while occasionally we yielded to the lure of "Freedom's star," we were really content with Green's Coulee and its surrounding hills.

## CHAPTER V

### The Last Threshing in the Coulee

Life on a Wisconsin farm, even for the women, had its compensations. There were times when the daily routine of lonely and monotonous housework gave place to an agreeable bustle, and human intercourse lightened the toil. In the midst of the slow progress of the fall's plowing, the gathering of the threshing crew was a most dramatic event to my mother, as to us, for it not only brought unwonted clamor, it fetched her brothers William and David and Frank, who owned and ran a threshing machine, and their coming gave the house an air of festivity which offset the burden of extra work which fell upon us all.

In those days the grain, after being brought in and stacked around the barn, was allowed to remain until October or November when all the other work was finished.

Of course some men got the machine earlier, for all could not thresh at the same time, and a good part of every man's fall activities consisted in "changing works" with his neighbors, thus laying up a stock of unpaid labor against the home job. Day after day, therefore, father or the hired man shouldered a fork and went to help thresh, and all through the autumn months, the ceaseless ringing hum and the *bow-ouw, ouw-woo, boo-oo-oom* of the great balance wheels on the separator and the deep bass purr of its cylinder could be heard in every valley like the droning song of some sullen and gigantic autumnal insect.

I recall with especial clearness the events of that last threshing in the coulee. – I was eight, my brother was six. For days we had looked forward to the coming of "the threshers," listening with the greatest eagerness to father's report of the crew. At last he said, "Well, Belle, get ready. The machine will be here tomorrow."

All day we hung on the gate, gazing down the road, watching, waiting for the crew, and even after supper, we stood at the windows still hoping to hear the rattle of the ponderous separator.

Father explained that the men usually worked all day at one farm and moved after dark, and we were just starting to "climb the wooden hill" when we heard a far-off faint halloo.

"There they are," shouted father, catching up his old square tin lantern and hurriedly lighting the candle within it. "That's Frank's voice."

The night air was sharp, and as we had taken off our boots we could only stand at the window and watch father as he piloted the teamsters through the gate. The light threw fantastic shadows here and there, now lighting up a face, now bringing out the separator which seemed a weary and sullen monster awaiting its den. The men's voices sounded loud in the still night, causing the roused turkeys in the oaks to peer about on their perches, uneasy silhouettes against the sky.

We would gladly have stayed awake to greet our beloved uncles, but mother said, "You must go to sleep in order to be up early in the morning," and reluctantly we turned away.

Lying thus in our cot under the sloping raftered roof we could hear the squawk of the hens, as father wrung their innocent necks, and the crash of the "sweeps" being unloaded sounded loud and clear and strange. We longed to be out there, but at last the dance of lights and shadows on the plastered wall died away, and we fell into childish dreamless sleep.

We were awakened at dawn by the ringing beat of the iron mauls as Frank and David drove the stakes to hold the "power" to the ground. The rattle of trace chains, the clash of iron rods, the clang of steel bars, intermixed with the laughter of the men, came sharply through the frosty air, and the smell of sizzling sausage from the kitchen warned us that our busy mother was hurrying the breakfast forward. Knowing that it was time to get up, although it was not yet light, I had a sense of being awakened into a romantic new world, a world of heroic action.

As we stumbled down the stairs, we found the lamp-lit kitchen empty of the men. They had finished their coffee and were out in the stack-yard oiling the machine and hitching the horses to the power. Shivering yet entranced by the beauty of the frosty dawn we crept out to stand and watch the play. The frost lay white on every surface, the frozen ground rang like iron under the steel-shod feet of the horses, and the breath of the men rose up in little white puffs of steam.

Uncle David on the feeder's stand was impatiently awaiting the coming of the fifth team. The pitchers were climbing the stacks like blackbirds, and the straw-stackers were scuffling about the stable door. – Finally, just as the east began to bloom, and long streamers of red began to unroll along the vast gray dome of sky Uncle Frank, the driver, lifted his voice in a "Chippewa war-whoop."

On a still morning like this his signal could be heard for miles. Long drawn and musical, it sped away over the fields, announcing to all the world that the McClintocks were ready for the day's race. Answers came back faintly from the frosty fields where dim figures of laggard hands could be seen hurrying over the plowed ground, the last team came clattering in and was hooked into its place, David called "All right!" and the cylinder began to hum.

In those days the machine was either a "J. I. Case" or a "Buffalo Pitts," and was moved by five pairs of horses attached to a "power" staked to the ground, round which they travelled pulling at the ends of long levers or sweeps, and to me the force seemed tremendous. "Tumbling rods" with "knuckle joints" carried the motion to the cylinder, and the driver who stood upon a square platform above the huge, greasy cog-wheels (round which the horses moved) was a grand figure in my eyes.

Driving, to us, looked like a pleasant job, but Uncle Frank thought it very tiresome, and I can now see that it was. To stand on that small platform all through the long hours of a cold November day, when the cutting wind roared down the valley sweeping the dust and leaves along the road, was work. Even I perceived that it was far pleasanter to sit on the south side of the stack and watch the horses go round.

It was necessary that the "driver" should be a man of judgment, for the horses had to be kept at just the right speed, and to do this he must gauge the motion of the cylinder by the pitch of its deep bass song.

The three men in command of the machine were set apart as "the threshers." – William and David alternately "fed" or "tended," that is, one of them "fed" the grain into the howling cylinder while the other, oil-can in hand, watched the sieves, felt of the pinions and so kept the machine in good order. The feeder's position was the high place to which all boys aspired, and on this day I stood in silent admiration of Uncle David's easy powerful attitudes as he caught each bundle in the crook of his arm and spread it out into a broad, smooth band of yellow straw on which the whirling teeth caught and tore with monstrous fury. He was the ideal man in my eyes, grander in some ways than my father, and to be able to stand where he stood was the highest honor in the world.

It was all poetry for us and we wished every day were threshing day. The wind blew cold, the clouds went flying across the bright blue sky, and the straw glistened in the sun. With jarring snarl the circling zone of cogs dipped into the sturdy greasy wheels, and the single-trees and pulley-chains chirped clear and sweet as crickets. The dust flew, the whip cracked, and the men working swiftly to get the sheaves to the feeder or to take the straw away from the tail-end of the machine, were like warriors, urged to desperate action by battle cries. The stackers wallowing to their waists in the fluffy straw-pile seemed gnomes acting for our amusement.

The straw-pile! What delight we had in that! What joy it was to go up to the top where the men were stationed, one behind the other, and to have them toss huge forkfuls of the light fragrant stalks upon us, laughing to see us emerge from our golden cover. We were especially impressed by the bravery of Ed Green who stood in the midst of the thick dust and flying chaff close to the tail of the stacker. His teeth shone like a negro's out of his dust-blackened face and his shirt was wet with sweat, but he motioned for "more straw" and David, accepting the challenge, signalled

for more speed. Frank swung his lash and yelled at the straining horses, the sleepy growl of the cylinder rose to a howl and the wheat came pulsing out at the spout in such a stream that the carriers were forced to trot on their path to and from the granary in order to keep the grain from piling up around the measurer. – There was a kind of splendid rivalry in this backbreaking toil – for each sack weighed ninety pounds.

We got tired of wallowing in the straw at last, and went down to help Rover catch the rats which were being uncovered by the pitchers as they reached the stack bottom. – The horses, with their straining, out-stretched necks, the loud and cheery shouts, the whistling of the driver, the roar and hum of the great wheel, the flourishing of the forks, the supple movement of brawny arms, the shouts of the men, all blended with the wild sound of the wind in the creaking branches of the oaks, forming a glorious poem in our unforgetting minds.

At last the call for dinner sounded. The driver began to call, "Whoa there, boys! Steady, Tom," and to hold his long whip before the eyes of the more spirited of the teams in order to convince them that he really meant "stop." The pitchers stuck their forks upright in the stack and leaped to the ground. Randal, the band-cutter, drew from his wrist the looped string of his big knife, the stackers slid down from the straw-pile, and a race began among the teamsters to see whose span would be first unhitched and at the watering trough. What joyous rivalry it seemed to us! —

Mother and Mrs. Randal, wife of our neighbor, who was "changing works," stood ready to serve the food as soon as the men were seated. – The table had been lengthened to its utmost and pieced out with boards, and planks had been laid on stout wooden chairs at either side.

The men came in with a rush, and took seats wherever they could find them, and their attack on the boiled potatoes and chicken should have been appalling to the women, but it was not. They enjoyed seeing them eat. Ed Green was prodigious. One cut at a big potato, followed by two stabbing motions, and it was gone. – Two bites laid a leg of chicken as bare as a slate pencil. To us standing in the corner waiting our turn, it seemed that every "smitch" of the dinner was in danger, for the others were not far behind Ed and Dan.

At last even the gauntest of them filled up and left the room and we were free to sit at "the second table" and eat, while the men rested outside. David and William, however, generally had a belt to sew or a bent tooth to take out of the "concave." This seemed of grave dignity to us and we respected their self-sacrificing labor.

Nooning was brief. As soon as the horses had finished their oats, the roar and hum of the machine began again and continued steadily all the afternoon, till by and by the sun grew big and red, the night began to fall, and the wind died out.

This was the most impressive hour of a marvellous day. Through the falling dusk, the machine boomed steadily with a new sound, a solemn roar, rising at intervals to a rattling impatient yell as the cylinder ran momentarily empty. The men moved now in silence, looming dim and gigantic in the half-light. The straw-pile mountain high, the pitchers in the chaff, the feeder on his platform, and especially the driver on his power, seemed almost superhuman to my childish eyes. Gray dust covered the handsome face of David, changing it into something both sad and stern, but Frank's cheery voice rang out musically as he called to the weary horses, "Come on, Tom! Hup there, Dan!"

The track in which they walked had been worn into two deep circles and they all moved mechanically round and round, like parts of a machine, dull-eyed and covered with sweat.

At last William raised the welcome cry, "All done!" – the men threw down their forks. Uncle Frank began to call in a gentle, soothing voice, "Whoa, lads! Steady, boys! Whoa, there!"

But the horses had been going so long and so steadily that they could not at once check their speed. They kept moving, though slowly, on and on till their owners slid from the stacks and seizing the ends of the sweeps, held them. Even then, after the power was still, the cylinder kept its hum, till David throwing a last sheaf into its open maw, choked it into silence.

Now came the sound of dropping chains, the clang of iron rods, and the thud of hoofs as the horses walked with laggard gait and weary down-falling heads to the barn. The men, more subdued than at dinner, washed with greater care, and combed the chaff from their beards. The air was still and cool, and the sky a deep cloudless blue starred with faint fire.

Supper though quiet was more dramatic than dinner had been. The table lighted with kerosene lamps, the clean white linen, the fragrant dishes, the women flying about with steaming platters, all seemed very cheery and very beautiful, and the men who came into the light and warmth of the kitchen with aching muscles and empty stomachs, seemed gentler and finer than at noon. They were nearly all from neighboring farms, and my mother treated even the few hired men like visitors, and the talk was all hearty and good tempered though a little subdued.

