

For Her Children's Sake OR A MOTHER BRAVING A WILDERNESS

Told by her son OTTO G. LUTZ
of CARMEL, Sask.
(CONTINUED.)

CHAPTER 11. FORCED BACK, LOCATING NEAR MONASTERY.

When we reached Wolverine creek again, we had been gone a little over two days and during the whole way back, the fire was keeping up with our pace, only a few miles to the rear. Not until we had forded the creek, did we feel somewhat safe again. As the next day was a Sunday and the feast of Pentecost, we proceeded up the creek and camped a little ways off the monastery camp. During the short time of their having been there, they had broken up a plot of prairie and sown it to oats; they had also put up a log building which occasioned a controversy between Brother Adolph, the cook, and another Brother whose name I have forgotten, and who was in charge of the horses. Both brothers wanted the shack for their respective purposes: Bro. Adolph claimed that he could not bake bread with the stove, standing outside in the wind. The brother cook finally got the right of way. On the following day we all attended at Holy Mass which was read on a rough table in a small round tent. The entrance to the tent was pinned back and the few people stood, or knelt outside on the ground. That same afternoon, Father Prior Alfred and a monastery laborer — Mr. Eimer — very generously offered to show to Mother, Anna and Henry, some land that was open for homesteading about 5 miles southwest and, also, other such land straight south across the creek and in the burnt area, for the fire had died out, when it reached the creek. They drove away in Father Prior's "democrat" early on Monday morning. I think that John had gone along, too, as I remained alone at the camp. Towards noon the party returned and after dinner the camp was knocked down and loaded on the wagon. At last we were ready now to move onto some land, even though it could not be our original homesteads. For the time being, we were merely squatters with the intention to claim ownership and make homestead entry at the land office, after the government surveyors should have arrived, to survey the land and fix the location of the homestead plots, containing, each, 160 acres. At this time the whole colony was only laid out in townships, or in blocks, measuring 6 miles in the square. If a pioneer wanted to find his land, he could only make sure by measuring the correct location of his land himself with reference to the township line, as alone given for a beginning to subdivisions. And if he should happen to make a mistake in his private survey, he was taking his chance of squatting down on land that could not be homesteaded, as each odd-numbered section was reserved for the Railroad Company. For this reason, only half of the land in a township could be taken up by homesteaders. Many a pioneer settler, including ourselves, discovered with bitter disappointment, that they had settled on railroad land, when the correct and official lines were surveyed during the following September and October. They found to their great loss that they must move, after having worked hard in breaking sod, putting up buildings, and making other improvements.

Mother and Henry had decided that they would take homesteads southwest of the monastery. We moved on the land in the afternoon of the same day, on which it had

been picked out. The land was sloping prairie with here and there a small grove of poplars, or willows. In the low flats was stagnant water. The tent was raised on a small hill beside a clump of willows. It was now the lovely month of June. We all were glad and gave thanks to God for having brought us safely to our destination and haven of rest. We had spent about three weeks on the trail, since leaving Rosthern. What great hardships did not mother and we all, undergo during this trip! All of us had our fill of this life of nomades and gypsies, longing only for a steady place to settle down once more. On the following day, Henry and John broke a small patch of ground beside the brush, and mother and Anna baked a batch of bread for the return trip to Rosthern. We had run out of flour and mother borrowed some from the monastery which we had to return at the earliest possible time. We could not buy this flour from the monastery at all, as the cook would only loan it till after our next trip to Rosthern.

CHAPTER 12. ANNA AND MYSELF ALONE.

A day or two later it was agreed that mother should return to Rosthern with the men, both to allay the probable fears and anxiety of Rosa, her baby, and Mary, who had been so long without a word, or news from us, and also, to wind up her business there, before the final removal to the claims. Thus it became necessary that Anna and I should stay behind alone on the claim, in order to hold our rights against a possible oncomer who might wish to dispossess us of the land. Mother, Henry, and John made ready, therefore, to return to Rosthern, in the morning. Henry had everything ready for the start and was on the point of driving away without mother, when Anna ran and got hold of the reins, just in time, to stop them from leaving without mother. Henry who had been anything but pleasant on the trip out thought of driving back, leaving mother with us, while he probably never meant to come back again, for as yet he was still undecided about taking and improving a claim. It is hard telling what would have happened, if he could have had his way. All our supplies were exhausted, except the flour, and mother had to go to Rosthern and see to it that the rest of the family and more supplies were hurried out as quickly as possible. Without resorting to violence, Henry had to submit to the inevitable and take mother along. Anna and I had not even time to say "good bye" to mother, or to provide a bit of comfort for the trip. Henry drove off in a swift gallop and till he disappeared behind a far off poplar bush, we two watched beside the tent with our eyes on mother who sat on the bottom of the wagon box. With sad and heavy hearts Anna and I returned to our task, wondering what the outcome would be. Perhaps Anna got some comfort, in being all alone with me, out of the companionship of her dog Fortuna. As I said already, the dog was with us on our long trip and had been nothing but a big nuisance. Fortuna's appetite and capacity for food was something enormous, and when our stocks were getting low, we were at a loss to decide, what we should feed her on. Mother had wanted to take the dog along back, but Anna objected strenuously, saying that without Fortuna she would not feel like staying back in the wilderness, and that she would catch gophers for the dog to feed on.

