

THE BIG MOVE

*by*

Esther Schreiner Pepler

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The large, white, two-story home where we lived looked lonely surrounded as it was on three sides by a half section of land (a section being 640 acres), and now it seemed to me it looked a little sad--as I was sad--because we were leaving it for another home, another farm, in another community some thirty miles away. This comfortable, homey house, its long, narrow windows surrounded with bright green frames and its inviting porch running full length across the front gave a sense of practical stability. The high, lofted barn and the chicken house in deep red added not only contrast, but their own country atmosphere. An ample yard was dotted haphazardly with hayracks, cultivators, wagons and many other useful paraphernalia. There was also the inevitable

liprivy." Ours was a three-holer--with one small and low for the kinder.

I was fourteen, going on fifteen, the second eldest of six girls. Two older and two younger brothers completed our boisterous family. I didn't realize it at the time, but later, while I was rearing my own two sons, I became acutely aware of the infinite confidence and trust our parents had in the ten of us, a circumstance I never came close to matching. The staunch, but pliable gauntlet of their faith and my struggle to rise up to it was soon to be stretched to its outer limits in the experience of--The Big Move.

Ault, our little village, was one of many sleepy, little communities which dotted the large expanse of land east of the Rocky Mountains in Colorado. We were nestled close enough to the mountains so that we could see Longs and Pikes Peaks etched vividly against the bluest of blue skies and could even catch a hint of the pungent odor of evergreens sweeping down after a raging thunderstorm.

For many years we had been hearing of men

becorring millionaires overnight from gold and silver pouring from those mountains,, especially from the mines at Cripple Creek. The gold fever finally hit my brothers Jack, age twenty, and Benny, eighteen, who were hankering to grab pick and shovel and go to seek their fortunes. Cripple Creek was just a cattle pasture until 1890 when gold was first discovered there, and this was 1914, but some of the mines were still working. Papa let the boys dream on and talk about riches, but he had other plans--not only for them bu@ for all of us. I was interested personally only because one of those mines was called, "The Mollie Kathleen," and I fancied that the Mollie part was named after me.

Iremember very vividly the evening that heralded in my lightning leap from girlhood into woman-hood. No delicate, timid tasting of this exciting but apprehensive new experience was mine; no dawdling and reveling in th-e beneficial aspects of this challenging grownup world--then jumping back into the comforting arms of childhood when obstacles mounted. That last day of my girlhood was like almost any other day. There

was always a multitude of chores to be done and aside from these, I had charge of the two youngest girls, Esther, five, and Rachel, almost seven, and our baby brother, Georgie, who was three. Georgie was a delicate child and sometimes needed a great deal of care; we all helped with this task. But this day I felt unusually carefree and happy. For one thing, the grueling task of the sugar beet harvest was over, and my little brood and I found time in the afternoon to play hide-and-seek and Andy-over, two of our favorite games. -

But that evening after the chores were done and the disarray of the evening meal was set straight, Papa called all of us back around the table. His lean, wiry frame sat stiff and straight at the head of the table, his black curly hair, once thick and crisp, lay loosely across his balding head. Sharp, black eyes looked out from a red-weathered face enhanced by a formidable-looking moustache. Mama sat next to Papa at the front of the table facing Georgie, Esther, Rachel and Bill who shared a long, deep bay window with numerous pots of geraniums. Opposite Papa sat Jack and

Benny who were always alert to opportunities for devil-ment. Since Mary, the eldest of the girls had gotten married, I now sat next to Mama, then Freda, who was thirteen, and Leona, eleven.

Along, awkward silence ensued which sent Mama bustling to the kitchen in pretense of something important to do. Her short, stocky body moved quickly, exuding more than her share of energy and determination. What-ever it was that Papa had to tell us, we knew right off it was giving them both some concern, and we were all agog to hear what it was. Papa, with great deliberation folded his hands as in prayer and placed them on the table, resting his eyes on each one of us all round. I began fidgeting, and was thankful to Jack who noticed my discomfort and said, "Come on, Dad. It's getting late." Jack being the eldest son was granted a margin of freedom with Papa that none of the rest of us dared try.

"I have been dickering for a farm over in !Alellington," he began softly, "and I think it's time to tell you all about it. First, there's only a one-room

shack on the place where 'Bachelor John' lives and works the land. We'll have to get buildings up right away before the snow flies."

"There's a house close by on a neighboring farm," Papa went on, "that is empty; we can have the use of it, but it is much too small for all our brood." He hesitated as though reluctant to go on, but after a deep breath said, "John has offered to help us with our buildings if we let him stay in the shack, and if we'll help him harvest the rest of his beets." A loud groan rose simultaneously from around the table and then escalated into sharp protests from Jack and Benny.

"Nicht so schnell," Papa shouted above the din, "He's got only ten acres left to dig, and he's afraid the freeze will catch him short. Now don't you think it's the only Christian thing to do? Besides, we are going to need all the help we can get to have those buildings ready by the time we have to move the stock."

"Move the stock!" Jack echoed. "You mean we're going to put up barns for the stock before we build our house?"

"You haven't heard me out, Papa replied. The horses won't need the hayloft so you boys can use it for your sleeping quarters. With plenty of hay up there and some straw ticks, you'll be warm and comfortable, and the horses will have their stalls. The new chicken house will be our bedroom"--meaning his and Mama's--"and the girls and Georgie will sleep in the old house next door. The large kitchen will take care of all of us for meals." Jack was warming up to the idea of sleeping away from the rest of the family and began teasing us girls--a out making some ruffled curtains for their new boudoir.

Mama, who had been getting everything in readiness for the next day, which would begin at 5:30 a.m., joined the group. I sensed an uneasiness in her soft grey-blue eyes akin to fear which was far removed from her usual aplomb, but she offered no resistance to Papa's plans.

