

Founding of a new Home

In the year 1872 the brothers of the old home plowed their way through "sloughs" of mud in the public highway to take their sister, with husband and four-year-old August, to board the train for the then, far out west. In the gloom of early night, goodbyes were said, hands reached up for a final clasp as heartstrings wrenched. Car door banged, and the darkness enveloped the travelers. All night long the rattle of the car wheels and the toot, toot of engines, reverberated through the gloom of the night.

Another morning and the train was slowed down for the crossing of the "Muddy" river, with its whirl and swirl of rushing waters; then on and on, and on again, following the Platte towards its source in the Rockies. For days and nights the Union Pacific led past telephone posts that had been chopped off by the Indians, leaving their stumps, re-established, and rubbed down by the then, still vast herds of buffalo.

Once the startled wife looked up with inquiring eyes at what looked like the sweep of cumulus clouds of her native land. "Yes it is mountains," was the reply to her unspoken question; and long did her eyes feast on what never became to her, a palling sight, during all the years of intimate acquaintance.

On and yet on, the slow moving train moved. This was not the day of flyers and lightning expresses. The roadbed but fairly laid out, was not certain in its tenure, and the depredations of Indians were yet to be guarded against. Occasionally a herd of antelope scurried away, holding their white/tipped ensign on high.

But, finally, Cheyenne was reached, the U. P. left behind, and the first railroad through Colorado took them on to Denver. After a detour which carried them to Boulder, and a few days outfitting at Coal creek, and Louisville, the journey was resumed, this time by ox team. The road, which seemed to follow no beaten track, but looked a law unto itself, over billows of rolling land, behind ridges, and through meadows of the native gramma grass. Denver was again reached, household furnishings, consisting of stove, with utensils, three or four chairs, not mission, but just plain kitchen chairs, were packed in the wagon bed, or secured behind; room was left somewhere in that wagon for sleeping for two people, with the little lad at their heads. Provisions were stored in the wash boiler, secured on top of the stove.

Then began the journey proper: what had come before seemed but child's play in comparison. The husband trudged along by the wagon side. The woman and little lad sat within, with eyes that were ever noting the fascinating scenes; for now Pike's Peak stood out in the grandeur of its snow-capped top at their right.

Once, in crossing the divide at Palmer Lake, a snow storm overtook them, causing the travelers to camp in a small "Pilgrim" cabin for two days or more. There the wife learned to manipulate "baking powder" biscuit; her first initiation into the camp bake-oven cookery, with which she became very familiar later in many a camping bout. Here, under the snow-laden pinon trees with their resinous, health-giving odors, she first fell in love with the piney, mountain fragrance, likening earth to one great altar--"Where saints, their prayer-filled censers swing."

Again the journey continued, along the foot hills of Monument Park, with the grotesque form of rock-capped pillars and monuments.

Down across the barren plains the thirsty oxen had been panting with lolling tongues, until eagerly a new impulse struck them. No longer urged on by whip or voice, they galloped until suddenly a many foot wide

ditch of running water gathered them into its cooling depths. The pitch down the bank jolted the boiler of provisions until they saw, in dismay, their cherished biscuits floating down the turbid stream. When the oxen had slaked their thirst another mighty effort took them out of the banks, but where was the good man? Anxious eyes looked sharply about, and were soon rewarded by seeing him make a mighty sprint, and by dint of hard scrambling, get out of the stream on the same side as the oxen.

Here, at Colorado Springs, terminated the railroad, and then was there taken into the wagon, the box shipped from the prairie home, containing bureau, sewing machine--taken from its frame and packed into bureau drawers, along with bedding; the invariable feather bed and pillows; emptied straw tick, to be refilled if straw could be found in that new country, if not, pine needles could be substituted; twenty five yards of newly woven rag carpet; and cracks and corners filled with bed linen, quilts, home spun and woven wool blankets, table linens, towels, etc.

Oh, it was a very treasure trove, was that pine box! But its occupancy excluded any further sleeping accommodations in that wagon box, consequently a sleeping room had to be secured from that on. A barn, with its fragrant hay mow, formed such a room during the two or three night's stay in Canon City; and once a sandy arroyo was chosen, where, if one of the sudden, not infrequent mountain deluges had surprised them, there would scarcely have been left a fragment to tell the tale.