One by one the men rose and slipped away, and father withdrew to milk the cows and bed down the horses, leaving the women and the youngsters to eat what was left and "do up the dishes."

After we had eaten our fill Frank and I also went out to the barn (all wonderfully changed now to our minds by the great stack of straw), there to listen to David and father chatting as they rubbed their tired horses. – The lantern threw a dim red light on the harness and on the rumps of the cattle, but left mysterious shadows in the corners. I could hear the mice rustling in the straw of the roof, and from the farther end of the dimly-lighted shed came the regular *strim-stram* of the streams of milk falling into the bottom of a tin pail as the hired hand milked the big roan cow.

All this was very momentous to me as I sat on the oat box, shivering in the cold air, listening with all my ears, and when we finally went toward the house, the stars were big and sparkling. The frost had already begun to glisten on the fences and well-curb, and high in the air, dark against the sky, the turkeys were roosting uneasily, as if disturbed by premonitions of approaching Thanksgiving. Rover pattered along by my side on the crisp grass and my brother clung to my hand.

How bright and warm it was in the kitchen with mother putting things to rights while father and my uncles leaned their chairs against the wall and talked of the west and of moving. "I can't get away till after New Year's," father said. "But I'm going. I'll never put in another crop on these hills."

With speechless content I listened to Uncle William's stories of bears and Indians, and other episodes of frontier life, until at last we were ordered to bed and the glorious day was done.

Oh, those blessed days, those entrancing nights! How fine they were then, and how mellow they are now, for the slow-paced years have dropped nearly fifty other golden mists upon that far-off valley. From this distance I cannot understand how my father brought himself to leave that lovely farm and those good and noble friends.



## CHAPTER VI

### David and His Violin

Most of the events of our last autumn in Green's Coulee have slipped into the fathomless gulf, but the experiences of Thanksgiving day, which followed closely on our threshing day, are in my treasure house. Like a canvas by Rembrandt only one side of the figures therein is defined, the other side melts away into shadow – a luminous shadow, through which faint light pulses, luring my wistful gaze on and on, back into the vanished world where the springs of my life lie hidden.

It is a raw November evening. Frank and Harriet and I are riding into a strange land in a clattering farm wagon. Father and mother are seated before us on the spring seat. The ground is frozen and the floor of the carriage pounds and jars. We cling to the iron-lined sides of the box to soften the blows. It is growing dark. Before us (in a similar vehicle) my Uncle David is leading the way. I catch momentary glimpses of him outlined against the pale yellow sky. He stands erect, holding the reins of his swiftly-moving horses in his powerful left hand. Occasionally he shouts back to my father, whose chin is buried in a thick buffalo-skin coat. Mother is only a vague mass, a figure wrapped in shawls. The wind is keen, the world gray and cheerless.

My sister is close beside me in the straw. Frank is asleep. I am on my knees looking ahead. Suddenly with rush of wind and clatter of hoofs, we enter the gloom of a forest and the road begins to climb. I see the hills on the right. I catch the sound of wheels on a bridge. I am cold. I snuggle down under the robes and the gurgle of ice-bound water is fused with my dreams.

I am roused at last by Uncle David's pleasant voice, "Wake up, boys, and pay y'r lodging!" I look out and perceive him standing beside the wheel. I see a house and I hear the sound of Deborah's voice from the warmly-lighted open door.

I climb down, heavy with cold and sleep. As I stand there my uncle reaches up his arms to take my mother down. Not knowing that she has a rheumatic elbow, he squeezes her playfully. She gives a sharp scream, and his team starts away on a swift run around the curve of the road toward the gate. Dropping my mother, he dashes across the yard to intercept the runaways. We all stand in silence, watching the flying horses and the wonderful race he is making toward the gate. He runs with magnificent action, his head thrown high. As the team dashes through the gate his outflung left hand catches the end-board of the wagon, – he leaps into the box, and so passes from our sight.

We go into the cottage. It is a small building with four rooms and a kitchen on the ground floor, but in the sitting room we come upon an open fireplace, – the first I had ever seen, and in the light of it sits Grandfather McClintock, the glory of the flaming logs gilding the edges of his cloud of bushy white hair. He does not rise to greet us, but smiles and calls out, "Come in! Come in! Draw a cheer. Sit ye down."

A clamor of welcome fills the place. Harriet and I are put to warm before the blaze. Grandad takes Frank upon his knee and the cutting wind of the gray outside world is forgotten.

This house in which the McClintocks were living at this time, belonged to a rented farm. Grandad had sold the original homestead on the LaCrosse River, and David who had lately married a charming young Canadian girl, was the head of the family. Deborah, it seems, was also living with him and Frank was there – as a visitor probably.

The room in which we sat was small and bare but to me it was very beautiful, because of the fire, and by reason of the merry voices which filled my ears with music. Aunt Rebecca brought to us a handful of crackers and told us that we were to have oyster soup for supper. This gave us great pleasure even in anticipation, for oysters were a delicious treat in those days.

"Well, Dick," Grandad began, "so ye're plannin' to go west, air ye?"

"Yes, as soon as I get all my grain and hogs marketed I'm going to pull out for my new farm over in Iowa."

"Ye'd better stick to the old coulee," warned my grandfather, a touch of sadness in his voice. "Ye'll find none better."

My father was disposed to resent this. "That's all very well for the few who have the level land in the middle of the valley," he retorted, "but how about those of us who are crowded against the hills? You should see the farm I have in Winnesheik!! Not a hill on it big enough for a boy to coast on. It's right on the edge of Looking Glass Prairie, and I have a spring of water, and a fine grove of trees just where I want them, not where they have to be grubbed out."

"But ye belong here," repeated Grandfather. "You were married here, your children were born here. Ye'll find no such friends in the west as you have here in Neshonoc. And Belle will miss the family."

My father laughed. "Oh, you'll all come along. Dave has the fever already. Even William is likely to catch it."

Old Hugh sighed deeply. "I hope ye're wrong," he said. "I'd like to spend me last days here with me sons and daughters around me, sich as are left to me," here his voice became sterner. "It's the curse of our country, – this constant moving, moving. I'd have been better off had I stayed in Ohio, though this valley seemed very beautiful to me the first time I saw it."

At this point David came in, and everybody shouted, "Did you stop them?" referring of course to the runaway team.

"I did," he replied with a smile. "But how about the oysters. I'm holler as a beech log."

The fragrance of the soup thoroughly awakened even little Frank, and when we drew around the table, each face shone with the light of peace and plenty, and all our elders tried to forget that this was the last Thanksgiving festival which the McClintocks and Garlands would be able to enjoy in the old valley. How good those oysters were! They made up the entire meal, – excepting mince pie which came as a closing sweet.

Slowly, one by one, the men drew back and returned to the sitting room, leaving the women to wash up the dishes and put the kitchen to rights. David seized the opportunity to ask my father to tell once again of the trip he had made, of the lands he had seen, and the farm he had purchased, for his young heart was also fired with desire of exploration. The level lands toward the sunset allured him. In his visions the wild meadows were filled with game, and the free lands needed only to be tickled with a hoe to laugh into harvest.

He said, "As soon as Dad and Frank are settled on a farm here, I'm going west also. I'm as tired of climbing these hills as you are. I want a place of my own – and besides, from all you say of that wheat country out there, a threshing machine would pay wonderfully well."

As the women came in, my father called out, "Come, Belle, sing 'O'er the Hills in Legions Boys!' – Dave get out your fiddle – and tune us all up."

David tuned up his fiddle and while he twanged on the strings mother lifted her voice in our fine old marching song.

Cheer up, brothers, as we go,  
O'er the mountains, westward ho —

and we all joined in the jubilant chorus —

Then o'er the hills in legions, boys,  
Fair freedom's star  
Points to the sunset regions, boys,  
Ha, ha, ha-ha! —

My father's face shone with the light of the explorer, the pioneer. The words of this song appealed to him as the finest poetry. It meant all that was fine and hopeful and buoyant in American life, to him – but on my mother's sweet face a wistful expression deepened and in her fine eyes a reflective shadow lay. To her this song meant not so much the acquisition of a new home as the loss of all her friends and relatives. She sang it submissively, not exultantly, and I think the other women were of the same mood though their faces were less expressive to me. To all of the pioneer wives of the past that song had meant deprivation, suffering, loneliness, heart-ache.

From this they passed to other of my father's favorite songs, and it is highly significant to note that even in this choice of songs he generally had his way. He was the dominating force. "Sing 'Nellie Wildwood,'" he said, and they sang it. – This power of getting his will respected was due partly to his military training but more to a distinctive trait in him. He was a man of power, of decision, a natural commander of men.

They sang "Minnie Minturn" to his request, and the refrain, —

I have heard the angels warning,  
I have seen the golden shore —

meant much to me. So did the line,

But I only hear the drummers  
As the armies march away.

Aunt Deb was also a soul of decision. She called out, "No more of these sad tones," and struck up "The Year of Jubilo," and we all shouted till the walls shook with the exultant words:

Ol' massa run – ha-ha!  
De darkies stay, – ho-ho!  
It must be now is the kingdom a-comin'  
In the year of Jubilo.

At this point the fire suggested an old English ballad which I loved, and so I piped up, "Mother, sing, 'Pile the Wood on Higher!'" and she complied with pleasure, for this was a song of home, of the unbroken fireside circle.

Oh, the winds howl mad outdoors  
The snow clouds hurry past,  
The giant trees sway to and fro  
Beneath the sweeping blast.

and we children joined in the chorus:

Then we'll gather round the fire  
And we'll pile the wood on higher,  
Let the song and jest go round;  
What care we for the storm,  
When the fireside is so warm,  
And pleasure here is found?

Never before did this song mean so much to me as at this moment when the winds were actually howling outdoors, and Uncle Frank was in very truth piling the logs higher. It seemed as though my stuffed bosom could not receive anything deeper and finer, but it did, for father was saying, "Well, Dave, now for some *tunes*."

This was the best part of David to me. He could make any room mystical with the magic of his bow. True, his pieces were mainly venerable dance tunes, cotillions, hornpipes, – melodies which had passed from fiddler to fiddler until they had become veritable folk-songs, – pieces like "Money Musk," "Honest John," "Haste to the Wedding," and many others whose names I have forgotten, but with a gift of putting into even the simplest song an emotion which subdued us and silenced us, he played on, absorbed and intent. From these familiar pieces he passed to others for which he had no names, melodies strangely sweet and sad, full of longing cries, voicing something which I dimly felt but could not understand.

At the moment he was the somber Scotch Highlander, the true Celt, and as he bent above his instrument his black eyes glowing, his fine head drooping low, my heart bowed down in worship of his skill. He was my hero, the handsomest, most romantic figure in all my world.