There is more than one reason why we can't all move over there at once," Papa went on, "other than the fact the house won't hold us. There's all those beet tops that would have to be gathered and hauled"--they

were used as stock fodder--"and that would take too much time. A better plan would be to turn the stock out in the fields and let them do the cleaning up. If the herd stays, someone will have to look after it. I'll need the boys over there to help me, and Mama will need Leona and Freda to help her, so," he looked at me, "it will be up to you, Mollie, to stay," My heart leaped up into my mouth making it impossible for me to speak. Everyone was staring at me waiting for my reaction, and though I wanted to shout out my protest, I was afraid I would uncap the volcano housed in Papa's quiet exterior. We all learned very young that it was risky business to thwart any of Papa's plans for us unless we were well fortified with strong, practical arguments. I felt too drained and insecure at the present to do battle with him, so I remained quiet. The moment of tension over, we all breathed easier. Preponderant as Papa's demands were at times, they were never impossible to accomplish, and I found myself already beginning to warm up to his idea and feeling the excitement of a new challenge. However, at the time I felt confident that Bill would be

staying with me to help with the chores and keep me company. Not so--and it was just as well I didn't get the complete picture that night. As it was, sleep was a long time coming, and when it did come, so did the nightmares.

The following week was time enough for the innumerable details to make themselves known. From Papa it was, "Molly, don't forget the little calves in the back pasture," or, "Be sure you keep the troughs filled with water. Those beet tops are very salty and the cattle will need more water than usual, and don't forget to lock everything up tight every night against the coyotes."

And from Mama, it was, "Now Molly, to set a sponge, you soak the yeast in lukewarm water--potato water if you have it--add three handfuls of flour, etc., etc....."

Their coaching went on daily and hourly until I wondered whether I could remember any of it. Strange, but my worst fears lay in the kitchen detail. The ignorance I displayed in the culinary arts was appalling,

but, alas, I couldn't catch up in a few days what I had deliberately avoided learning for all *my* young years.

Mary, my oldest sister, had been Mama's right-hand maid in the kitchen, and if anyone could bake a better loaf of bread than Mama, it was Mary. They both gave me such a complex that I never went near the kitchen unless forced. Worse luck for me, Mary had just recently had the effrontery to get married, leaving me to fill her shoes. Mama had been trying, not too successfully, to corral me into the kitchen ever since. Had I known what was in store for me, I might have been a more willing subject, but I had made up my mind long ago that my talents didn't lie in pots and pans, and --"three measures of *meal*."

Our prospective new home, Wellington, was no larger than Ault, and we learned that the only advantage it had was that it was closer to the mountains and to Fort Collins which was considered by us to be a sizable town -- population about 35,000. It boasted more than one dry goods store and one ready-to-wear clothing store. All our clothes up to now came from the Sears-Roebuck

catalogue or from Mama's busy sewing machine and her inventive genius at making patterns. Our chances of fulfilling dreams of visiting both Estes Park and Denver were also enhanced. Estes Park, situated between the foothills and the high mountains, was acclaimed by far the most beautiful and desirable resort and playground in the state, and Denver, named the capital on July 4, 1890, was attracting hordes from all over the world and fast becoming an exciting and important metropolis.

Even so, I doubted that all these concessions were enough to offset the turmoil I was feeling, but of course Papa was buying this farm and it meant a great deal to him to be a proud owner instead of a mere renter. He also promised to take us to the circus when it came to Ft. Collins. Having never seen a circus, we didn't know exactly how elated we should be over that. He kept his promise though, only it was a long time coming. "First," he said, "We have to buy a new car so we can all go together." We agreed it would be worth waiting for because none of us relished the idea of going "horse and buggy."

As day followed day, and the time grew alarmingly close for the big day of departure, my apprehensions mounted in spite of all their instructions and expressions of confidence in me. The climax, to *my* utter despair, came one evening when Papa calmly announced that Rachel, Esther, and Georgie were all to remain with me to keep me company. "Company!," I blurted out sarcastically, "They're some company! They're nothing but work," I complained bitterly. The full impact of encroaching responsibilities became downright unnerving, a-nd I complained much more to Mama later in private. **He.** meaning Papa, "could at least have allowed Bill to stay with me," then added, "instead of Georgie." Though Bill was only nine, the thought of having a boy around was comforting even though I could count on him getting into more trouble than enough. I recalled one time when Mama and Papa were holding prayer meeting on a Sunday after-noon at our house, and we had been warned to stay out-doors, Bill's insatiable appetite caused them a great deal of embarrassment. We had a small storage room in our garage where we kept large sacks of staples, such as

beans, flour, and sugar. Bill reached his limit of endurance and decided to open one of the sacks of flour and have himself a feast. When he came out he was powdered from head to foot. Before long the meeting broke up and Bill was first in line to shove his way through the guests, unmindful of the roaring laughter that greeted him. All he cared about was to get to some real food! Another time he stuck a pinto bean up his nose. When his speech became more and more strange, Mama insisted Papa take him to the doctor to see if his adenoids should come out. The doctor dislodged the bean, greatly swollen and beginning to sprout.

It wasn't as if I didn't want Georgie to stay, but I was afraid he'd get sick or hurt, and I wouldn't know what to do for him. Although he was three, he didn't make any attempt to talk so it was hard to determine his needs. He would just look at you with his big, black eyes and shake his tow head yes, or no, when you asked him questions. He understood and was obedient; he was also infinitely patient and undemanding, and his smile was most endearing, but I still felt he

would be a nuisance, and I told Mama as much. She was busy taking large handfuls of homemade sauerkraut from an earthen jar and putting it on top of the spare ribs we were having for supper. Turning and looking at me with compassion in her eyes, she wiped her hands on her blue-checked apron, and walked over to embrace and console me. "Every pair of hands," she explained, "will be needed over there, and the sooner we get the necessary things done, the sooner we can all be together again. Besides, the house is poorly built and is cold and drafty, so the kinder will be much better off here." I saw the wisdom of this, but it afforded me little comfort.

I recalled the day that Mama and Papa had slipped over to Wellington to take closer stock of the place and to close the deal. Mama moved under a dark cloud of depression for several days after that, and I stayed as far from the kitchen as possible. They had found the place unbelievably dirty, and some of the windows broken with rags stuffed in the holes. There was a barn and a chicken house of sorts, she said, and an old cistern, all of them surrounded by weeds that



had had a heyday with never a hoe or scythe to interfere with their rank growth.

The weed story was easy to believe--nowhere could there be found richer soil or better farmland. Colorado attained first rank among states in irrigated areas, with almost 3,000,000 acres under irrigation. Its many lakes and the Cache La Poudre River tumbling tons of water down to the valleys made a veritable paradise for the farmers. The Big Thompson also contributed its share of the water supply. Disappointed miners who had lost their all were offered parcels of land in Loveland, a few miles south of Ft. Collins and they did so well there that they more than recouped their losses in a short-lived inflationary period by selling butter at \$2.00 a pound and eggs at \$1.50 a dozen in Denver.