Next they came to the home of Joe Lamb, who for the next years to come was their friendliest neighbor, as it was he, who freighted lumber for flooring, doors, windows, etc., for the new home to be erected. It was he also, who broke the virgin soil to be planted to potatoes, grain, and garden, with the same meek-eyed oxen that hauled provisions from Canon City, for a long time the only post office, thirty miles distant.

Leaving this place there was another six miles to traverse when a

turn was made, leaving the county road, which in itself was barely a mountain trail, up a little stream bordered by scrub oaks, often having to use an axe to widen the way; until a laid foundation of poles was reached, which established the site of the future home in the little valley, ever after known as Oak Dell.

The quiet oxen turned out to graze on the tender grass and to browse on succulent herbage, the attention was next turned to unloading the full wagon of its contents, and the making of its box, now placed on the ground, into a comfortable bed chamber; for as such did it serve during the weeks employed in rearing the walls of this primitive house. The aspen grove surrounding the chosen site of the foundation was made to yield its substance. Day after day the chopping and hewing continued, and log after log was placed in position. The walls rose until the apex was reached, and the ridge pole was forced, by all the united strength of the two, to its position. For this was the house that Jack built, with only the help of his faithful Jill.

Lumber had been freighted from the Texas Creek saw mill by their neighbor, Joe Lamb, with the ever faithful oxen, Buck and Bright, on the running gears of the dismantled wagon. A floor was laid in the cabin, doors and window frames made and put into place; puncheons split and laid on the roof, to be covered many layers deep with the black alluvial soil; the cracks between the logs chinked and daubed; the windows inserted, door hung, and the stove set up. A bed was manufactured from native material, the box unpacked to get at bedding, linen, etc., and one night the cottage was occupied for the first time. Under the shelter of their own roof and fig tree, they listened to the first rain that had fallen during their trip and labors.

There were still many hours, reaching into days, of work in getting settled. Three widths of the new carpet were laid in the back of the room; furnishing the parlor-bedroom were also the bureau and reconst-

ucted sewing machine. A cot was framed at once side for little August, a bread board, secured to the wall under the window, to which was hinged a falling leaf, took the place of the here to fore primitive box tops for^a table. A cupboard was built in one corner back of the stove, for the dishes and utensils, and another in the opposite corner for a milk repository, as a pile of shining milk pans had been brought, in anticipation of the dairy yet to be. For convenience of construction few modern homes could compete. The housewife could stand in the center of her realm and reach in any direction to parlor, table, stove, or boudoir.

All was now in readiness for the actual business of the enterprise, so one morning early, the good man started out in search of the dairy herd, which he expected to find in the up-river provinces.

The wife was busy in one of her apartments, unpacking her trunk, which she had not yet found time to do. Little August was prattling near her, and her occupancy of laying out familiar articles of clothing, all redolent with the home and life that she had left behind so recently, kept her mind so fully occupied that she took no note of time until suddenly the room darkened. She glanced up to see the narrow doorway occupied by a stalwart Indian.

Frightened? Yes. But a pioneer's wife must know naught of cowardice. She advanced with as brave a front as possible to meet the guttural "How, how?" of the savage. His curious eyes peered around the room, taking note of everything. She was not at all assured to see him reinforced by a gusty young brave. Some remnants of food on the table attracted the attention of the first brave, and he called out the request, "Swap!" So tremblingly she passed out slices of bread.

"Where's man?" Was the next inquiry. What should she say? She was afraid to tell them that he was gone for the day, not knowing what the next move might be. She feared to admit that he might be near, lest it prolong their stay. She compromised with her own conscience by saying,

"He has gone in bushes after cows." At last they departed with their guns, and as they day passed she began to breathe easier once more, on realizing that she and the lad were not to be massacred. At three in the afternoon she again heard foot steps and saw the Indians return from mountainward, but this time her fear was not so poignant; and at their renewed solicitations to swap she was ready to barter, especially so, when they held out for her inspection a fine piece of mountain sheep, killed by them during their absence, and some lovely specimens of Alpine moss. Again the bread claimed their attention, but more, a pitcher of molasses excited their envy.