He played, "Maggie, Air Ye Sleepin," and the wind outside went to my soul. Voices wailed to me out of the illimitable hill-land forests, voices that pleaded:

Oh, let me in, for loud the linn  
Goes roarin' o'er the moorland craggy.

He appeared to forget us, even his young wife. His eyes looked away into gray storms. Vague longing ached in his throat. Life was a struggle, love a torment.

He stopped abruptly, and put the violin into its box, fumbling with the catch to hide his emotion and my father broke the tense silence with a prosaic word. "Well, well! Look here, it's time you youngsters were asleep. Beckie, where are you going to put these children?"

Aunt Rebecca, a trim little woman with brown eyes, looked at us reflectively, "Well, now, I don't know. I guess we'll have to make a bed for them on the floor."

This was done, and for the first time in my life, I slept before an open fire. As I snuggled into my blankets with my face turned to the blaze, the darkness of the night and the denizens of the pineland wilderness to the north had no terrors for me.

I was awakened in the early light by Uncle David building the fire, and then came my father's call, and the hurly burly of jovial greeting from old and young. The tumult lasted till breakfast was called, and everybody who could find place sat around the table and attacked the venison and potatoes which formed the meal. I do not remember our leave-taking or the ride homeward. I bring to mind only the desolate cold of our own kitchen into which we tramped late in the afternoon, sitting in our wraps until the fire began to roar within its iron cage.

Oh, winds of the winter night! Oh, firelight and the shine of tender eyes! How far away you seem tonight!

So faint and far,  
Each dear face shineth as a star.

Oh, you by the western sea, and you of the south beyond the reach of Christmas snow, do not your hearts hunger, like mine tonight for that Thanksgiving Day among the trees? For the glance of eyes undimmed of tears, for the hair untouched with gray?

It all lies in the unchanging realm of the past – this land of my childhood. Its charm, its strange dominion cannot return save in the poet's reminiscent dream. No money, no railway train can take us back to it. It did not in truth exist – it was a magical world, born of the vibrant union of youth

and firelight, of music and the voice of moaning winds – a union which can never come again to you or me, father, uncle, brother, till the coulee meadows bloom again unscarred of spade or plow.

## CHAPTER VII

### Winnesheik "Woods and Prairie Lands"

Our last winter in the Coulee was given over to preparations for our removal but it made very little impression on my mind which was deeply engaged on my school work. As it was out of the question for us to attend the village school the elders arranged for a neighborhood school at the home of John Roche, who had an unusually large living room. John is but a shadowy figure in this chronicle but his daughter Indiana, whom we called "Ingie," stands out as the big girl of my class.

Books were scarce in this house as well as in our own. I remember piles of newspapers but no bound volumes other than the Bible and certain small Sunday school books. All the homes of the valley were equally barren. My sister and I jointly possessed a very limp and soiled cloth edition of "Mother Goose." Our stories all came to us by way of the conversation of our elders. No one but grandmother Garland ever deliberately told us a tale – except the hired girls, and their romances were of such dark and gruesome texture that we often went to bed shivering with fear of the dark.

Suddenly, unexpectedly, miraculously, I came into possession of two books, one called *Beauty and The Beast*, and the other *Aladdin and His Wonderful Lamp*. These volumes mark a distinct epoch in my life. The grace of the lovely Lady as she stood above the cringing Beast gave me my first clear notion of feminine dignity and charm. On the magic Flying Carpet I rose into the wide air of Oriental romance. I attended the building of towered cities and the laying of gorgeous feasts. I carried in my hand the shell from which, at the word of command, the cool clear water gushed. My feet were shod with winged boots, and on my head was the Cap of Invisibility. My body was captive in our snowbound little cabin but my mind ranged the golden palaces of Persia – so much I know. Where the wonder-working romances came from I cannot now tell but I think they were Christmas presents, for Christmas came this year with unusual splendor.

The sale of the farm had put into my father's hands a considerable sum of money and I assume that some small part of this went to make our holiday glorious. In one of my stockings was a noble red and blue tin horse with a flowing mane and tail, and in the other was a monkey who could be made to climb a stick. Harriet had a new china doll and Frank a horn and china dog, and all the corners of our stockings were stuffed with nuts and candies. I hope mother got something beside the potatoes and onions which I remember seeing her pull out and unwrap with delightful humor – an old and rather pathetic joke but new to us.

The snow fell deep in January and I have many glorious pictures of the whirling flakes outlined against the darkly wooded hills across the marsh. Father was busy with his team drawing off wheat and hogs and hay, and often came into the house at night, white with the storms through which he had passed. My trips to school were often interrupted by the cold, and the path which my sister and I trod was along the ever-deepening furrows made by the bob-sleighs of the farmers. Often when we met a team or were overtaken by one, we were forced out of the road into the drifts, and I can feel to this moment, the wedge of snow which caught in the tops of my tall boots and slowly melted into my gray socks.

We were not afraid of the drifts, however. On the contrary mother had to fight to keep us from wallowing beyond our depth. I had now a sled which was my inseparable companion. I could not feed the hens or bring in a pan of chips without taking it with me. My heart swelled with pride and joy whenever I regarded it, and yet it was but a sober-colored thing, a frame of hickory built by the village blacksmith in exchange for a cord of wood – delivered. I took it to school one day, but Ed Roche abused it, took it up and threw it into the deep snow among the weeds. – Had I been large enough, I would have killed that boy with pleasure, but being small and fat and numb with

cold I merely rescued my treasure as quickly as I could and hurried home to pour my indignant story into my mother's sympathetic ears.

I seldom spoke of my defeats to my father for he had once said, "Fight your own battles, my son. If I hear of your being licked by a boy of anything like your own size, I'll give you another when you get home." He didn't believe in molly-coddling, you will perceive. His was a stern school, the school of self-reliance and resolution.

Neighbors came in now and again to talk of our migration, and yet in spite of all that, in spite of our song, in spite of my father's preparation I had no definite premonition of coming change, and when the day of departure actually dawned, I was as surprised, as unprepared as though it had all happened without the slightest warning.

So long as the kettle sang on the hearth and the clock ticked on its shelf, the idea of "moving" was pleasantly diverting, but when one raw winter day I saw the faithful clock stuffed with rags and laid on its back in a box, and the chairs and dishes being loaded into a big sleigh, I began to experience something very disturbing and very uncomfortable. "O'er the hills in legions, boys," did not sound so inspiring to me then. "The woods and prairie lands" of Iowa became of less account to me than the little cabin in which I had lived all my short life.

Harriet and I wandered around, whining and shivering, our own misery augmented by the worried look on mother's face. It was February, and she very properly resented leaving her home for a long, cold ride into an unknown world, but as a dutiful wife she worked hard and silently in packing away her treasures, and clothing her children for the journey.

At last the great sleigh-load of bedding and furniture stood ready at the door, the stove, still warm with cheerful service, was lifted in, and the time for saying good-bye to our coulee home had come.

"Forward march!" shouted father and led the way with the big bob-sled, followed by cousin Jim and our little herd of kine, while mother and the children brought up the rear in a "pung" drawn by old Josh, a flea-bit gray. – It is probable that at the moment the master himself was slightly regretful.

A couple of hours' march brought us to LaCrosse, the great city whose wonders I had longed to confront. It stood on the bank of a wide river and had all the value of a sea-port to me for in summertime great hoarsely bellowing steamboats came and went from its quay, and all about it rose high wooded hills. Halting there, we overlooked a wide expanse of snow-covered ice in the midst of which a dark, swift, threatening current of open water ran. Across this chasm stretching from one ice-field to another lay a flexible narrow bridge over which my father led the way toward hills of the western shore. There was something especially terrifying in the boiling heave of that black flood, and I shivered with terror as I passed it, having vividly in my mind certain grim stories of men whose teams had broken through and been swept beneath the ice never to reappear.

It was a long ride to my mother, for she too was in terror of the ice, but at last the Minnesota bank was reached, La Crescent was passed, and our guide entering a narrow valley began to climb the snowy hills. All that was familiar was put behind; all that was strange and dark, all that was wonderful and unknown, spread out before us, and as we crawled along that slippery, slanting road, it seemed that we were entering on a new and marvellous world.

We lodged that night in Hokah, a little town in a deep valley. The tavern stood near a river which flowed over its dam with resounding roar and to its sound I slept. Next day at noon we reached Caledonia, a town high on the snowy prairie. Caledonia! For years that word was a poem in my ear, part of a marvellous and epic march. Actually it consisted of a few frame houses and a grocery store. But no matter. Its name shall ring like a peal of bells in this book.

It grew colder as we rose, and that night, the night of the second day, we reached Hesper and entered a long stretch of woods, and at last turned in towards a friendly light shining from a low house beneath a splendid oak.

As we drew near my father raised a signal shout, "Hallo-o-o the House!" and a man in a long gray coat came out. "Is that thee, friend Richard?" he called, and my father replied, "Yea, neighbor Barley, here we are!"

I do not know how this stranger whose manner of speech was so peculiar, came to be there, but he was and in answer to my question, father replied, "Barley is a Quaker," an answer which explained nothing at that time. Being too sleepy to pursue the matter, or to remark upon anything connected with the exterior, I dumbly followed Harriet into the kitchen which was still in possession of good Mrs. Barley.

Having filled our stomachs with warm food mother put us to bed, and when we awoke late the next day the Barleys were gone, our own stove was in its place, and our faithful clock was ticking calmly on the shelf. So far as we knew, mother was again at home and entirely content.

This farm, which was situated two miles west of the village of Hesper, immediately won our love. It was a glorious place for boys. Broad-armed white oaks stood about the yard, and to the east and north a deep forest invited to exploration. The house was of logs and for that reason was much more attractive to us than to our mother. It was, I suspect, both dark and cold. I know the roof was poor, for one morning I awoke to find a miniature peak of snow on the floor at my bedside. It was only a rude little frontier cabin, but it was perfectly satisfactory to me.

Harriet and I learned much in the way of woodcraft during the months which followed. Night by night the rabbits, in countless numbers printed their tell-tale records in the snow, and quail and partridges nested beneath the down-drooping branches of the red oaks. Squirrels ran from tree to tree and we were soon able to distinguish and name most of the tracks made by the birds and small animals, and we took a never-failing delight in this study of the wild. In most of my excursions my sister was my companion. My brother was too small.

All my memories of this farm are of the fiber of poetry. The silence of the snowy aisles of the forest, the whirring flight of partridges, the impudent bark of squirrels, the quavering voices of owls and coons, the music of the winds in the high trees, – all these impressions unite in my mind like parts of a woodland symphony. I soon learned to distinguish the raccoon's mournful call from the quavering cry of the owl, and I joined the hired man in hunting rabbits from under the piles of brush in the clearing. Once or twice some ferocious, larger animal, possibly a panther, hungrily yowled in the impenetrable thickets to the north, but this only lent a still more enthralling interest to the forest.

To the east, an hour's walk through the timber, stood the village, built and named by the "Friends" who had a meeting house not far away, and though I saw much of them, I never attended their services.