Several days later Mama announced, "We're all going over and clean up that place." This stirred up a lot of excitement since we were all anxious to have a "look-see" at this strange place that Mama couldn't find her peace with. We decided the following Sunday would be the day. It dawned bright and sunny, and we children

didn't need the usual Sunday morning prodding to get the chores done. In anticipation of an early start, we sailed through them neatly and were ready to go, but again Papa had other plans. He called us all back around the table with the exception of Jack and Benny who were loading the wagon with farm implements that were to go along. He reached for the large, German Bible cradled in its niche on the oak stand, along with a "Book of Sermons." He read unduly long, I thought, from, both, and ended with a prayer for our protection and finally, the benediction.

Mama and Papa with the kinder climbed into the buggy and started out with Nellie the horse at the helm. Queenie was hitched to the spring wagon and was champing at the bit to follow Nellie. I was delegated to the driver's seat, and Freda, Leona, and Bill were huddled between buckets, mops, and brushes in the long bed behind the seat. The seat of a spring wagon is mounted on a set of springs with a slat across the back to lean against. This made it a little more comfortable than the wagon seat, but considerably less comfortable than

the buggy seat, a fact I had discovered **by** the end of our journey. Jack and Benny brought up the rear with their loaded wagon.

I kept the buggy in sight for many miles, but the distance between us stretched farther and farther. Apprehensions mounted in the bed behind me, and Bill, the youngest, wanted to know, "How will we know where to go if we can't see them anymore?" That was a good question, and I didn't have the answer. I pushed Queenie as hard as I could and soon we saw the buggy turn in at a farm-house. We conjectured that they might be stopping to give Nellie a drink or maybe just waiting for us to catch up. That couldn't be the place where we were going to live! Our conjectures were tossed aside when we saw Papa lifting the children down from the buggy and Mama carrying the large basket with our noon-day fare into the house.

Now I understood Mama's depression after her first visit. She had told us only half the story! The house couldn't even boast an original coat of paint, and its lopsided porch and sway-back roof told a sad story.

And if the outside was any criterion, its interior was going to need more than Mama's lye soap, hot water, and our combined resources of energy. The early frosts had deprived the ugly weeds of most of their foliage, and as we sat there looking at them, they seemed to stare back defiantly, daring us to uproot them.

By the time we had everything unpacked and the table scrubbed and covered with a new oilcloth, the boys pulled in with the wagon, and we were all ready for some internal fortitude which Mama produced in abundance. In spite of our miserable surroundings, we had a jolly meal-time, joking about the various aspects--such as the mound of someone's discarded clothing left in one corner where it had collected a patina of dust and resembled a small sand dune. And the rag stuffed in the broken window that Mama told us about turned out to be a pair of long-handled underwear with one grey leg hanging down limply, its bottom extremity tucked in an old, curly-tongued shoe. The former tenants apparently weren't too fastidious, but they displayed a sense of humor, and we appreciated it. And the spiders! What a glorious time

they were having, weaving their intricate netting into every corner, never worrying that the business end of a broom would invade their silent complacency.

What Mama and we girls accomplished in the house didn't help the paint much, but it got the place looking and smelling fresh and clean. The men effected a like transformation in the yard, and when it was time to leave, Mama was much more relaxed and less apprehensive about moving in. "Now," she said, "if only the house doesn't collapse, we can move in any time and hope to endure the winter.1'

The day before the folks were to leave, Papa had me make the rounds with him, coaching me on how various chores should be done and the reason why. This built up my confidence considerably and gave me a whole new perspective into my father's make-up. He patiently answered all my foolish questions and subdued my worst fears, but he never let me think for a minute that I was put upon, nor that I couldn't handle this assignment with flying colors. "Du kanst alles tuen vas ich dir gegeben hat suh tuefl," were his final words given with a

squeeze--the only one I ever remember getting. With such confidence expressed in me, I was determined not'tb let him down.

Iawakened the next morning even before I heard Mama in the kitchen shaking the cold ashes from the stove. I burrowed deeper under the patchwork quilts hoping to shut out the encroaching dawn. "Just a little more time," I pleaded silently, "If I could have just a little more time!" A loud rap on the door broke my reverie as Papa called reveille, and I bounced out like a rubber ball, glad to get shed of my thoughts. I roused my sisters, and grudgingly we all trooped downstairs. The boys already had their milk buckets in hand and out the door when Papa explained why the milking had to be done before breakfast. "We're taking Daisy with us and she has to have plenty of time to eat her fill. It will be a long, slow trip with her tied behind one of the wagons." I was sorry Daisy was leaving because she was our best milker and the pet of the herd. She was the most gentle and affectionate of our cows, and one of her most likeable traits was that when she saw you coming with your bucket,

she would hurry to meet you, a behavior which was the opposite of most bovines. She gave such a generous amount of milk and gave it so easily that we children had many a tussle about who was going to get to milk her. She also demanded promptness; if we didn't get to her on time, she would bless the ground with her over-flow.

We all sleep-walked our way through the chores and finished just as the sun was peeping over the frosty eastern hills. I was still in a daze all through breakfast and the loading of the wagons. We girls took beds apart and folded bedding in readiness for the boys to move out. Mama was bustling in the kitchen, getting a week's supply of food together to take along. She and Papa planned to come back every Saturday to see us and to replenish their supply. Sunday, too, was to be spent .with us which was my only rampart against utter despair.

The two wagons and the spring wagon were loaded to full capacity even without the jar of dills Mama sent me to fetch 'from the basement the last minute. Goodbys were said--not without some tears--and more hurried

instructions. Even after they got moving, Mama flung back, "Be sure to watch Georgie and don't let him out-doors without his wraps." I shook my head vigorously and waved, not trusting my voice to reply. Looking at the tear-stained faces of my charges, I suggested a game of ring-around-the-rosy which they entered into enthusiastically, and their sadness was soon forgotten.