"But you can not carry it!" She objected. They, however, were full of expedient. Pointing to a pint cup they suggested its transfer thereto. "But you won't return it!" Vociferously they denied the accusation. So she filled it for them; and they rewarded her faith by returning the cup in a day or two. Her fears were again renewed by their continued query, "Where's man?" So she was infinitely relieved, at this juncture, by the welcome appearance of her husband.

She learned soon after that the Indians belonged to the not at all unfriendly Ute tribe, who were at this time located on their reservation near Saguache, and came over Poncha Pass each spring on their way to Canon City to barter their winter's supply of pelts in return for supplies. The older of the pair, who called on her, was familiarly known by the settlers as "Old Spoke," a minor chief.

The summer passed by, ever full of unexpected and interested events of daily life. One morning as they sat at the breakfast table, they heard the cut, cut, cut, of a fowl, and the man sallied out to see a wild turkey with her brood of little turks at her feet. One of the two small ones graced the board from this sally. Many times the gobble, gobble, of the lord of the harem was heard from over the hill in the early morning, but he ever escaped capture.

Soon after a man rode up to the door and apologized for having

chased a bear across the garden the day before, not knowing that he was trespassing on any one's domain. One morning in the early days of their settlement, the wife came upon the carcass of a grizzly within a few rods of the house and was somewhat startled to subsequently learn that four bears had been shot by one hunter, within twenty minutes time, the autumn before, within the narrow confines of the inclosed improvements.

The day that the husband had made his first trip in quest of cows he came home with his overalls tied at the feet into bags and filled with seed potatoes, flung over his shoulders. These formed the nucleus of the finest crop of potatoes ever raised. All summer long the revivifying rays of the sun from a spotless Colorado sky warmed the earth, bringing forth plants and flowers. The front of the cottage was made rainbow tinted by the clambering morning glories, and the day never passed but what August's first joy was to run out and count, "uno, dos, tres, quatro, cinco, etc.," all through the Spanish numerals, for mountain passes and Mexican towns made this almost a more familiar tongue than his own native English.

August days were coming on apace. The wife had been told in the old home that, "It never rains in Colorado." Cloud forms were beginning to float over the mountains. Shadows began to troop between earth and sky. Again the husband made a trip up the river to augment the dairy herd; and one day while he was gone, the lowering sky began to drop moisture. All day long it rained. The mother and August had grown ^{un}afraid of Indian, bear, or man, and with cows milked, corralled, and food box filled, were ready for the night.

The little lad had crawled into mother's bed, while she, preparing to follow, was startled by the drip, drip of falling water. The roof, that had withstood many hours of rain, was leaking. Hastily removing articles, that could be injured, to cover, she followed from one part of the house to another; books were put into bureau drawers, or into boxes and slid under the bed. In two hours time not a dry spot seemed to remain.

To go to bed was impossible, to sit up was but little improvement. At last, donning her husband's overcoat, she sat down on the foot of the bed with her head under the ridge pole, and waited the long hours through. At intervals during the night came little piping cries from the bed, "Mamma, I'm wet," "Well cuddle down and try to go to sleep."

Morning dawned at last and with its first beams the mother was astir. The first thing was to make a fire in the stove, which in the stifling days of midsummer had been removed to the outside of the cabin, the wagon sheet stretched over it, from the house, to form a shed. Dry blankets were looked up for the lad, and he was lifted, dripping wet, from the bed and carried to the fire. A vigorous rub, and encased in dry with his little Red Riding Hood of a cloak, the horizon of his life soon changed to sunshine. There was nothing to do that day but to attend to the animals, cows, pigs, and chickens, keeping up courage for all, with abundant food.

But night was coming again, and the rain inside was no less abundant than that outside; in addition, ^{was} muddy water. Even the ridge pole would bring but small comfort.

A comfortable bed was improvised for August in a big trunk that stood under the protection of the wagon seat, and the mother sat on the wood box, with her feet resting on the stone hearth to allow the streams of water running with free access to the creek. Through the night she sat there, with her hand on the trunk, ready to nestle little August if he stirred. Once, she dreamed that this little babbling creek had become a raging torrent, and she thought that her old father of the prairie country was trying to irrigate. Once she heard the pigs in the pen some rods away, "Woof, woof," and she thought it might be a bear.

