

the missing nut. With a whoop of exultation the nut was replaced and the journey continued.

A week more of slow onward travelling and the road led through a muddy slough. Will, driving the foremost team, saw one of the leading horses suddenly slip. Unwisely they were urged forward with the result that soon two of the horses were down and all four wheels of the wagon hopelessly embedded in the slime. Desperate efforts were made to get out, but the animals only floundered deeper in an apparently bottomless hole, until they lay there exhausted. So terrible was the nature of the place that it took them two days to finally get extricated from the place. A camp had to be made for the night and a hoist was built to drag the poor animals from their mire bed. The wagons had to be unloaded, taken apart and carried out piece by piece, then cleaned and put together again. The whole party were utterly exhausted when at length they were ready to proceed, with horses, wagons, bedding and almost everything in an unspeakably muddy condition.

It was after this experience that the horses first showed signs of losing their strength. Their helpless struggles had sapped their vitality, and the change in climate had wrought its hardships. An extra supply of oats was fed them with the result that the supply diminished rapidly and later the store became exhausted. Thereafter all sloughs were carefully avoided and many extra miles were travelled in order to avoid a repetition of a similar experience.

Day after day of weary travelling. The sun-blazed down with a scorching heat. The promised land seemed no nearer. The road became more dry and dusty; then a sudden gust of wind would come up and fill eyes, ears and mouth with sand. How refreshing the little streams would be then, and how joyfully the weary travellers would spring from the wagon to drink of the cold stream and bathe in its refreshing waters.

About noon one hot tiring day trees were discerned ahead and soon the Ottertail river came into view. After a shot halt an attempt was made to ford the river, but the river was deep and had a strong current. In attempting to turn around and regain the bank the wagon was almost overturned, and it was only by a miraculous guidance that seemed to lead their travels that they managed to scramble up onto the bank with nothing worse than wet clothing. Here a halt had to be made, trees felled and a large raft built. By the next day this was completed, family and goods were loaded in while the horses swam behind. In crossing a bag of flour and beans were accidentally knocked into the water. This was a serious matter, as food was already becoming scarce and while beans, pemmican and flour remained, many of the smaller articles of food such as tea and sugar had been used up. They had reckoned upon getting game and fish by the way but game was scarce that year and the finny tribe had refused to do their bit. The oats, by this time were all gone, and the horses were steadily growing weaker on the prairie grass which was their only support.

About a day's journey from the Ottertail they were fortunate in meeting the Canadian troops, a detachment which was making its way from Pembina to Abercrombie. All men were brothers in those days and provisions seemed to be common property. Quite as a matter of course the troops divided their food and supplied the travellers with sugar, tea and tinned goods. Oats, however, could not be obtained.

It was then an anxious time. They were still over two hundred miles from any settlement from which they could get aid, and as they slowly moved over the ground hope was very low. Now and then one of the family would get out and walk until exhausted in order to relieve the horses which now and then stumbled in a hopeless sort of way, then would regain their footing and amble onward with hanging head.

At length the Red River, where Fargo is now situated, was reached. After crossing the ferry they camped on the other side. Here one of the horses lay down and, though efforts were made to revive him with brandy he rolled over and breathed his last. They were so busy attending to the last moments of the poor animal that they did not notice the approach of troops on the other side of the river and

later were surprised to see quite an array of tents under construction. They were visited by several of these men and advised to settle there instead of pressing onward.

The next day preparations for the journey were continued. The promised land of Manitoba was still the goal. There was now but one horse for each wagon which necessitated slow travelling and that by foot. The other two poor animals were growing thinner each day, and were fed bread and beans from the scanty store. To make matters worse their clothing was in rags from hard usage, and Will, who had borne the brunt of the hardships had worn his shoes and stockings through and was travelling on his bare feet. Each one that was able was taking a turn in shoving the wagon, lending what aid they could to the weary horses and even the little tots showed marks upon their tender shoulders from their willing help given in these sore straits. Still the only hope lay in pressing onward and hoping to pass some traveller on the way, who might render assistance.

It took two days to make the next eighteen miles. The road led on to a hilly plain, dotted here and there with bluffs. There were many rivers and it was a delightful country but its beauty was lost to the weary travellers as they slowly crawled along, through little streams, down shady lanes and over rocky paths. At many of the streams the banks were very steep and at Elm River so perpendicular were they that the half breeds had tied a rope to a tree trunk for their convenience in lowering their wagons down the bank, a sign of civilization that awakened hope in the travellers, alas, not destined to be fulfilled.

The next trouble came at Salt river. When the camp had been made they discovered that the water beside which they had camped was absolutely vile. At this stage of the journey none were fastidious but this could not be swallowed. Water was a necessity and darkness had come on. Will's father went forth into the darkness to search for water. Hours, which grew longer with each minute, rolled by and he did not return. The poor mother was almost distracted with anxiety. At length she reluctantly yielded to the entreaties of Will that he should go to search for his father. There, alone, among the dark trees, with her little ones about her, she kept alight the camp fire and watched and prayed. One might pause to realize her terrible anxiety, alone, in this unknown land, the only strong members of the family gone into the darkness, where not only might wild animals lurk but where also Indians roamed about and might at any moment come upon her or the absent ones. Travelling in those days carried more terrifying anxieties than in the anxiety of the present-day traveller whose only fear is lack of funds to pay for expensive dinners on the dining-car.

In the meantime Will walked along the river bank that he might be able to find his way back and pushed on through the trees, stumbling over fallen logs and tearing his bare legs on the brush and rocks. Calling aloud in the solitary darkness he stumbled along for a great distance and was giving up the search in despair when he heard an answering call from his father who, as he expected, had lost his way. A long weary walk took them back and when Will arrived his legs were so sore and swollen that he could barely walk for several days afterwards.

That night they had no water. The little ones cried themselves to sleep. The horses' tongues were hanging from their mouths and they looked up with dumb, piteous eyes of entreaty. The next morning when they arose from a weary night the second horse was dead.

Then, indeed, they were in sore straits. After light had revealed a watering place a consultation was held. Their outfit now consisted of one weak horse and two wagons; the provisions were almost gone, there being only flour and water which they were making into hard cakes and cooking in the half-breed fashion into what was known as bannocks; their clothes were in tatters and Will, who was the right hand of the party was almost crippled with his injured legs.

But still the only hope lay ahead. To make the load lighter the canvas covering was taken off the wagons and everything cast away except the bare necessities. Then fastening the two wagons together and taking turns at pushing and pulling,

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