Despite the heavy pall that hung over me, that day went by all too soon. Monday was always wash day, and this one was no different, except that I was the one doing the wash. The family had left all their soiled clothing behind, and along with the mountain of bedding and towels, it reached a sizable pile. Fortunately for me, Mama thought to put the boiler on the stove and the water was piping hot. I poured several bucketfuls over a clod of Mama's "strictly business" soap and put the cleanest and whitest clothes to soak while I made the beds and cleaned the upstairs. With most of the furniture out, it was a breeze, and I was back down in a wink, ready to start washing. But where was the washboard? I searched both basement rooms, the

back porch and the kitchen twice. Finally I looked in the pantry, and there it stood looking saucily as if to say, "I've been right here for years."

Keeping the boiler full of hot water was by no means the smallest part of this mammoth job, since it had to be hauled bucket by bucket from the cistern. I corralled Esther and Rachel and started a bucket brigade. Georgie, too, caught on and went for one of the "dinner buckets" we carried to school filled with sandwiches and fruit. As I replaced the soiled water in the-wash tub from the boiler, they had their pails filled and waiting to replenish the boiler. Things took on a brighter hue as I discovered how able and willing these little troopers were. From then on they were delegated many other chores, and I was to change my mind about their being "nothing but work" long before our three weeks were up. As soon as dinner was over--we always ate our big meal at noon--I put Georgie down for his nap, finished up the wash, scrubbed the kitchen and dining room floors, and then went to the organ.

It had taken months of persuasion, but Papa's

resistance had finally broken and he bought us an organ --no sheet music to play from, just the organ. None of us could read music anyway, so it was just as well. Consumed with the desire to play, I spent every spare minute I had trying to drum out tunes by ear. The girls were always fascinated with the wheezing pedals and the whining tunes I was able to produce. They had been given strict instructions when we first got the organ not to go near it. tle found out later that they thought there was some kind of ogre in there making t-he noise, but all that concerned us were the sticky fingerprints.

I became so engrossed that I forgot all about time and the usual evening chores--feeding chickens, bringing home the stock from the fields, milking the cows, fetching wood and coal for the stoves, and locking up against predators. I was grateful to Nellie who called to me with a loud whinny. I hurried out and saddled up with the kinder close at heel. I gave the girls in-structions to have all the watering troughs pumped full of water and the eggs gathered before I returned. "Keep Georgie with you every minute," I warned, "and if you do

your work well and don't get into mischief, I'll give each one of you a ride on Nell, when I get back." I knew by their reactions I was going to get the best performance possible, for they all loved to ride on Nell.

The cattle were not hard to round up--their appetites for beet tops were satiated and they were eager for water. Besides, I had Rover, our dog, with me and this turned out to be one of his better days. We had always kept a dog as far back as I could remember, and his name was always Rover. This particular one was very willing but uniquely inept at herding cattle. One time when several steers had strayed, I said, "Rover, go get 'em." Without even looking where I was pointing, he streaked straight for the middle of the herd scattering them in all directions. With ears flopping and tail flying, his thunderous barks brought complete confusion--even to himself. He stopped, looked back at me and practically said, "Now what do I do?" To give him credit, however, sometimes he would come up with a good performance which more than cancelled his bad ones. One thing sure, Nell and I were never able to get away without

him, even though he was fast asleep in a hay stack or curled up in a ball under the front porch; when we took off, he was loping along behind-

When I returned, the girls had finished their chores and were waiting with joyous anticipation for their reward. They each got a quarter-mile ride down the road and back, hanging on to me for dear life and yelling, "Faster! Faster!"

I must have done some grumbling about having nine cows to milk, because I no sooner got started when along came Esther and Rachel lugging buckets half their sizes, offering to help. I didn't think they could do it, but decided to let them try, and I was to be surprised again at these two. I gave them the gentlest and easiest milkers, and when their buckets were full I carried them to the kitchen along with my own, which meant a good many trips.

The milk was strained into a large drum which was the upper part of a cream separator. This piece of machinery always fascinated me, probably because I could never understand how it knew which direction to send the

milk and which the cream. This phenomenon took place by simply turning the large wooden handle fastened to a geared wheel on one side of the separator. After a momentum was gained, the wheel turned easily and the milk was swirled and agitated through discs and cylinders until the cream separated itself from the milk, or vice versa. After the separation, the milk flowed from one of the two spouts in a thick stream forming a mound of foam in the bucket, and the cream, in a much finer stream, emptied into an earthenware jar from the other spout.- A proper speed had to be maintained to keep the "innards" of this iron horse functioning at its best, and doing this and keeping the drum replenished posed a problem. Mama was always in the kitchen getting supper when this task was performed so she kept the drum filled, but how was I going to manage this feat alone?

After much thought, I pulled the bench we kept in the kitchen close to the separator and lined the buckets of milk on it. Keeping the wheel circling with my left arm, I heaved the buckets up to the drum with my right, but try as I might, I couldn't pour their contents

without spilling a goodly amount from each pail. Finally, I sent Rachel for one of the milking stools. I placed it close to me and had her stand on it. Making sure she was out of the wheel's orbit, I placed her hand next to mine on the handle, and we went the rounds together several times until she got the hang of it. "Keep it rolling," I shouted over the grinding din and quickly dumped more milk into the maw of this gurgling monster. It took only seconds to regain the lost speed and Rachel was back at her job helping Esther-replace full buckets of foamy milk for empty ones under the milk spigot. This operation worked beautifully, and after that we could dispense with mopping up afterwards.

By the time we toted all the skimmed milk back out to the calves, the pigs, the chickens and the cats and dog, my arms were almost numb. We locked up the animals and went in to supper which consisted of corn-flakes with plenty of milk and cream and some of Mama's canned fruit; I was much too weary to think of cooking. After our frugal repast, the separator had to be dis-mantled, thoroughly washed and its inward parts placed

in the warming closet on the stove to sweeten over-night. I banked the fire, took the little lamp from its bracket on the wall, and we all trudged upstairs ,to bed.

Sometime during the night, I was awakened **by** strong complaints from my arms. They were used to hard work but nothing like what was demanded **of** them that day. During the sleepless hours that followed, I made up my mind I was going to be kinder to them the next day. I was envious of the children's calm, peaceful slumber but glad for their close proximity. I also felt thankful that they insisted we all sleep in the same room. The eerie, mournful cries of coyotes and the wind whistling th-rough the empty rooms were not conducive to lulling me back to sleep.