Again came morning, and with it the clouds rolled away--blessed sunshine. Now there was plenty of work to do. Bedding was quickly trans-

ferred to the lines outside, and the work of drying it began. Water was swept from the floor, emptied from the milk pans, which stood brimming under the ridge pole, where they had been placed to catch the drip. But you can not make that wife believe that "it never rains in Colorado."

That day brought the husband home, with his own tale of discomfort. A cow having escaped him, had crossed the river, he was compelled to sleep in a deserted cabin, with only a corduroy bed, spread with rushes, without other covering except his own clothes. But together again, they made light of troubles. Though it was weeks before the walls of the cabin were dry and freed from the mildew following, neither father, mother, nor child, suffered so much as a cold resulting from the exposure.

The summer time passed. The long brooding months of Indian summer, followed when calm, sweet days, in golden haze, melted down the amber sky. The winter shut in at last. The wife longed for the sound of a woman's voice and the touch of a woman's hand. Three months of this passed by.

There was a night of suffering, of pent up agony. Before the rare burst of dawn, the husband laid in her arms, a little daughter. Born, not of the spring snow drops, or the June roses, little Pipsissewa, came with the odor of the fragrant wintergreen in the frost laden air, with the swaying of the redolent balsam and the pines of the forest.

Life in this virgin land was all an open unread book to the wife and mother. The companionship of the many friends of her girlhood was replaced by constantly recurring incidents of a new and often startling nature. One day August, on the floor, intently pushing his box of Crandall blocks under the bureau cried out, "Mamma, here is a snake!" "Oh, no, little child", but with shifting heart beat she was at his side to find, hanging on the back of a chair, the hideous length of a spotted rattler. With one quick move the boy was snatched up and set outside the pen door, and his father called to the rescue. He soon dispatched and

laid out in its slimy length, a great bull snake. But it was long ere the mother could heed her husband's chicking and stop the stifling sobs that shook her as she held August close to her throbbing heart. She realized all the terror that could have been hers if the harmless snake could indeed have been the venomous rattler of the mountains.

Sometimes a loping bear was seen traversing the hillside, sometimes the shy, timid fawn was discovered frolicing by its mother's side in the open, among the aspens. Again the screech of the lion resounded through the night air, yet the bear were tracked in the swamp, the lion was driven from its feast of young pig by the squeals and assaults of an irate mother hog, even after it left its teeth marks in piggie's back.

The year after Pipsie's birth, a new house, all lumber, with shingled roof, was erected. The preacher who had come with his three^{year}-old Bertha, astride his horse in front of him, to see that wonderful baby, her first female visitor, came to have a hand in that house raising. For a skeleton frame raised that house to the dignity of a second story.

The months passed on to another year, when the Indians again passed through. Brave, squaw, pappose, all in the paraphernalia of a strapping board, cradle, vari-colored beads, tepee poles, ponies, and dogs. This time they camped far up the mountain side above the homestead. In the mornings the wailing songs of the squaws was heard as they collected the herd.

The first morning that little Pipsie heard them she came creeping down the steps, her eyes wide with wonder, exclaiming, "Coyotes, mamma, coyotes," They remained in camp for some days, passing in and out. One day a young brave stopped at the kitchen door as the wife was dishing dinner, His face was filled with animated exclamation of which she could not comprehend. She piloted him to the dining room, thinking that there might be an explanation. He received food unconcernedly, still jabbering his unintelligible jargon. When the good man turned to his wife with, "Is not

Was the one who visited us the first spring?" She shook her head unknowingly, for one Indian was like another to her.

He questioned the young buck, "Were you here before?" His face lighted as he replied, "Si, Si, new house." Pointing to the floor above. "More pappose!"

A little four stop organ was one of the possessions of the new house. He was invited to sit down to it and was shown the secret of the peddles. He went away, coming back late in the afternoon with two or three-sweethearts, maybe. He asked if they might sit at the organ, After initiating them in o the movements of the keys he suddenly put the pressure on the peddles. How he did laugh at their jump of surprise! August was sent off, towards evening, for the cows in the nearby pasture. The young brave approvingly exclaimed, "Good papoose!"