Anna and I went to work hoeing and smoothening a patch of sods and planting garden seeds. This took several days. Our meals consisted of flap-jacks, made out of flour, salt and water, and fried in a pan, greased only with a bacon rind. Having sent the bread along with mother and the men, Anna prepared some yeast and was going to bake a batch of bread for us, also. She set the pans of dough away to rise, while we went about our work again on our patch of sod. Anna, however, got the surprise of her life, when, after a while, she started the fire for baking the bread. The dough was all gone and the pans were empty and clean. She called me, and I suspected Fortuna right away. I ran behind the tent where the dog had been tied with a stout rope, as we lacked a chain. The rope was gnawed through and the dog was gone. We then looked and called for her high and low, finding her at last in the brush, where she lay stretched out in the grass and groaning. The dog's stomach or belly was stretched and distended out of all proportions, as the big batch of dough kept on rising, perhaps, within her stomach. Strange to say, the dog got over it and would have performed the same stunt again and again, if the chance had been good, but Anna henceforth kept her bread and dough out of the dog's reach.

Every night Anna placed an axe against the tent-wall, as we had no other weapon, and I am sure she would not have lacked the courage to use it, if any night prowlers had come to our tent. One night, when I could not sleep, thinking of mother and where she could be now, I heard a distant rumble come over the prairie. I remembered having read of immense herds of buffaloes, causing the earth to tremble and making a loud rumbling noise, when they are stamped. I prayed that we might not be in their path, if it was buffaloes that I had heard. I woke up Anna and told her of my fear and, both alert, we waited for the sound again. It came, and with it a flash of lightning. We were glad it was only a far off peal of thunder that I had heard.

CHAPTER 13. A HAPPY REUNION

One morning, when Anna was at a loss what she could cook for a meal, we found outside near our tent a cow which was eating very contentedly the green grass. Anna did not ask long, from where the cow might have come, as our nearest neighbors were miles away; but seeing that the cow had a big, full udder, she got a pail and milked her. The cow gave quite a "lot" of milk, and we made big plans what we were going to cook with the milk and flour at our command now. The cow stayed all day and in the evening, after milking her again, we tied her to a willow, to get at least one more pail full of milk from her in the morning.

That same evening a kind woman and her two girls found our tent and brought us a few dozen of eggs. Mother had passed their claim and home about 5 miles from us, where they had settled since we had come from Rosthern. Mother, ever thoughtful of us, on her way back had stopped there and asked them, if they could not send us a few eggs. The good woman promised to send us some, and when they came, they found the strange cow and knew, that she belonged to one of their neighbors. They took the cow along in order to restore her to the owners. Anna and I were now pretty well provided for with all the eggs and the milk, together with bread and flour. The milk was boiled to keep it fresh longer. We could easily wait now for the return of the folks from Rosthern.

One day, about a week after we had been left alone we saw a wagon amble slowly toward our tent and, in the first few minutes, we thought that our own folks were coming. I started off at a fast trot, but I soon made out that the wagon could not be ours for it was drawn by a pair of white horses, while ours were brown. I returned to Anna very much disappointed, and we wondered who it could be. Soon the wagon drew up at our tent and we greeted John, our old guide, and a stranger with whom John had returned. John told us that their trip to Rosthern had not taken quite three days, owing to the fact that Henry drove unusually fast, having an empty wagon, and that they took short cuts past Mt. Carmel. They had lost no time in stopping long for meals, living only on dry bread and what little milk they could buy from settlers along the way. Besides this, they made good use of the long days, as it remained light about 20 hours in one stretch, getting dark with dusk which passed quickly over into dawn again inside of a few hours. Mother had asked John to look after us, as they could not travel so fast with a heavy load, and would be a day or so later in arriving.

After John and the stranger had fed their horses, and Anna had given them a warm meal, they moved on. John was going to show the man to a homestead, close by and adjoining his own. Anna and I, were now relieved of our worry, and looking forward to a happy reunion of our entire family, within a day or two. On the second day toward noon, a high-loaded wagon about which we did not make a mistake this time, came straight across the prairie toward us, and we both ran out to meet it. Oh, what joy was ours! To see mother, Rosa, Mary, Henry, and the baby again! It seemed like ages since we had seen them last, and especially Rosa and Mary. Soon all were busy and at work. The big tent was raised not far from the smaller one, and I build a small sod coop for the chickens. Fortuna had stolen one of them the moment they were released, and after this the beast was kept on the chain continually. The load of supplies and furnishings—mostly Henry's—were unloaded and set in the tents. A shallow well was dug in the brush clumps which supplied good water while it lasted. Our garden was examined, where the first lettuce and radishes were showing through the ground.

Then, mother told us of her return trip to Rosthern. They had stopped at the first shack, where Henry inquired for the shortest trail to Leafeld. In the meantime mother had spoken to the good lady about sending us the eggs. The man told Henry of the trail that passed Mount Carmel and which was good travelling part of the way and much shorter than the telegraph trail. In the vicinity of Mount Carmel John got an easy shot at a deer and killed it, though he had only a shot gun. Thus they had a "lot" of meat, but nothing to cook it in. At night mother slept under the starry heavens covered only with her blankets and quilts, while the men slept in or under the wagon to which the horses had been tied. Their sleep lasted only a few hours, as they were on their way again about 3 o'clock, when the sun rose.

In this fashion they reached Rosthern, where mother set about to arrange things for a speedy return to us. As Henry had said that he would not come out again, but go back to the States, mother hired John to load the wagon and drive it out with only herself and Mary as companions. Mother felt sad and sorry that, after all, her efforts for Henry and Rosa had failed, and that she must, at this late stage, continue alone; but resolved not to urge or argue the matter with Rosa, or Henry. How-

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