Our closest neighbor was a gruff loud-voiced old Norwegian and from his children (our playmates) we learned many curious facts. All Norwegians, it appeared, ate from wooden plates or wooden bowls. Their food was soup which they called "bean swaagen" and they were all yellow haired and blue-eyed.

Harriet and I and one Lars Peterson gave a great deal of time to an attempt to train a yoke of yearling calves to draw our handsled. I call it an attempt, for we hardly got beyond a struggle to overcome the stubborn resentment of the stupid beasts, who very naturally objected to being forced into service before their time. Harriet was ten, I was not quite nine, and Lars was only twelve, hence we spent long hours in yoking and unyoking our unruly span. I believe we did actually haul several loads of firewood to the kitchen door, but at last Buck and Brin "turned the yoke" and broke it, and that ended our teaming.

The man from whom we acquired our farm had in some way domesticated a flock of wild geese, and though they must have been a part of the farm-yard during the winter, they made no deep impression on my mind till in the spring when as the migratory instinct stirred in their blood they all rose on the surface of the water in a little pool near the barn and with beating wings lifted



their voices in brazen clamor calling to their fellows driving by high overhead. At times their cries halted the flocks in their arrowy flight and brought them down to mix indistinguishably with the captive birds.

The wings of these had been clipped but as the weeks went on their pinions grew again and one morning when I went out to see what had happened to them, I found the pool empty and silent. We all missed their fine voices and yet we could not blame them for a reassertion of their freeborn nature. They had gone back to their summer camping grounds on the lakes of the far north.

Early in April my father hired a couple of raw Norwegians to assist in clearing the land, and although neither of these immigrants could speak a word of English, I was greatly interested in them. They slept in the granary but this did not prevent them from communicating to our housemaid a virulent case of smallpox. Several days passed before my mother realized what ailed the girl. The discovery must have horrified her, for she had been through an epidemic of this dread disease in Wisconsin, and knew its danger.

It was a fearsome plague in those days, much more fatal than now, and my mother with three unvaccinated children, a helpless handmaid to be nursed, was in despair when father developed the disease and took to his bed. Surely it must have seemed to her as though the Lord had visited upon her more punishment than belonged to her, for to add the final touch, in the midst of all her other afflictions she was expecting the birth of another child.

I do not know what we would have done had not a noble woman of the neighborhood volunteered to come in and help us. She was not a friend, hardly an acquaintance, and yet she served us like an angel of mercy. Whether she still lives or not I cannot say, but I wish to acknowledge here the splendid heroism which brought Mary Briggs, a stranger, into our stricken home at a time when all our other neighbors beat their horses into a mad gallop whenever forced to pass our gate.

Young as I was I realized something of the burden which had fallen upon my mother, and when one night I was awakened from deep sleep by hearing her calling out in pain, begging piteously for help, I shuddered in my bed, realizing with childish, intuitive knowledge that she was passing through a cruel convulsion which could not be softened or put aside. I went to sleep again at last, and when I woke, I had a little sister.

Harriet and I having been vaccinated, escaped with what was called the "verylide" but father was ill for several weeks. Fortunately he was spared, as we all were, the "pitting" which usually follows this dreaded disease, and in a week or two we children had forgotten all about it. Spring was upon us and the world was waiting to be explored.

One of the noblest features of this farm was a large spring which boiled forth from the limestone rock about eighty rods north of the house, and this was a wonder-spot to us. There was something magical in this never-failing fountain, and we loved to play beside its waters. One of our delightful tasks was riding the horses to water at this spring, and I took many lessons in horsemanship on these trips.

As the seeding time came on, enormous flocks of pigeons, in clouds which almost filled the sky, made it necessary for some one to sentinel the new-sown grain, and although I was but nine years of age, my father put a double-barrelled shotgun into my hands, and sent me out to defend the fields.

This commission filled me with the spirit of the soldier. Proudly walking my rounds I menaced the flocks as they circled warily over my head, taking shot at them now and again as they came near enough, feeling as duty bound and as martial as any Roman sentry standing guard over a city. Up to this time I had not been allowed to carry arms, although I had been the companion of Den Green and Ellis Usher on their hunting expeditions in the coulee – now with entire discretion over my weapon, I loaded it, capped it and fired it, marching with sedate and manly tread, while little Frank at my heels, served as subordinate in his turn.

The pigeons passed after a few days, but my warlike duties continued, for the ground-squirrels, called "gophers" by the settlers, were almost as destructive of the seed corn as the pigeons had been of the wheat. Day after day I patrolled the edge of the field listening to the saucy whistle of the striped little rascals, tracking them to their burrows and shooting them as they lifted their heads above the ground. I had moments of being sorry for them, but the sight of one digging up the seed, silenced my complaining conscience and I continued to slay.

The school-house of this district stood out upon the prairie to the west a mile distant, and during May we trudged our way over a pleasant road, each carrying a small tin pail filled with luncheon. Here I came in contact with the Norwegian boys from the colony to the north, and a bitter feud arose (or existed) between the "Yankees," as they called us, and "the Norskies," as we called them. Often when we met on the road, showers of sticks and stones filled the air, and our hearts burned with the heat of savage conflict. War usually broke out at the moment of parting. Often after a fairly amicable half-mile together we suddenly split into hostile ranks, and warred with true tribal frenzy as long as we could find a stone or a clod to serve as missile. I had no personal animosity in this, I was merely a Pict willing to destroy my Angle enemies.

As I look back upon my life on that woodland farm, it all seems very colorful and sweet. I am re-living days when the warm sun, falling on radiant slopes of grass, lit the meadow phlox and tall tiger lilies into flaming torches of color. I think of blackberry thickets and odorous grapevines and cherry trees and the delicious nuts which grew in profusion throughout the forest to the north. This forest which seemed endless and was of enchanted solemnity served as our wilderness. We explored it at every opportunity. We loved every day for the color it brought, each season for the wealth of its experience, and we welcomed the thought of spending all our years in this beautiful home where the wood and the prairie of our song did actually meet and mingle.

## CHAPTER VIII

### We Move Again

One day there came into our home a strange man who spoke in a fashion new to me. He was a middle-aged rather formal individual, dressed in a rough gray suit, and father alluded to him privately as "that English duke." I didn't know exactly what he meant by this, but our visitor's talk gave me a vague notion of "the old country."

"My home," he said, "is near Manchester. I have come to try farming in the American wilderness."

He was kindly, and did his best to be democratic, but we children stood away from him, wondering what he was doing in our house. My mother disliked him from the start for as he took his seat at our dinner table, he drew from his pocket a case in which he carried a silver fork and spoon and a silver-handled knife. Our cutlery was not good enough for him!

Every family that we knew at that time used three-tined steel forks and my mother naturally resented the implied criticism of her table ware. I heard her say to my father, "If our ways don't suit your English friend he'd better go somewhere else for his meals."

This fastidious pioneer also carried a revolver, for he believed that having penetrated far into a dangerous country, he was in danger, and I am not at all sure but that he was right, for the Minnesota woods at this time were filled with horse-thieves and counterfeiters, and it was known that many of these landhunting Englishmen carried large sums of gold on their persons.

We resented our guest still more when we found that he was trying to buy our lovely farm and that father was already half-persuaded. We loved this farm. We loved the log house, and the oaks which sheltered it, and we especially valued the glorious spring and the plum trees which stood near it, but father was still dreaming of the free lands of the farther west, and early in March he sold to the Englishman and moved us all to a rented place some six miles directly west, in the township of Burr Oak.

This was but a temporary lodging, a kind of camping place, for no sooner were his fields seeded than he set forth once again with a covered wagon, eager to explore the open country to the north and west of us. The wood and prairie land of Winnesheik County did not satisfy him, although it seemed to me then, as it does now, the fulfillment of his vision, the realization of our song.

For several weeks he travelled through southern Minnesota and northern Iowa, always in search of the perfect farm, and when he returned, just before harvest, he was able to report that he had purchased a quarter section of "the best land in Mitchell County" and that after harvest we would all move again.

If my mother resented this third removal she made no comment which I can now recall. I suspect that she went rather willingly this time, for her brother David wrote that he had also located in Mitchell County, not two miles from the place my father had decided upon for our future home, and Samantha, her younger sister, had settled in Minnesota. The circle in Neshonoc seemed about to break up. A mighty spreading and shifting was going on all over the west, and no doubt my mother accepted her part in it without especial protest.

Our life in Burr Oak township that summer was joyous for us children. It seems to have been almost all sunshine and play. As I reflect upon it I relive many delightful excursions into the northern woods. It appears that Harriet and I were in continual harvest of nuts and berries. Our walks to school were explorations and we spent nearly every Saturday and Sunday in minute study of the country-side, devouring everything which was remotely edible. We gorged upon May-apples until we were ill, and munched black cherries until we were dizzy with their fumes. We clambered high trees to collect baskets of wild grapes which our mother could not use, and we

garnered nuts with the insatiable greed of squirrels. We ate oak-shoots, fern-roots, leaves, bark, seed-balls, – everything! – not because we were hungry but because we loved to experiment, and we came home, only when hungry or worn out or in awe of the darkness.

It was a delightful season, full of the most satisfying companionship and yet of the names of my playmates I can seize upon only two – the others have faded from the tablets of my memory. I remember Ned who permitted me to hold his plow, and Perry who taught me how to tame the half-wild colts that filled his father's pasture. Together we spent long days lassoing – or rather snaring – the feet of these horses and subduing them to the halter. We had many fierce struggles but came out of them all without a serious injury.

Late in August my father again loaded our household goods into wagons, and with our small herd of cattle following, set out toward the west, bound once again to overtake the actual line of the middle border.

This journey has an unforgettable epic charm as I look back upon it. Each mile took us farther and farther into the unsettled prairie until in the afternoon of the second day, we came to a meadow so wide that its western rim touched the sky without revealing a sign of man's habitation other than the road in which we travelled.

The plain was covered with grass tall as ripe wheat and when my father stopped his team and came back to us and said, "Well, children, here we are on The Big Prairie," we looked about us with awe, so endless seemed this spread of wild oats and waving blue-joint.

Far away dim clumps of trees showed, but no chimney was in sight, and no living thing moved save our own cattle and the hawks lazily wheeling in the air. My heart filled with awe as well as wonder. The majesty of this primeval world exalted me. I felt for the first time the poetry of the unplowed spaces. It seemed that the "herds of deer and buffalo" of our song might, at any moment, present themselves, – but they did not, and my father took no account even of the marsh fowl.

"Forward march!" he shouted, and on we went.

Hour after hour he pushed into the west, the heads of his tired horses hanging ever lower, and on my mother's face the shadow deepened, but her chieftain's voice cheerily urging his team lost nothing of its clarion resolution. He was in his element. He loved this shelterless sweep of prairie. This westward march entranced him, I think he would have gladly kept on until the snowy wall of the Rocky Mountains met his eyes, for he was a natural explorer.