All was not prosperity in the new home. In the summer of '76, the grasshoppers dropped down from a cloudless sky, the sun was obscured, and destruction began. Husband and wife worked rapidly as possible in an effort to save the crops; but soon, even the corn stalks were stripped of their leaves. The garden disappeared as if by magic. Where before had been plenty, devastation stalked. When all was destroyed, the hoppers took wing and flew over the mountains to the south. But not until they had done their work; for the hopes of the next year's crops were again blasted when with the bright spring time, and the growingcrops, myriads of tiny grassoppers were soon to spring from their winter's bed from the eggs laid in the soil the previous fall. Then destruction came.

A field of waving grain would disappear as if by magic in a few hours/earth, brown as though by fire, the only visible reminder. Growing crops did not suffice. The grass was mowed as though by a machine. Trees were made barren from loss of leaves, until finally strength grew in the grasshopper's wings, and these newly fledged insects flew away over the mountains after their predecessors.

Another spring came and brought new hope, for these hoppers had winged their way as soon as able to fly. Again were the gardens tilled, and grain was sown. Bick, the great-hearted seedsman sent word, "I will furnish seed for all those who will apply from the grasshopper belt."

The earth grew green oncemore, with vines, and grass, and grain. One day Pipsy with her little brother--for another little pappoose had come--came running in excitedly, with "Hurry up, mother, and get dinner on. The grasshoppers are coming back, and we want something to eat first!" True enough, Again was the sun hidden by the hordes of flying insects, and the battle began afresh. There must be something strangely invigorating in the mountain breath, for these did not lose courage as the fall settled down upon them.

Many days the mother and children were without flour and meat in the house, and the husband packed his kit and went to the mining camps to secure the means to feed the hungry children. It was no easy matter to hear the children cry for bread, but never for a moment did she listen to the beseechings to return to the old home. If there had been milk for the babies it would not have wrenched her heart so much, but with the disappearance of the grass, the cows and calves were driven into the mountains to eke out a subsistence as best they could. Summer squash and mangle beets became a very limited diet when confined to them; but they were the only vegetables apparently undevoured by the grasshoppers.

Another winter waned and spring came again, with its multitudes of young insects hopping everywhere, but--an unknown miracle--they never flew again. Whether it was a heavy storm of sleety rain or a parasite insect, that brought destruction to the scourge was not known, Certain it was, the pest never returned.

The years passed by. The first decade was nearing its advent, when the losses by the grasshoppers, and other alluring interests, had won the man to a new venture; and leaving the homestead in charge of a

tenant, a new trek was made. The little flock was collected, August, rowing fast towards his teens, Pipsie gathering the little ones, Dot, Trot, and Bunny, whom she had sistered and mothered since each one's birth.

There were days of journeys up over the mountain passes, until at last, hidden in the very heart of the Rockies, the Cavalcade came to a rest, by a boiling, broiling torrent. August and his father had climbed the nearest pass with the dairy herd. Ever following at their feet was Dulcie, the collie, who aided the children in many an adventure in the home.

Three summers were spent among these mountain fastnesses. The first one, a tent house formed shelter from the rain that oft times deluged the hills.

August, on his pony, Pat, with his milk cans astride, climbed up the steeps to the mining camp of Bonanza, with his daily supply of milk for the "leaded" men at the smelter.

One evening, when he had gone after the cows, he was seen galloping home in frenzied haste, and when his mother saw his bloodstained hands, her heart sank in fear. He could scarcely stop to shout, "I've killed a deer!" (His little rifle was always an accompaniment when off in the hills) "I am after a rope to tie it onto Pat!" He admitted that he felt as though he would break through the earth, his footfalls sounded so heavy. Happy thirteen-year-old boy over his first deer!