My arms felt fairly comfortable by morning, but I dreaded the ordeal of again coaxing milk from seven COWS. However, after a leisurely breakfast of the usual hot oatmeal and bacon fresh from the smokehouse, I felt better and we all headed out for the corral. It was later than usual, and the cows were voicing their

impatience with blatant persistence. The milking done, the stock fed and turned out, and the battle with the separator behind us, we all filed outdoors into..the-warm autumn sunshine. I stretched my full length on the platform covering the cistern and watched the children and Rover play in the meadow nearby. Earlier in the spring it was covered with a vivid display of wild flowers, vying for their place in the sun, but now it was carpeted with a thick brown turf which afforded protection for boney, little knees when Rover got overly rambunctious.

My thoughts were occupied with school days and I yearned to get back to my classroom. I wondered about all the other states we studied in geography and felt sure none could compare with this one. @lhere else could you find great thickets of Cottonwoods, with miles and miles of grain, alfalfa or sugar beet fields in-between? Or large cherry and apple orchards with their delicate pink blossoms perfuming the air in spring? In late summer, Papa would hitch up the wagon and call to us children to gather up all the milk buckets, dish pans

and every other available container we could find. "We're going cherry picking" he'd announce. It was always a full-day project, so Mama packed a lunch for us. Inevitably, we had to pick enough cherries for the farmer first to pay for what we took home. Papa didn't believe in laying out money for anything he could get in exchange for work. With so many of us picking, it wasn't too difficult and considering what we took home in our stomachs, I don't think the farmer came out too much ahead. With our teeth painfully on edge, we didn't care whether we ever saw another cherry--another plus for Mama. She was able to can them all, which kept us in pies and cobblers all winter. This same routine worked for apples and raspberries later in the season. We had to drive to La Porte for the raspberries, a long trip for US. La Porte was nestled at the base of the foothills, and we all loved going there because we got a closeup of the mountains, and the air was so cool and refreshing. Most of all, raspberries were our favorite fruit, and our capacity for them seemed insatiable. Mama concocted endless desserts with them, but out first choice was

always blintzes filled with crushed, sugared berries, rolled up and covered with thick cream--sweet or sour; it di dn ' t matter.

The next several days I spent a good deal of time at the organ and playing games with the children. I knew Thursday was butter-churning day and there would be no time for horseplay, but little did I realize what that chore entailed. It took a large chunk of hours from the forenoon with all of us spelling each other to persuade butter out of the cold cream. We were glad to hear the thick, muffled sound give way to light, splashing noises which told us the first step was ended. The children ran for their cups, and we all drank our fill of the cold, refreshing buttermilk pouring from the uncorked spout. I washed the butter several times in fresh water, then in slightly salted water, to insure that no trace of buttermilk remained to turn the butter strong. Mama prided herself in the fact that no one had ever returned her butter to the grocer with this complaint, or any other for that matter. The fact was, most of the villagers knew that she brought her butter on Fridays,

and they were waiting for her precious load, all tied up in a white linen tablecloth and nestled in the clothes basket for easier handling. After kneading forty pounds ,of cold butter until the water ran clear, I knew Mama earned every bit of that praise--however, my education in buttermaking had just begun.

After dinner Georgie was put down for his nap, and again we formed an assembly line to tackle the last of this job. Esther dunked the white, rectangular sheets of treated paper in water and placed them side by side in rows across the large table. I unmolded a pound of butter on each sheet and Rachel wrapped it up, nice and neat. They were pushed along to Esther who put our indelible stamp--F. Schreiner--on each one and placed it in the linen-lined basket.

Long before the forty pounds were molded, my right wrist began troubling me. Forcing the butter down into the corners and kneading out all the air bubbles demanded considerable wrist action. By the time the last pound was placed on its wrapper, my wrist felt almost broken. I tied the four ends of the cloth over the

butter, and we pushed the basket into the pantry to keep cold.

Getting through the evening chores was the most difficult task yet. I had tried several times, unsuccessfully, to saddle Nellie one-armed, and was on the verge of tears. We had only two neighbors living fairly close on whom I could call for help. One was a young Japanese couple who were very kind to the children. They bought milk from us, and every time Rachel and Esther delivered it, the couple would give them a treat. Once it was an orange, and the girls thought it must be Christmas time as we never had oranges except in our Christmas stockings. The other family was Swedish, and they had a son named Roy who loved to hang around our place. I thought it was because he was an only child and enjoyed visiting with the boys. But the boys were gone, and he kept coming. He was tall and gangly and several years my senior. I began avoiding him like the plague. If I saw him first, I gathered the children in the house, locked the doors and pulled down the shades. He knew we were at home, and I knew he knew, but that didn't seem

to matter to either one of us in this game; he kept coming, and I kept hiding. I was reluctant to ask either of our neighbors for help, but predictably we soon saw Roy coming loping by on his horse, and when he saw us he rode up to the barn and stopped. I gave my black curls a flick and put on my most engaging smile when I greeted him. I told him I was unable to saddle Nell and showed him my wrist which was swollen and throbbing unmercifully. He offered to saddle her and bring in the stock, for which I felt most grateful. I vowed I was going to be nicer to him in the future, but that was a rash commitment I failed to keep; as soon as my wrist felt better, I went right back to my old tricks, for reasons I still can't explain.

Roy not only helped milk the cows, but carried all the milk to the kitchen for us. He also offered to turn the separator, but I got panicky with him in the house and dismissed him abruptly, if not rudely. The girls and I struggled through the battle with the Iron Monster by ourselves, as well as with the rest of the chores and again, retired early. By morning my wrist

felt much better, but I was in no hurry to get to the milking despite the noisy commotion from the corral. We indulged ourselves in a leisurely breakfast, and when we finally stepped out the back door loaded with buckets, we were greeted with a cheery, "Hello--I thought you were never going to get at your chores this morning," from Roy.

"Oh, I wasn't in any hurry," I countered.

"How's your wrist?" he asked.

"Some better," I said, careful not to sound too independent. I wanted help too much to discourage him from asking, and he didn't ask; he just reached for the pails and headed for the corral. He helped us with all the chores and again offered to turn the separator, but I was adamant on that point.