Sunset came at last, but still he drove steadily on through the sparse settlements. Just at nightfall we came to a beautiful little stream, and stopped to let the horses drink. I heard its rippling, reassuring song on the pebbles. Thereafter all is dim and vague to me until my mother called out sharply, "Wake up, children! Here we are!"

Struggling to my feet I looked about me. Nothing could be seen but the dim form of a small house. – On every side the land melted into blackness, silent and without boundary.

Driving into the yard, father hastily unloaded one of the wagons and taking mother and Harriet and Jessie drove away to spend the night with Uncle David who had preceded us, as I now learned, and was living on a farm not far away. My brother and I were left to camp as best we could with the hired man.

Spreading a rude bed on the floor, he told us to "hop in" and in ten minutes we were all fast asleep.

The sound of a clattering poker awakened me next morning and when I opened my sleepy eyes and looked out a new world displayed itself before me.

The cabin faced a level plain with no tree in sight. A mile away to the west stood a low stone house and immediately in front of us opened a half-section of unfenced sod. To the north, as far as I could see, the land billowed like a russet ocean, with scarcely a roof to fleck its lonely spread. – I cannot say that I liked or disliked it. I merely marvelled at it, and while I wandered about the yard,

the hired man scorched some cornmeal mush in a skillet and this with some butter and gingerbread, made up my first breakfast in Mitchell County.

An hour or two later father and mother and the girls returned and the work of setting up the stove and getting the furniture in place began. In a very short time the experienced clock was voicing its contentment on a new shelf, and the kettle was singing busily on its familiar stove. Once more and for the sixth time since her marriage, Belle Garland adjusted herself to a pioneer environment, comforted no doubt by the knowledge that David and Deborah were near and that her father was coming soon. No doubt she also congratulated herself on the fact that she had not been carried beyond the Missouri River – and that her house was not "surrounded by Indians who murder by night."

A few hours later, while my brother and I were on the roof of the house with intent to peer "over the edge of the prairie" something grandly significant happened. Upon a low hill to the west a herd of horses suddenly appeared running swiftly, led by a beautiful sorrel pony with shining white mane. On they came, like a platoon of cavalry rushing down across the open sod which lay before our door. The leader moved with lofty and graceful action, easily out-stretching all his fellows. Forward they swept, their long tails floating in the wind like banners, – on in a great curve as if scenting danger in the smoke of our fire. The thunder of their feet filled me with delight. Surely, next to a herd of buffalo this squadron of wild horses was the most satisfactory evidence of the wilderness into which we had been thrust.

Riding as if to intercept the leader, a solitary herder now appeared, mounted upon a horse which very evidently was the mate of the leader. He rode magnificently, and under him the lithe mare strove resolutely to overtake and head off the leader. – All to no purpose! The halterless steeds of the prairie snorted derisively at their former companion, bridled and saddled, and carrying the weight of a master. Swiftly they thundered across the sod, dropped into a ravine, and disappeared in a cloud of dust.

Silently we watched the rider turn and ride slowly homeward. The plain had become our new domain, the horseman our ideal.

## CHAPTER IX

### Our First Winter on the Prairie

For a few days my brother and I had little to do other than to keep the cattle from straying, and we used our leisure in becoming acquainted with the region round about.

It burned deep into our memories, this wide, sunny, windy country. The sky so big, and the horizon line so low and so far away, made this new world of the plain more majestic than the world of the Coulee. – The grasses and many of the flowers were also new to us. On the uplands the herbage was short and dry and the plants stiff and woody, but in the swales the wild oat shook its quivers of barbed and twisted arrows, and the crow's foot, tall and sere, bowed softly under the feet of the wind, while everywhere, in the lowlands as well as on the ridges, the bleaching white antlers of by-gone herbivora lay scattered, testifying to "the herds of deer and buffalo" which once fed there. We were just a few years too late to see them.

To the south the sections were nearly all settled upon, for in that direction lay the county town, but to the north and on into Minnesota rolled the unplowed sod, the feeding ground of the cattle, the home of foxes and wolves, and to the west, just beyond the highest ridges, we loved to think the bison might still be seen.

The cabin on this rented farm was a mere shanty, a shell of pine boards, which needed re-enforcing to make it habitable and one day my father said, "Well, Hamlin, I guess you'll have to run the plow-team this fall. I must help neighbor Button wall up the house and I can't afford to hire another man."

This seemed a fine commission for a lad of ten, and I drove my horses into the field that first morning with a manly pride which added an inch to my stature. I took my initial "round" at a "land" which stretched from one side of the quarter section to the other, in confident mood. I was grown up!

But alas! my sense of elation did not last long. To guide a team for a few minutes as an experiment was one thing – to plow all day like a hired hand was another. It was not a chore, it was a job. It meant moving to and fro hour after hour, day after day, with no one to talk to but the horses. It meant trudging eight or nine miles in the forenoon and as many more in the afternoon, with less than an hour off at noon. It meant dragging the heavy implement around the corners, and it meant also many ship-wrecks, for the thick, wet stubble matted with wild buckwheat often rolled up between the coulter and the standard and threw the share completely out of the ground, making it necessary for me to halt the team and jerk the heavy plow backward for a new start.

Although strong and active I was rather short, even for a ten-year-old, and to reach the plow handles I was obliged to lift my hands above my shoulders; and so with the guiding lines crossed over my back and my worn straw hat bobbing just above the cross-brace I must have made a comical figure. At any rate nothing like it had been seen in the neighborhood and the people on the road to town looking across the field, laughed and called to me, and neighbor Button said to my father in my hearing, "That chap's too young to run a plow," a judgment which pleased and flattered me greatly.

Harriet cheered me by running out occasionally to meet me as I turned the nearest corner, and sometimes Frank consented to go all the way around, chatting breathlessly as he trotted along behind. At other times he was prevailed upon to bring to me a cookie and a glass of milk, a deed which helped to shorten the forenoon. And yet, notwithstanding all these ameliorations, plowing became tedious.

The flies were savage, especially in the middle of the day, and the horses, tortured by their lances, drove badly, twisting and turning in their despairing rage. Their tails were continually

getting over the lines, and in stopping to kick their tormentors from their bellies they often got astride the traces, and in other ways made trouble for me. Only in the early morning or when the sun sank low at night were they able to move quietly along their ways.

The soil was the kind my father had been seeking, a smooth dark sandy loam, which made it possible for a lad to do the work of a man. Often the share would go the entire "round" without striking a root or a pebble as big as a walnut, the steel running steadily with a crisp crouching ripping sound which I rather liked to hear. In truth work would have been quite tolerable had it not been so long drawn out. Ten hours of it even on a fine day made about twice too many for a boy.

Meanwhile I cheered myself in every imaginable way. I whistled. I sang. I studied the clouds. I gnawed the beautiful red skin from the seed vessels which hung upon the wild rose bushes, and I counted the prairie chickens as they began to come together in winter flocks running through the stubble in search of food. I stopped now and again to examine the lizards unhoused by the share, tormenting them to make them sweat their milky drops (they were curiously repulsive to me), and I measured the little granaries of wheat which the mice and gophers had deposited deep under the ground, storehouses which the plow had violated. My eyes dwelt enviously upon the sailing hawk, and on the passing of ducks. The occasional shadowy figure of a prairie wolf made me wish for Uncle David and his rifle.

On certain days nothing could cheer me. When the bitter wind blew from the north, and the sky was filled with wild geese racing southward, with swiftly-hurrying clouds, winter seemed about to spring upon me. The horses' tails streamed in the wind. Flurries of snow covered me with clinging flakes, and the mud "gummed" my boots and trouser legs, clogging my steps. At such times I suffered from cold and loneliness – all sense of being a man evaporated. I was just a little boy, longing for the leisure of boyhood.

Day after day, through the month of October and deep into November, I followed that team, turning over two acres of stubble each day. I would not believe this without proof, but it is true! At last it grew so cold that in the early morning everything was white with frost and I was obliged to put one hand in my pocket to keep it warm, while holding the plow with the other, but I didn't mind this so much, for it hinted at the close of autumn. I've no doubt facing the wind in this way was excellent discipline, but I didn't think it necessary then and my heart was sometimes bitter and rebellious.

The soldier did not intend to be severe. As he had always been an early riser and a busy toiler it seemed perfectly natural and good discipline, that his sons should also plow and husk corn at ten years of age. He often told of beginning life as a "bound boy" at nine, and these stories helped me to perform my own tasks without whining. I feared to voice my weakness.

At last there came a morning when by striking my heel upon the ground I convinced my boss that the soil was frozen too deep for the mold-board to break. "All right," he said, "you may lay off this forenoon."

Oh, those beautiful hours of respite! With time to play or read I usually read, devouring anything I could lay my hands upon. Newspapers, whether old or new, or pasted on the wall or piled up in the attic, – anything in print was wonderful to me. One enthralling book, borrowed from Neighbor Button, was *The Female Spy*, a Tale of the Rebellion. Another treasure was a story called *Cast Ashore*, but this volume unfortunately was badly torn and fifty pages were missing so that I never knew, and do not know to this day, how those indomitable shipwrecked seamen reached their English homes. I dimly recall that one man carried a pet monkey on his back and that they all lived on "Bustards."

Finally the day came when the ground rang like iron under the feet of the horses, and a bitter wind, raw and gusty, swept out of the northwest, bearing gray veils of sleet. Winter had come! Work in the furrow had ended. The plow was brought in, cleaned and greased to prevent its rusting,

and while the horses munched their hay in well-earned holiday, father and I helped farmer Button husk the last of his corn.

Osman Button, a quaint and interesting man of middle age, was a native of York State and retained many of the traditions of his old home strangely blent with a store of vivid memories of Colorado, Utah and California, for he had been one of the gold-seekers of the early fifties. He loved to spin yarns of "When I was in gold camps," and he spun them well. He was short and bent and spoke in a low voice with a curious nervous sniff, but his diction was notably precise and clear. He was a man of judgment, and a citizen of weight and influence. From O. Button I got my first definite notion of Bret Harte's country, and of the long journey which they of the ox team had made in search of Eldorado.

His family "mostly boys and girls" was large, yet they all lived in a low limestone house which he had built (he said) to serve as a granary till he should find time to erect a suitable dwelling. In order to make the point dramatic, I will say that he was still living in the "granary" when last I called on him thirty years later!

A warm friendship sprang up between him and my father, and he was often at our house but his gaunt and silent wife seldom accompanied him. She was kindly and hospitable, but a great sufferer. She never laughed, and seldom smiled, and so remains a pathetic figure in all my memories of the household.

The younger Button children, Eva and Cyrus, became our companions in certain of our activities, but as they were both very sedate and slow of motion, they seldom joined us in our livelier sports. They were both much older than their years. Cyrus at this time was almost as venerable as his father, although his years were, I suppose, about seventeen. Albert and Lavinia, we heard, were much given to dancing and parties.