Another spring he was long gone in bringing up the calves, and when he came in sight that time, he was carrying a load, which proved to be a lovely spotted fawn. Its mother had run with it into a marsh, where it had mired, and he had captured it. He kept it all summer, until it had grown into a fair sized deer. When he sold it, for the dogs from town became a menace to its life. Many a frolic did Trot and Bunny have, racing cross the hillside paths with it in their wake. One evening when Pipsie

and Dot had been with Dulcie for the cows, they came home all excitement, for they had found deer grazing with the cows.

Many were the delightful plays the quartet had among the flowers and trees. A park just across Kerber creek was aglow with the azure columbine, the beautiful state flower. Long sprays of hanging bluebells saw their image in the brook where "the blue-eyed gentian looked through fringed lids to heaven."

Sometimes a pleasure party of sightseers came by, and took August or Pipsie or Dot with them far up the mountain height above timberline, where the snow lay all the year, and fell in storms in August; and flowers could be gathered in one hand and snowballs in the other. Oh, the blue of that ether, when sound no longer lingered, of cricket, or katydid, and one could look far out beyond the mountain ranges to the plains of New Mexico or Utah.

One night a gaunt form came down on the camp of Bonanza and the mines about. A little child was lost, strayed off just as dusk fell. All night stern, bearded men searched streams and ravines, and visited every cabin home, shouting, ever shouting, "Stella, Stella," until the echoes rang. Once they found the print of her little bare foot on a log over a rushing stream. Half the town was out and the other half only waiting as a relay until morning. The mother, at the tent house, leaving her own brood fast asleep, was out at the first rose burst of dawn to listen and watch. She heard a glad shout with gesture from the opposite mountain side, "We've found her!" Clad only in a summer slip, without a wrap or head cover, the little girl had at last crouched down by a log, not daring, she said, to answer the shouts she heard as she awaited the day. Once, some soft, furry animal brushed by her. God gave his angels charge over her.

During their stay at this camp the rain clouds shrouded the mountain peaks as only mountain clouds can, and when the word went forth that our president, the gifted Garfield, was dead by the assassin's hand, the

little flock sobbed, "The clouds are raining tears for him," and twined wreaths of evergreen to hang over his pictured face.

The mountain land was left behind, and the family wended its way down the valley past Villa Grove, over the mountain pass of Poñcha, and on to the Arkansas valley, where the father had preceded and furnished home by the river side.

There, by the rapid, turbid stream, many years were passed; the children growing into man and womanhood. Many incidents have left their impress.

When the spring floods came bearing the burden of twenty years of debris, the water fowl darted and flitted before the amazed eyes of the children. August bagged many a sack of ducks, tiny teal, brilliant hued mallards, and other unknown species graced the prowess of his hand. Once he came proudly home bearing a wild goose, a bird with a broken wing, another wild goose, was brought home, in wavering, uncertain lines, from far down the river, by the little girls, Trot and bunny. As they neared the house the mother saw them driving the poor creature to its new home. For weeks it kept its place, feeding with the poultry, but never quite trusting itself to be corraled with them. The autumn brought the arrow formed lines of wild geese passing to the south, and their honk, honk, was heard far into the night, as they flew low over the river bed. One morning the delight of the children was unbounded to see a young goose, which had dropped down during the darkness, to the answering call of the crippled bird, with which it was hobnobbing and eating the scattered grain of the poultry yard.

One day a startled deer was seen bounding across the open valley from ridge to ridge. Dot and Trot spent many hours fishing, hooking the speckled trout at their feet, even within the precincts of the narrow yard. While Pipsie kept fragrant with wild roses gathered from the bank, the table at morning noon and night.

All the children made new acquaintances, friendships, and loves in the schools, which they were, for the first time, privileged to attend. A little lad, child of their old age, was born to them here--Alwyn, who came to fill the gaps, in a little measure, caused by the departure of the older ones. First Pipsie gave her hand, one eventide, to one who carried her away to fill and grace his home. Then August brought home, for a little time, his own blushing bride. Dot, Trot, and Bunny finished high school courses, dropped their childhood names, and went out to careers of their own, from the South to the Pacific coast. Alwyn, too, as the years went by, found his mate, and the bride of forty years ago sits alone by the riverside, awaiting the tide that will carry her over the flood to him who has passed beyond.

The story of the W. K. Egglestons from notes of Mrs Eggleston.

Mrs. Myra E. Nelson.