After dinner, I put Georgie down, banked the fire and cautioned the girls to keep the doors locked and not to answer if anyone knocked. I reminded them also that they were in full charge of Georgie, and they must not let him out of their sight should he awaken before I returned. I brought carrots and apples from the cellar

for them to nibble on and then hitched Nellie to the buggy and tied her to a post close to the back door. Besides the heavy basket of butter, we had a full crate .of eggs that had to be lifted into the buggy, and I had no desire to cart either one any farther than necessary. With the girls' help, I got the basket and the crate wedged in tightly between the dashboard **and** the seat, barely leaving room for my feet.

I felt very apprehensive as I left. I had never left the children except to round up the cattle, and I didn't like doing it now, but this was only one cause for my uneasiness. My wrist was still giving me trouble and protested strongly when pushed too far. I knew from previous four-mile trips to the store with Mama how terrified Nell was of cars, so I started pray-ing from the first "giddap" that we wouldn't meet any. There were only three that I knew of in the whole community, so I didn't think it an unreasonable request to make, but before long, the black dot way down the road loomed larger and larger until it couldn't be mistaken for anything but our neighbor's black Ford chuqaing its

way toward us. I quickly turned Nell about face so she couldn't see the oncoming menace, a tactic that always worked with Mama, but Nell didn't feel the firm grip on the reins that Mama had. She reared and jumped and carried on so that I had to let go the reins and hold on to the sides of the buggy to keep from flying out. Feeling even more slack on the reins, Nell took off down the side of the road where the clods and ruts nearly toppled us over. It seemed an eternity before Nell swerved too close to the fence along side of-the road hooking one of the buggy shafts tight. To say we came to an abrupt stop wouldn't describe the jolt we both got. Nell tumbled to her knees with a loud shriek, and I somersaulted over the dashboard and onto her rump, startling her into another loud snort. I slid to the ground, trembling and shaken but unhurt. I hastened to comfort Nell who settled down quickly and began nuzzling me until she saw the owner of the car hurrying toward US. I felt her stiffen and quiver so I waved to him to go back--he got the message and returned to his trouble-maker and left.

As soon as I got Nell untangled we were on our way once more. I was still much shaken but felt very grateful for two things. First, that I hadn't succumbed to the temptation of bringing the children, and second, that we had wedged the butter and eggs in good and tight. I decided Providence was looking over us after all; I had begun to doubt that when I saw the black menace rattling toward us.

At the store I purchased the usual weekly supplies with a few luxury items tucked in. -The delicious smell of bananas overwhelmed me, and the joy of picking out my favorite cookies from the various bins was too much to resist. I didn't forget the bag of candy that was always expected by the children on shop-ping day. The grocer advised me that I still had credit coming, but I told him to hold it over for- next week. Together we loaded the buggy for my trek home.

The trip home was quick and uneventful, and I was as glad to see the children as they were to see me. They helped cart in groceries and sampled goodies to their hearts' content. The rest of that day was occupied

with getting chores done, and I, for one, was happy when bedtime came. Before taking the little lamp from its bracket, I put the large chunk of beef I had purchased in a deep kettle of water to simmer slowly on the top of the stove. The next day was Saturday--the day Papa and Mama were coming home--and I planned to surprise them with their favorite meal. Soup, stout and thick, was always a welcome dish to all of us, but especially to them; I aimed to have the best ever.

The next day dawned cold and blustery, and I was doubly glad I had planned for soup. Rushing through the morning chores at maximum speed gave us plenty of time to scrub and shine up the house. As soon as the noon meal was over, the children began to get anxious and made countless trips out to the road, looking longingly for the familiar spring wagon coming over the rise. Each time the tots came back looking more sad and forlorn, especially Georgie.

"Why aren't they coming?" asked Rachel, "They should be here by now "

And from Esther, "Are we sure this is the right

day?"

"Maybe Queenie Horse is too tired to hurry," suggested Rachel.

"How long are they going to stay?" and "When can we go back with them?" The questions kept coming, and I kept stalling for answers. Finally I got an inspiration. "Let's make some taffy candy." This brought hand-clapping and squeaks of delight. We all loved pulling taffy and it was one of our means of entertainment reserved especially for Sunday afternoons. I quickly got the old stove cracklin' by plying it with plenty of hard wood, then gathered all the paraphernalia necessary to get this project rolling. Cooking took a measure of time that had to be dealt with, so I suggested we play hide the thimble. After we all had a turn at being "it," we filed back into the kitchen to check on the candy. A blob dropped into a dipper of cold water looked and felt okay to me, so we started the cooling down process. In a short time we were all trying to keep this gooey mess held together long enough to pull it into ropes that even slightly resembled taffy. It

slithered through the children's fingers, on to their clothes, the floor, and even found its way into their hair.

"Are you sure this is the kind of candy you pull?" asked Esther.

"How long will it take to be taffy?" Rachel wanted to know, "because I don't want my hands all sticky when Mama comes home,"

Georgie just sat dreamily on his chair by the table making mud pies out of his pittance of-goo. I hadn't put him down for his nap, hoping, along with the children, that our parents would be home shortly after dinner. I did gain my objective--keeping the children's thoughts diverted--but at what a price! What I was able to salvage of this disaster went onto a platter and was placed in the pantry well out of sight, but it hadn't finished with its trouble making yet!

I had barely gotten the mess cleaned up when I heard Nell and Queen whinnying excitedly to each other. "fell almost jumped the corral fence, she was so glad to see Queen. But they couldn't have been as glad as we

were to see Mama and Papa and vice versa. Georgie was simply ecstatic. The little fella must have missed Mama dreadfully for he couldn't let her out of his sight a minute. When Mama put him down, he clutched a corner of her long, Mother Hubbard and followed her everywhere she went. After supper, he climbed into her lap and, cuddling against her ample bosom, was rocked to sleep.

Before bedtime, Papa was snooping around in the pantry for a snack and came upon the platter of taffy. He came out with a smirk on his face, exclaiming, "Ach du lieber, schmeer kase." I admit it looked more like cheese than candy. I knew Papa didn't like sweets, but I couldn't bring myself to set him straight before he shoveled a big spoonful into his mouth. I didn't know whether to laugh or run when I saw the look on his face--I did both. I hadn't gotten out of earshot when I heard Papa explode, "Dunder vetter, was ist des seich?" "What is this stuff?" he wanted to know. He hurried to the swill bucket and got rid of-it. Mama and the girls were laughing so hard at him that he too finally saw the humor of it. Not until then did I return and join in.