One night as we were all seated around the kerosene lamp my father said, "Well, Belle, I suppose we'll have to take these young ones down to town and fit 'em out for school." These words so calmly uttered filled our minds with visions of new boots, new caps and new books, and though we went obediently to bed we hardly slept, so excited were we, and at breakfast next morning not one of us could think of food. All our desires converged upon the wondrous expedition – our first visit to town.

Our only carriage was still the lumber wagon but it had now two spring seats, one for father, mother and Jessie, and one for Harriet, Frank and myself. No one else had anything better, hence we had no sense of being poorly outfitted. We drove away across the frosty prairie toward Osage – moderately comfortable and perfectly happy.

Osage was only a little town, a village of perhaps twelve hundred inhabitants, but to me as we drove down its Main Street, it was almost as impressive as LaCrosse had been. Frank clung close to father, and mother led Jessie, leaving Harriet and me to stumble over nail-kegs and dodge whiffle trees what time our eyes absorbed jars of pink and white candy, and sought out boots and buckskin mittens. Whenever Harriet spoke she whispered, and we pointed at each shining object with cautious care. – Oh! the marvellous exotic smells! Odors of salt codfish and spices, calico and kerosene, apples and ginger-snaps mingle in my mind as I write.

Each of us soon carried a candy marble in his or her cheek (as a chipmunk carries a nut) and Frank and I stood like sturdy hitching posts whilst the storekeeper with heavy hands screwed cotton-plush caps upon our heads, – but the most exciting moment, the crowning joy of the day, came with the buying of our new boots. – If only father had not insisted on our taking those which were a size too large for us!

They were real boots. No one but a Congressman wore "gaiters" in those days. War fashions still dominated the shoe-shops, and high-topped cavalry boots were all but universal. They were kept in boxes under the counter or ranged in rows on a shelf and were of all weights and degrees of fineness. The ones I selected had red tops with a golden moon in the center but my brother's taste



ran to blue tops decorated with a golden flag. Oh! that deliciously oily *new* smell! My heart glowed every time I looked at mine. I was especially pleased because they did *not* have copper toes. Copper toes belonged to little boys. A youth who had plowed seventy acres of land could not reasonably be expected to dress like a child. – How smooth and delightfully stiff they felt on my feet.

Then came our new books, a McGuffey reader, a Mitchell geography, a Ray's arithmetic, and a slate. The books had a delightful new smell also, and there was singular charm in the smooth surface of the unmarked slates. I was eager to carve my name in the frame. At last with our treasures under the seat (so near that we could feel them), with our slates and books in our laps we jolted home, dreaming of school and snow. To wade in the drifts with our fine high-topped boots was now our desire.

It is strange but I cannot recall how my mother looked on this trip. Even my father's image is faint and vague (I remember only his keen eagle-gray terrifying eyes), but I can see every acre of that rented farm. I can tell you exactly how the house looked. It was an unpainted square cottage and stood bare on the sod at the edge of Dry Run ravine. It had a small lean-to on the eastern side and a sitting room and bedroom below. Overhead was a low unplastered chamber in which we children slept. As it grew too cold to use the summer kitchen we cooked, ate and lived in the square room which occupied the entire front of the two story upright, and which was, I suppose, sixteen feet square. As our attic was warmed only by the stove-pipe, we older children of a frosty morning made extremely simple and hurried toilets. On very cold days we hurried down stairs to dress beside the kitchen fire.

Our furniture was of the rudest sort. I cannot recall a single piece in our house or in our neighbors' houses that had either beauty or distinction. It was all cheap and worn, for this was the middle border, and nearly all our neighbors had moved as we had done in covered wagons. Farms were new, houses were mere shanties, and money was scarce. "War times" and "war prices" were only just beginning to change. Our clothing was all cheap and ill fitting. The women and children wore home-made "cotton flannel" underclothing for the most part, and the men wore rough, ready-made suits over which they drew brown denim blouses or overalls to keep them clean.

Father owned a fine buffalo overcoat (so much of his song's promise was redeemed) and we possessed two buffalo robes for use in our winter sleigh, but mother had only a sad coat and a woolen shawl. How she kept warm I cannot now understand – I think she stayed at home on cold days.

All of the boys wore long trousers, and even my eight year old brother looked like a miniature man with his full-length overalls, high-topped boots and real suspenders. As for me I carried a bandanna in my hip pocket and walked with determined masculine stride.

My mother, like all her brothers and sisters, was musical and played the violin – or fiddle, as we called it, – and I have many dear remembrances of her playing. *Napoleon's March*, *Money Musk*, *The Devil's Dream* and half-a-dozen other simple tunes made up her repertoire. It was very crude music of course but it added to the love and admiration in which her children always held her. Also in some way we had fallen heir to a Prince melodeon – one that had belonged to the McClintocks, but only my sister played on that.

Once at a dance in neighbor Button's house, mother took the "dare" of the fiddler and with shy smile played *The Fisher's Hornpipe* or some other simple melody and was mightily cheered at the close of it, a brief performance which she refused to repeat. Afterward she and my father danced and this seemed a very wonderful performance, for to us they were "old" – far past such frolicking, although he was but forty and she thirty-one!

At this dance I heard, for the first time, the local professional fiddler, old Daddy Fairbanks, as quaint a character as ever entered fiction, for he was not only butcher and horse doctor but a renowned musician as well. Tall, gaunt and sandy, with enormous nose and sparse projecting teeth, he was to me the most enthralling figure at this dance and his queer "Calls" and his "York State"

accent filled us all with delight. "*Ally man left*," "*Chassay by your pardners*," "*Dozy-do*" were some of the phrases he used as he played *Honest John* and *Haste to the Wedding*. At times he sang his calls in high nasal chant, "*First lady lead to the right, deedle, deedle dum-dum – gent foller after – dally-deedle-do-do —three hands round*" – and everybody laughed with frank enjoyment of his words and action.

It was a joy to watch him "start the set." With fiddle under his chin he took his seat in a big chair on the kitchen table in order to command the floor. "Farm on, farm on!" he called disgustedly. "Lively now!" and then, when all the couples were in position, with one mighty No. 14 boot uplifted, with bow laid to strings he snarled, "Already – GELANG!" and with a thundering crash his foot came down, "Honors TEW your pardners – right and left FOUR!" And the dance was on!

I suspect his fiddlin' was not even "middlin'," but he beat time fairly well and kept the dancers somewhere near to rhythm, and so when his ragged old cap went round he often got a handful of quarters for his toil. He always ate two suppers, one at the beginning of the party and another at the end. He had a high respect for the skill of my Uncle David and was grateful to him and other better musicians for their non-interference with his professional engagements.

The school-house which was to be the center of our social life stood on the bare prairie about a mile to the southwest and like thousands of other similar buildings in the west, had not a leaf to shade it in summer nor a branch to break the winds of savage winter. "There's been a good deal of talk about setting out a wind-break," neighbor Button explained to us, "but nothing has as yet been done." It was merely a square pine box painted a glaring white on the outside and a desolate drab within; at least drab was the original color, but the benches were mainly so greasy and hacked that original intentions were obscured. It had two doors on the eastern end and three windows on each side.

A long square stove (standing on slender legs in a puddle of bricks), a wooden chair, and a rude table in one corner, for the use of the teacher, completed the movable furniture. The walls were roughly plastered and the windows had no curtains.

It was a barren temple of the arts even to the residents of Dry Run, and Harriet and I, stealing across the prairie one Sunday morning to look in, came away vaguely depressed. We were fond of school and never missed a day if we could help it, but this neighborhood center seemed small and bleak and poor.

With what fear, what excitement we approached the door on that first day, I can only faintly indicate. All the scholars were strange to me except Albert and Cyrus Button, and I was prepared for rough treatment. However, the experience was not so harsh as I had feared. True, Rangely Field did throw me down and wash my face in snow, and Jack Sweet tripped me up once or twice, but I bore these indignities with such grace and could command, and soon made a place for myself among the boys.

Burton Babcock was my seat-mate, and at once became my chum. You will hear much of him in this chronicle. He was two years older than I and though pale and slim was unusually swift and strong for his age. He was a silent lad, curiously timid in his classes and not at ease with his teachers.

I cannot recover much of that first winter of school. It was not an experience to remember for its charm. Not one line of grace, not one touch of color relieved the room's bare walls or softened its harsh windows. Perhaps this very barrenness gave to the poetry in our readers an appeal that seems magical, certainly it threw over the faces of Frances Babcock and Mary Abbie Gammons a lovelier halo. – They were "the big girls" of the school, that is to say, they were seventeen or eighteen years old, – and Frances was the special terror of the teacher, a pale and studious pigeon-toed young man who was preparing for college.

In spite of the cold, the boys played open air games all winter. "Dog and Deer," "Dare Gool" and "Fox and Geese" were our favorite diversions, and the wonder is that we did not all die of pneumonia, for we battled so furiously during each recess that we often came in wet with

perspiration and coughing so hard that for several minutes recitations were quite impossible. – But we were a hardy lot and none of us seemed the worse for our colds.

There was not much chivalry in the school – quite the contrary, for it was dominated by two or three big rough boys and the rest of us took our tone from them. To protect a girl, to shield her from remark or indignity required a good deal of bravery and few of us were strong enough to do it. Girls were foolish, ridiculous creatures, set apart to be laughed at or preyed upon at will. To shame them was a great joke. – How far I shared in these barbarities I cannot say but that I did share in them I know, for I had very little to do with my sister Harriet after crossing the school-house yard. She kept to her tribe as I to mine.

This winter was made memorable also by a "revival" which came over the district with sudden fury. It began late in the winter – fortunately, for it ended all dancing and merry-making for the time. It silenced Daddy Fairbanks' fiddle and subdued my mother's glorious voice to a wail. A cloud of puritanical gloom settled upon almost every household. Youth and love became furtive and hypocritic.

The evangelist, one of the old-fashioned shouting, hysterical, ungrammatical, gasping sort, took charge of the services, and in his exhortations phrases descriptive of lakes of burning brimstone and ages of endless torment abounded. Some of the figures of speech and violent gestures of the man still linger in my mind, but I will not set them down on paper. They are too dreadful to perpetuate. At times he roared with such power that he could have been heard for half a mile.

And yet we went, night by night, mother, father, Jessie, all of us. It was our theater. Some of the roughest characters in the neighborhood rose and professed repentance, for a season, even old Barton, the profanest man in the township, experienced a "change of heart."

We all enjoyed the singing, and joined most lustily in the tunes. Even little Jessie learned to sing *Heavenly Wings*, *There is a Fountain filled with Blood*, and *Old Hundred*.

As I peer back into that crowded little schoolroom, smothering hot and reeking with lamp smoke, and recall the half-lit, familiar faces of the congregation, it all has the quality of a vision, something experienced in another world. The preacher, leaping, sweating, roaring till the windows rattle, the mothers with sleeping babes in their arms, the sweet, strained faces of the girls, the immobile wondering men, are spectral shadows, figures encountered in the phantasmagoria of disordered sleep.