Our time together passed all too quickly. Papa did most of the outside chores with Rachel and Esther tagging along showing off all the things they had learned to do. I liked that; it gave me time to be alone with Mama who was a constant source of reassurance to me as well as guidance in tasks where I felt least confident. It was the first time I was willing to stay in the kitchen all day. Mama had set a sponge the night before--a sponge consists of a cake of yeast soaked at least one hour in warm water, five or six large handfuls of flour, plus all the other ingredients that go into bread making. This is set in a warm place overnight. Next morning more flour is added until the right consistency is reached for a smooth, pliable mass. I watched Mama like a hawk adding white flour to about two-thirds of the sponge and rye flour to the rest--we all loved rye bread hot from the oven with plenty of butter and a spritz of salt. These were set on the warming closet of the stove for about two hours which gave us time to catch two fat roosters, lop off their heads, pluck, clean, dress and stuff them with savory dressing. By noontime our table

was groaning with loaves of white and rye bread, crullers and doughnuts. Mama was still juggling the roasting pan with the roosters and two pans of coffee cakes in the oven until they all reached their point of brown perfection. By the time we had eaten the main course with gusto, the coffee cakes had reached that warm, tender deliciousness that no other dessert could top.

It wasn't until Mama and Papa were all packed and ready to leave that I remembered the puny behavior of one of the little calves which the children and I had coddled and nursed--all to no avail. "Why won't he eat?" the children had wanted to know, and "Why can't he stand up by himself?" They had kept petting and talking to him while I had tried to coax some warm milk down his throat with little success. I can't imagine why I forgot to mention this problem to Papa sooner; probably it was because I was too engrossed in kitchen duties with Mama. "Papa, go and see what you can do for this little calf in the back'barn," I begged, "I forgot to tel3 you about him." Papa didn't want to take the time for it, but I pleaded with him, and Mama, seeing

my distress, insisted. Reluctantly he went, and when he came back his face looked grim, but with no more concern than if he were asking me to get an armload of wood, he said, "If he doesn't get better in a day or two, take the big but'cher'knife;an'd cut his throat."

"I can't kill him--I won't," I protested. I looked desperately to Mama, but she knew when it was time to look the other way. She had learned long ago what I was still in the process of learning--that Papa's ways usually turned out to be best even though they seemed harsh and cruel at times. I turned and went into the house, tears stinging my eyes, relieved that the children followed the spring wagon out to the road and stayed to watch it disappear over the rise. I had witnessed numerous butcherings of pigs and cattle in various stages of development--not without some revulsion--but I considered them necessary to our liveli-hood; I had been trying to save this little fella's life and having the burden of doing him in was just too much.

All my earnest petitions for the calf's recovery were of no avail, and my hopes dropped to nil when 1

checked him on Wednesday morning. I walked slowly back to the house trying desperately to convince myself that I had no alternative. Reminding the girls that it was ,too cold for Georgie to be out, and that they had to watch over him until I returned, I took the knife from its rack and started back. By now I was thoroughly convinced of what had to be done, but my arms and legs had turned to rubber. I cried aloud, "Oh, God, give me strength."

Suddenly I heard myself saying, "Oh,-you silly goose. What's the matter with you--get on with it." I felt so detached from the gruesomeness of it that it seemed comparatively simple since there wasn't much life left in him anyway. I stepped out into the fresh air while deciding what the next step would be. I knew I couldn't leave him there, and I knew that Papa would have dug a grave and buried him, but I didn't have the strength for that. I finally took him by the tail and dragged him away into the stubbles of a harvested grain field. There I said goodbye to him and left. Later that night, I was awakened by the yelping and snarling of the

coyotes and knew that they had found him.

The rest of the week passed more quickly and effortlessly for me. I felt like a veteran, and my confidence soared to new heights. I just dared Nell to run away with me come Friday, should we encounter the entire car population. I had told Mama about my wrist and she promptly found the little wooden paddle that was used for tamping down the butter into the mold. She had dispensed with it for her own use because she could work faster without it and have no ill effect-S. It proved to be a blessing for me, however, on Thursday when it was butter-making time again. Though it didn't eliminate all the discomfort, I was able to let Nell know I was in the driver's seat all the way to the store and back. I must confess, however, that we didn't meet any black menaces.

It was chore time again, and we no sooner got started when Roy came loping in on his horse. The three-week harvest vacation that was allowed from school was over, and he was on his way home. I felt embarrassed because he was back in school, and I wasn't. He sat

there grinning and enjoying my discomfort which infuriated me, but I remained coldly polite. He asked about my wrist which reminded me how grateful I should be, but ,all I could do was wish he'd go away and leave me alone. He finally obliged, and I never saw him again.

Butter-making day came and went, and on Friday I made my last trip to the grocery store. Papa had told me to trade out all our remaining credit and to get plenty of staples, especially rice because we used lots of it, and it would keep indefinitely. The grocer must have been glad that it was to be my last day of exchange with him. I kept him busy subtracting a few items at a time for fear I'd buy more than our credit allowed. Papa had cautioned me against over-buying because he didn't want a bill to settle before we left. After numerous sub-tractions, he informed me I still had a couple dollars or thereabouts to go. Suddenly I remembered the rice. "Oh, yes," I said, beaming, "Give me a hundred pounds of rice."

He gave me a startled look. "Are you sure you want a hundred pounds of rice?" he asked dubiously.

"Oh yes," I assured him, "we always buy by the hundred pounds."

"That will do it," he said, relieved, and emphatically closed our account. I didn't think it came out all that even, but suspected if anyone was ahead it was I, and I was happy to be shed of this responsibility. While the grocer was loading the buggy his conscience must have prompted him to ask again, "Are you sure your parents want a hundred pounds of rice?" I reassured him, and he said, "All right, I can load it for you, but how are you going to get it unloaded?"

"Oh, don't worry about that. I can do it." But I hadn't figured on a hundred pounds being so heavy, and wrestling that sack of rice into the house took a lot of doing, even with the help of the girls.

The rest of the time passed quickly as we were looking forward to the final move. Our parents came in one of the wagons and Jack and Benny in the other. Papa and the boys sacked grain and gathered up all the farm implements while r-lama and I packed everything that wasn't needed up to our last breakfast we were to share together

in this house. In clearing out the pantry, Mama asked, "What in the world is in this hundred-pound sack?"

"Rice," I announced proudly.