## CHAPTER X

### The Homestead on the Knoll

Spring came to us that year with such sudden beauty, such sweet significance after our long and depressing winter, that it seemed a release from prison, and when at the close of a warm day in March we heard, pulsing down through the golden haze of sunset, the mellow *boom, boom, boom* of the prairie cock our hearts quickened, for this, we were told, was the certain sign of spring.

Day by day the call of this gay herald of spring was taken up by others until at last the whole horizon was ringing with a sunrise symphony of exultant song. "*Boom, boom, boom!*" called the roosters; "*cutta, cutta, wha-whoop-squaw, squawk!*" answered the hens as they fluttered and danced on the ridges – and mingled with their jocund hymn we heard at last the slender, wistful piping of the prairie lark.

With the coming of spring my duties as a teamster returned. My father put me in charge of a harrow, and with old Doll and Queen – quiet and faithful span – I drove upon the field which I had plowed the previous October, there to plod to and fro behind my drag, while in the sky above my head and around me on the mellowing soil the life of the season, thickened.

Aided by my team I was able to study at close range the prairie roosters as they assembled for their parade. They had regular "stamping grounds" on certain ridges, where the soil was beaten smooth by the pressure of their restless feet. I often passed within a few yards of them. – I can see them now, the cocks leaping and strutting, with trailing wings and down-thrust heads, displaying their bulbous orange-colored neck ornaments while the hens flutter and squawk in silly delight. All the charm and mystery of that prairie world comes back to me, and I ache with an illogical desire to recover it and hold it, and preserve it in some form for my children. – It seems an injustice that they should miss it, and yet it is probable that they are getting an equal joy of life, an equal exaltation from the opening flowers of the single lilac bush in our city back-yard or from an occasional visit to the lake in Central Park.

Dragging is even more wearisome than plowing, in some respects, for you have no handles to assist you and your heels sinking deep into the soft loam bring such unwonted strain upon the tendons of your legs that you can scarcely limp home to supper, and it seems that you cannot possibly go on another day, – but you do – at least I did.

There was something relentless as the weather in the way my soldier father ruled his sons, and yet he was neither hard-hearted nor unsympathetic. The fact is easily explained. His own boyhood had been task-filled and he saw nothing unnatural in the regular employment of his children. Having had little play-time himself, he considered that we were having a very comfortable boyhood. Furthermore the country was new and labor scarce. Every hand and foot must count under such conditions.

There are certain ameliorations to child-labor on a farm. Air and sunshine and food are plentiful. I never lacked for meat or clothing, and mingled with my records of toil are exquisite memories of the joy I took in following the changes in the landscape, in the notes of birds, and in the play of small animals on the sunny soil.

There were no pigeons on the prairie but enormous flocks of ducks came sweeping northward, alighting at sunset to feed in the fields of stubble. They came in countless myriads and often when they settled to earth they covered acres of meadow like some prodigious cataract from the sky. When alarmed they rose with a sound like the rumbling of thunder.

At times the lines of their cloud-like flocks were so unending that those in the front rank were lost in the northern sky, while those in the rear were but dim bands beneath the southern sun. – I tried many times to shoot some of them, but never succeeded, so wary were they. Brant and geese

in formal flocks followed and to watch these noble birds pushing their arrowy lines straight into the north always gave me special joy. On fine days they flew high – so high they were but faint lines against the shining clouds.

I learned to imitate their cries, and often caused the leaders to turn, to waver in their course as I uttered my resounding call.

The sand-hill crane came last of all, loitering north in lonely easeful flight. Often of a warm day, I heard his sovereign cry falling from the azure dome, so high, so far his form could not be seen, so close to the sun that my eyes could not detect his solitary, majestic circling sweep. He came after the geese. He was the herald of summer. His brazen, reverberating call will forever remain associated in my mind with mellow, pulsating earth, springing grass and cloudless glorious May-time skies.

As my team moved to and fro over the field, ground sparrows rose in countless thousands, flinging themselves against the sky like grains of wheat from out a sower's hand, and their chatter fell upon me like the voices of fairy sprites, invisible and multitudinous. Long swift narrow flocks of a bird we called "the prairie-pigeon" swooped over the swells on sounding wing, winding so close to the ground, they seemed at times like slender air-borne serpents, – and always the brown lark whistled as if to cheer my lonely task.

Back and forth across the wide field I drove, while the sun crawled slowly up the sky. It was tedious work and I was always hungry by nine, and famished at ten. Thereafter the sun appeared to stand still. My chest caved in and my knees trembled with weakness, but when at last the white flag fluttering from a chamber window summoned to the mid-day meal, I started with strength miraculously renewed and called, "*Dinner!*" to the hired hand. Unhitching my team, with eager haste I climbed upon old Queen, and rode at ease toward the barn.

Oh, it was good to enter the kitchen, odorous with fresh biscuit and hot coffee! We all ate like dragons, devouring potatoes and salt pork without end, till mother mildly remarked, "Boys, boys! Don't 'founder' yourselves!"

From such a meal I withdrew torpid as a gorged snake, but luckily I had half an hour in which to get my courage back, – and besides, there was always the stirring power of father's clarion call. His energy appeared superhuman to me. I was in awe of him. He kept track of everything, seemed hardly to sleep and never complained of weariness. Long before the nooning was up, (or so it seemed to me) he began to shout: "Time's up, boys. Grab a root!"

And so, lame, stiff and sore, with the sinews of my legs shortened, so that my knees were bent like an old man's, I hobbled away to the barn and took charge of my team. Once in the field, I felt better. A subtle change, a mellower charm came over the afternoon earth. The ground was warmer, the sky more genial, the wind more amiable, and before I had finished my second "round" my joints were moderately pliable and my sinews relaxed.

Nevertheless the temptation to sit on the corner of the harrow and dream the moments away was very great, and sometimes as I laid my tired body down on the tawny, sunlit grass at the edge of the field, and gazed up at the beautiful clouds sailing by, I wished for leisure to explore their purple valleys. – The wind whispered in the tall weeds, and sighed in the hazel bushes. The dried blades touching one another in the passing winds, spoke to me, and the gophers, glad of escape from their dark, underground prisons, chirped a cheery greeting. Such respites were strangely sweet.

So day by day, as I walked my monotonous round upon the ever mellowing soil, the prairie spring unrolled its beauties before me. I saw the last goose pass on to the north, and watched the green grass creeping up the sunny slopes. I answered the splendid challenge of the loitering crane, and studied the ground sparrow building her grassy nest. The prairie hens began to seek seclusion in the swales, and the pocket gopher, busily mining the sod, threw up his purple-brown mounds of cool fresh earth. Larks, blue-birds and king-birds followed the robins, and at last the full tide of May covered the world with luscious green.

Harriet and Frank returned to school but I was too valuable to be spared. The unbroken land of our new farm demanded the plow and no sooner was the planting on our rented place finished than my father began the work of fencing and breaking the sod of the homestead which lay a mile to the south, glowing like a garden under the summer sun. One day late in May my uncle David (who had taken a farm not far away), drove over with four horses hitched to a big breaking plow and together with my father set to work overturning the primeval sward whereon we were to be "lords of the soil."

I confess that as I saw the tender plants and shining flowers bow beneath the remorseless beam, civilization seemed a sad business, and yet there was something epic, something large-gestured and splendid in the "breaking" season. Smooth, glossy, almost unwrinkled the thick ribbon of jet-black sod rose upon the share and rolled away from the mold-board's glistening curve to tuck itself upside down into the furrow behind the horse's heels, and the picture which my uncle made, gave me pleasure in spite of the sad changes he was making.

The land was not all clear prairie and every ounce of David's great strength was required to guide that eighteen-inch plow as it went ripping and snarling through the matted roots of the hazel thickets, and sometimes my father came and sat on the beam in order to hold the coulter to its work, while the giant driver braced himself to the shock and the four horses strained desperately at their traces. These contests had the quality of a wrestling match but the men always won. My own job was to rake and burn the brush which my father mowed with a heavy scythe. – Later we dug postholes and built fences but each day was spent on the new land.

Around us, on the swells, gray gophers whistled, and the nesting plover quaveringly called. Blackbirds clucked in the furrow and squat badgers watched with jealous eye the plow's inexorable progress toward their dens. The weather was perfect June. Fleecy clouds sailed like snowy galleons from west to east, the wind was strong but kind, and we worked in a glow of satisfied ownership.

Many rattlesnakes ("massasaugas" Mr. Button called them), inhabited the moist spots and father and I killed several as we cleared the ground. Prairie wolves lurked in the groves and swales, but as foot by foot and rod by rod, the steady steel rolled the grass and the hazel brush under, all of these wild things died or hurried away, never to return. Some part of this tragedy I was able even then to understand and regret.

At last the wide "quarter section" lay upturned, black to the sun and the garden that had bloomed and fruited for millions of years, waiting for man, lay torn and ravaged. The tender plants, the sweet flowers, the fragrant fruits, the busy insects, all the swarming lives which had been native here for untold centuries were utterly destroyed. It was sad and yet it was not all loss, even to my thinking, for I realized that over this desolation the green wheat would wave and the corn silks shed their pollen. It was not precisely the romantic valley of our song, but it was a rich and promiseful plot and my father seemed entirely content.

Meanwhile, on a little rise of ground near the road, neighbor Gammons and John Bowers were building our next home. It did not in the least resemble the foundation of an everlasting family seat, but it deeply excited us all. It was of pine and had the usual three rooms below and a long garret above and as it stood on a plain, bare to the winds, my father took the precaution of lining it with brick to hold it down. It was as good as most of the dwellings round about us but it stood naked on the sod, devoid of grace as a dry goods box. Its walls were rough plaster, its floor of white pine, its furniture poor, scanty and worn. There was a little picture on the face of the clock, a chromo on the wall, and a printed portrait of General Grant – nothing more. It was home by reason of my mother's brave and cheery presence, and the prattle of Jessie's clear voice filled it with music. Dear child, – with her it was always spring!

## CHAPTER XI

### School Life

Our new house was completed during July but we did not move into it till in September. There was much to be done in way of building sheds, granaries and corn-cribs and in this work father was both carpenter and stone-mason. An amusing incident comes to my mind in connection with the digging of our well.

Uncle David and I were "tending mason," and father was down in the well laying or trying to lay the curbing. It was a tedious and difficult job and he was about to give it up in despair when one of our neighbors, a quaint old Englishman named Barker, came driving along. He was one of these men who take a minute inquisitive interest in the affairs of others; therefore he pulled his team to a halt and came in.

Peering into the well he drawled out, "Hello, Garland. W'at ye doin' down there?"

"Tryin' to lay a curb," replied my father lifting a gloomy face, "and I guess it's too complicated for me."

"Nothin' easier," retorted the old man with a wink at my uncle, "jest putt two a-top o' one and one a-toppo two – and the big eend out," – and with a broad grin on his red face he went back to his team and drove away.

My father afterwards said, "I saw the whole process in a flash of light. He had given me all the rule I needed. I laid the rest of that wall without a particle of trouble."

Many times after this Barker stopped to offer advice but he never quite equalled the startling success of his rule for masonry.

The events of this harvest, even the process of moving into the new house, are obscured in my mind by the clouds of smoke which rose from calamitous fires all over the west. It was an unprecedentedly dry season so that not merely the prairie, but many weedy cornfields burned. I had a good deal of time to meditate upon this for I was again the plow-boy. Every day I drove away from the rented farm to the new land where I was cross-cutting the breaking, and the thickening haze through which the sun shone with a hellish red glare, produced in me a growing uneasiness which became terror when the news came to us that Chicago was on fire. It seemed to me then that the earth was about to go up in a flaming cloud just as my grandad had so often prophesied.

This general sense of impending disaster was made keenly personal by the destruction of uncle David's stable with all his horses. This building like most of the barns of the region was not only roofed with straw but banked with straw, and it burned so swiftly that David was trapped in a stall while trying to save one of his teams. He saved himself by burrowing like a gigantic mole through the side of the shed, and so, hatless, covered with dust and chaff, emerged as if from a fiery burial after he had been given up for dead.

This incident combined with others so filled my childish mind that I lived in apprehension of similar disaster. I feared the hot wind which roared up from the south, and I never entered our own stable in the middle of the day without a sense of danger. Then came the rains – the blessed rains – and put an end to my fears.

In a week we had forgotten all the "conflagrations" except that in Chicago. There was something grandiose and unforgettable in the tales which told of the madly fleeing crowds in the narrow streets. These accounts pushed back the walls of my universe till its far edge included the ruined metropolis whose rebuilding was of the highest importance to us, for it was not only the source of all our supplies, but the great central market to which we sent our corn and hogs and wheat.

My world was splendidly romantic. It was bounded on the west by The Plains with their Indians and buffalo; on the north by The Great Woods, filled with thieves and counterfeiterers; on the south by Osage and Chicago; and on the east by Hesper, Onalaska and Boston. A luminous trail ran from Dry Run Prairie to Neshonoc – all else was "chaos and black night."

For seventy days I walked behind my plow on the new farm while my father finished the harvest on the rented farm and moved to the house on the knoll. It was lonely work for a boy of eleven but there were frequent breaks in the monotony and I did not greatly suffer. I disliked cross-cutting for the reason that the unrotted sods would often pile up in front of the coulter and make me a great deal of trouble. There is a certain pathos in the sight of that small boy tugging and kicking at the stubborn turf in the effort to free his plow. Such misfortunes loom large in a lad's horizon.

One of the interludes, and a lovely one, was given over to gathering the hay from one of the wild meadows to the north of us. Another was the threshing from the shock on the rented farm. This was the first time we had seen this done and it interested us keenly. A great many teams were necessary and the crew of men was correspondingly large. Uncle David was again the thresher with a fine new separator, and I would have enjoyed the season with almost perfect contentment had it not been for the fact that I was detailed to hold sacks for Daddy Fairbanks who was the measurer.

Our first winter had been without much wind but our second taught us the meaning of the word "blizzard" which we had just begun to hear about. The winds of Wisconsin were "gentle zephyrs" compared to the blasts which now swept down over the plain to hammer upon our desolate little cabin and pile the drifts around our sheds and granaries, and even my pioneer father was forced to admit that the hills of Green's Coulee had their uses after all.

One such storm which leaped upon us at the close of a warm and beautiful day in February lasted for two days and three nights, making life on the open prairie impossible even to the strongest man. The thermometer fell to thirty degrees below zero and the snow-laden air moving at a rate of eighty miles an hour pressed upon the walls of our house with giant power. The sky of noon was darkened, so that we moved in a pallid half-light, and the windows thick with frost shut us in as if with gray shrouds.

Hour after hour those winds and snows in furious battle, howled and roared and whistled around our frail shelter, slashing at the windows and piping on the chimney, till it seemed as if the Lord Sun had been wholly blotted out and that the world would never again be warm. Twice each day my father made a desperate sally toward the stable to feed the imprisoned cows and horses or to replenish our fuel – for the remainder of the long pallid day he sat beside the fire with gloomy face. Even his indomitable spirit was awed by the fury of that storm.

So long and so continuously did those immitigable winds howl in our ears that their tumult persisted, in imagination, when on the third morning, we thawed holes in the thickened rime of the window panes and looked forth on a world silent as a marble sea and flaming with sunlight. My own relief was mingled with surprise – surprise to find the landscape so unchanged.

True, the yard was piled high with drifts and the barns were almost lost to view but the far fields and the dark lines of Burr Oak Grove remained unchanged.

We met our school-mates that day, like survivors of shipwreck, and for many days we listened to gruesome stories of disaster, tales of stages frozen deep in snow with all their passengers sitting in their seats, and of herders with their silent flocks around them, lying stark as granite among the hazel bushes in which they had sought shelter. It was long before we shook off the awe with which this tempest filled our hearts.

The school-house which stood at the corner of our new farm was less than half a mile away, and yet on many of the winter days which followed, we found it quite far enough. Hattie was now thirteen, Frank nine and I a little past eleven but nothing, except a blizzard such as I have described, could keep us away from school. Facing the cutting wind, wallowing through the drifts, battling



like small intrepid animals, we often arrived at the door moaning with pain yet unsubdued, our ears frosted, our toes numb in our boots, to meet others in similar case around the roaring hot stove.

Often after we reached the school-house another form of suffering overtook us in the "thawing out" process. Our fingers and toes, swollen with blood, ached and itched, and our ears burned. Nearly all of us carried sloughing ears and scaling noses. Some of the pupils came two miles against these winds.

The natural result of all this exposure was of course, chilblains! Every foot in the school was more or less touched with this disease to which our elders alluded as if it were an amusing trifle, but to us it was no joke.

After getting thoroughly warmed up, along about the middle of the forenoon, there came into our feet a most intense itching and burning and aching, a sensation so acute that keeping still was impossible, and all over the room an uneasy shuffling and drumming arose as we pounded our throbbing heels against the floor or scraped our itching toes against the edge of our benches. The teacher understood and was kind enough to overlook this disorder.

The wonder is that any of us lived through that winter, for at recess, no matter what the weather might be we flung ourselves out of doors to play "fox and geese" or "dare goal," until, damp with perspiration, we responded to the teacher's bell, and came pouring back into the entry ways to lay aside our wraps for another hour's study.

Our readers were almost the only counterchecks to the current of vulgarity and baseness which ran through the talk of the older boys, and I wish to acknowledge my deep obligation to Professor McGuffey, whoever he may have been, for the dignity and literary grace of his selections. From the pages of his readers I learned to know and love the poems of Scott, Byron, Southey, Wordsworth and a long line of the English masters. I got my first taste of Shakespeare from the selected scenes which I read in these books.

With terror as well as delight I rose to read *Lochiel's Warning*, *The Battle of Waterloo* or *The Roman Captive*. Marco Bozzaris and William Tell were alike glorious to me. I soon knew not only my own reader, the fourth, but all the selections in the fifth and sixth as well. I could follow almost word for word the recitations of the older pupils and at such times I forgot my squat little body and my mop of hair, and became imaginatively a page in the train of Ivanhoe, or a bowman in the army of Richard the Lion Heart battling the Saracen in the Holy Land.

With a high ideal of the way in which these grand selections should be read, I was scared almost voiceless when it came my turn to read them before the class. "Strike for your Altars and your Fires. Strike for the Green Graves of your Sires – God and your Native Land," always reduced me to a trembling breathlessness. The sight of the emphatic print was a call to the best that was in me and yet I could not meet the test. Excess of desire to do it just right often brought a ludicrous gasp and I often fell back into my seat in disgrace, the titter of the girls adding to my pain.

Then there was the famous passage, "Did ye not hear it?" and the careless answer, "No, it was but the wind or the car rattling o'er the stony street." – I knew exactly how those opposing emotions should be expressed but to do it after I rose to my feet was impossible. Burton was even more terrified than I. Stricken blind as well as dumb he usually ended by helplessly staring at the words which, I conceive, had suddenly become a blur to him.

No matter, we were taught to feel the force of these poems and to reverence the genius that produced them, and that was worth while. Falstaff and Prince Hal, Henry and his wooing of Kate, Wolsey and his downfall, Shylock and his pound of flesh all became a part of our thinking and helped us to measure the large figures of our own literature, for Whittier, Bryant and Longfellow also had place in these volumes. It is probable that Professor McGuffey, being a Southern man, did not value New England writers as highly as my grandmother did, nevertheless *Thanatopsis* was there and *The Village Blacksmith*, and extracts from *The Deer Slayer* and *The Pilot* gave us a notion that in Cooper we had a novelist of weight and importance, one to put beside Scott and Dickens.

A by-product of my acquaintance with one of the older boys was a stack of copies of the *New York Weekly*, a paper filled with stories of noble life in England and hair-breadth escapes on the plain, a shrewd mixture, designed to meet the needs of the entire membership of a prairie household. The pleasure I took in these tales should fill me with shame, but it doesn't – I rejoice in the memory of it.

I soon began, also, to purchase and trade "Beadle's Dime Novels" and, to tell the truth, I took an exquisite delight in *Old Sleuth* and *Jack Harkaway*. My taste was catholic. I ranged from *Lady Gwendolin* to *Buckskin Bill* and so far as I can now distinguish one was quite as enthralling as the other. It is impossible for any print to be as magical to any boy these days as those weeklies were to me in 1871.

One day a singular test was made of us all. Through some agency now lost to me my father was brought to subscribe for *The Hearth and Home* or some such paper for the farmer, and in this I read my first chronicle of everyday life.

In the midst of my dreams of lords and ladies, queens and dukes, I found myself deeply concerned with backwoods farming, spelling schools, protracted meetings and the like familiar homely scenes. This serial (which involved my sister and myself in many a spat as to who should read it first) was *The Hoosier Schoolmaster*, by Edward Eggleston, and a perfectly successful attempt to interest western readers in a story of the middle border.

To us "Mandy" and "Bud Means," "Ralph Hartsook," the teacher, "Little Shocky" and sweet patient "Hannah," were as real as Cyrus Button and Daddy Fairbanks. We could hardly wait for the next number of the paper, so concerned were we about "Hannah" and "Ralph." We quoted old lady Means and we made bets on "Bud" in his fight with the villainous drover. I hardly knew where Indiana was in those days, but Eggleston's characters were near neighbors.

The illustrations were dreadful, even in my eyes, but the artist contrived to give a slight virginal charm to Hannah and a certain childish sweetness to Shocky, so that we accepted the more than mortal ugliness of old man Means and his daughter Mirandy (who simpered over her book at us as she did at Ralph), as a just interpretation of their worthlessness.

This book is a milestone in my literary progress as it is in the development of distinctive western fiction, and years afterward I was glad to say so to the aged author who lived a long and honored life as a teacher and writer of fiction.

## **Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.**

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.