"That's all rice in there? she exclaimed.

"Yes, rice. You told me to get plenty of staples," I replied.

"But a hundred pounds of rice--that will last us forever!" For the first time it dawned on me how much cooked rice a hundred pounds would make. We both saw the humor of it and had a good laugh, and later when the boys loaded it they teased me unmercifully.

"Are you sure we won't run out of rice before winter is over?" asked Jack jokingly.

"We'll have enough of this stuff left to throw at your wedding," chimed in Benny.

But Papa was kinder, and said "Des lust nar gute sein, mir kann des all veck schaffen." (Just never mind, we can get rid of all of it). Next to soup, rice was Papa's favorite meal.

After supper and dishes were done, Papa called us all back around the table to lay out the plans in

detail for the next day. "Die Mutter und die kinder will head out first in the buggy," he said, "Then Jack and Benny with the wagon loaded with the heavy equipment, then my wagon with the remainder of the household goods, some hay and grain, and several of the small calves.

"Mollie," he said, looking at me, "You and Nell will have to drive the cattle over."

"Me?" I piped, incredulous.

Ya, mine kind," Papa, nodded. "You're yet young, but with Mary ferhiraut, who else could do it?" I knew either one of the boys would have gladly switched with me, but it took two strong men to unload the heavy articles they were hauling.

Chores were done by lantern light the next morning in order to get an early start. Mama and the children led the exodus in the buggy; the boys wheeled out behind her, next came Papa, his wagon piled high with hay and sacks of grain and several of the smallest calves. Bringing up the rear were Nell and I driving the herd with Rover at our heels. The cows whose calves were in the wagon led the herd along--another one of

Papa's ingenious ideas. He knew the cows would try to get to their calves, so he kept just far enough ahead to keep the herd moving at a good, steady pace.

Mama and the boys stretched the distance farther and farther between us until I lost sight of them completely. This saddened me enough, but I made the mistake of giving one last look from the rise at the home where I had learned and experienced so much and was sure no other place would ever seem so dear. I was remembering mostly the sunny hours shared with my sisters and brothers, without the burden of responsibilities. The lump that arose in my throat lingered for many a mile.

The stock was behaving fine and moving along well--all except Jennie, our mule, and a frisky colt that seemed to have the wanderlust. At every crossroad, they would go tearing off, and by the time Nell and I got them headed back, we had done considerable extra traveling. Before our trek was over, I had them both condemned to everlasting perdition.

By noon, we reached the farmer's place where

Papa had made arrangements to water and rest the stock for an hour. I slid from the saddle glad to stretch my legs and to attend to personal matters. The farmer helped Papa feed and water the stock while I washed some of the dust off my face and hands at the cistern. I took the basket with the baked chicken, bread and butter sandwiches and crisp, juicy apples that Mama had prepared for us to a grassy plot where Papa and I shared our fare with Rover. An hour's rest did wonders for us all, and we were ready to head out again.

All went well until late afternoon when the cows' bags began filling up in spite of the fact that Papa had milked some from each one during our respite to feed the calves. It was past their usual milking time and they and their calves were bawling back and forth, frustrating the whole herd. Papa decided to forge ahead as fast as he could, but he assured me one of the boys would be back soon to relieve me. I felt completely deserted when the distance grew between us, but again, it was the only way.

We were traveling west and I was watching the sun inching its way toward the twin peaks where it dipped

out of sight this time of year. A nagging uneasiness kept me from fully enjoying the splash of crimson and gold covering the western sky. No sooner had the sun disappeared when my worst fears were realized. Two coyotes appeared as if by magic on one of the hills in the distance. Their silent silhouettes against the fading glow of the sky filled me with terror for I knew they were watching us very carefully. The encroaching darkness quickly swallowed up the twilight, and for a while we were in almost total darkness.

The frosty, night air was beginning to get to me, even through the heavy sweater Mama insisted I bring along. I was becoming so stiff and saddle sore that I longed to get down and walk, but fear prevented me. Stories were told that coyotes always traveled in packs because alone, they were cowards. Their strategy was to isolate one animal, run him to a safe distance while calling signals back and forth, then close in. No matter which route the unfortunate takes, he's trapped.

At the next crossroad, I had to turn the cattle north, and mule-like, this time Jennie chose to go

straight ahead with the colt alongside. I spurred Nell hard to get them back in a hurry, and just as I was turning them, I saw the flashing eyes of two coyotes uncomfortably close. I screamed at the top of my lungs and saw them turn and slink away as silently as they had come, with Rover hot on their trail. In a panic, I called him back sharply, putting all the force of command in my voice that I could muster. I kept it up until I saw him bounding back and literally fold up at Nell's feet. I slipped off Nell to pet him and longed to let him rest a bit, but I was too afraid to stop even a minute.

By this time, the steers were adding their protests to the bawls of the cows, causing a general slow-down--I think they were telling me all they wanted was to bed down and call it a day. That's what I wanted too, but first I wanted something in my stomach, then a bath and a warm bed to stretch out in. Thanks to the stars which were now shining brightly through the cold night air, we could see our way, and I lost my fear of the coyotes. It seemed an eternity since Papa left, but

having no watch I had no idea how long it had actually been. I only knew I was numb with cold and so weary that I dozed off, or at least hovered in that state, when I heard approaching hoof-beats in the distance and thought it was Roy again coming to my rescue. Even he would have been welcomed with open arms. It was Benny who was trying to shake me to full consciousness so he could get the coat on me. "You're to go home as fast as you can," he said, then gave a loud whistle and a "ityippee" to get the cattle moving faster. He tried to get Rover to stay with him, but Rover turned a deaf ear.

By the time I reined in at our new home, Bill was there ready to put up Nell, and Mama greeted me with open arms and a bowl of hot soup. I insisted that Rover, who was whining softly at the door be fed and housed first. Freda and Leona had already fixed him a cozy place to sleep and were only too glad to feed and get re-acquainted with him. The last thing I remembered after a hot bath and climbing into a bed warmed with blanket-wrapped bricks was hearing the bawling herd coming home. I felt grateful for that and for many other things too.

Two of the most immediate were a full stomach and a warm bed, but most of all I was grateful that The Big Move was behind us. I fell asleep with the warm glow of Mama's sincere blessing, "Well.done, thou good and faithful servant," ringing in my ears.