Memories of pioneer days.

(Translated from the article written in Bohemian for the Bohemian almanach Pionýr, by Joseph P. Sedivy, Verdigre, Nebr). (Volume III, 1918.)

The year 1872 was a cruel one in our settlement. It was the second year when our people began to settle here in homesteads. Our county was then called El Eau Qui Court, later changed to Knox. Everyone began with a small capital, but with strong hopes for prosperity in the future. A favorable spring promised good crops and all were happy to think they would harvest enough to make the present better than the past. All who could sowed some wheat, so they would not have to buy flour for bread. Some were so optimistic, that they hoped to sell a part of their harvest to the storekeeper in Niobrara, who promised to buy wheat and send it down the Missouri to market.

But on June 20th. their hopes were blasted. The morning of that day was beautiful. Not a breeze stirred the leaves on the trees, the birds were fairly quiet, the heavens clear, not a cloud anywhere, - everything foretold a hot day. But when at eleven o'clock my father and I were engaged in digging stumps in the valley on our homestead, we were interrupted in our work by a strange ~~noud~~ sound in the air. Right after that it became dark. Father and I were paralyzed and asked each other: "What is the matter?" We looked up to the sun ~~a~~ and saw on the sky a myriad of moving dashes and crosses, covered with mist and vanishing toward the northeast. They were grasshoppers, so feared by the western farmers. At about half past one in the afternoon they began to come down to the ground until they fell as rapidly and heavily as snow. The scraping sound of their wings changed into one solid roar and in a short time everything was covered with the hungry, cruel insects.

Those of my readers who knows what this sort of a visitation means, can realize our position, and all such will agree with me, that the hunger or appetite of these insectes is not limited to green stuff only, they seems to relish onions, tobacco, grain, prairie grass, the leaves and bark of trees, why even dry logs.

My father as usual did not lose his head when misfortune came on us. He told me to bring the oxen, which were standing under a tree near the house. He hitched them to the wagon, on which we quickly loaded old hay, stacked by the barn, and rode to a small field, in which were growing vegetables and potatoes. Here we made a row of hay-cocks and fired them, hoping to save the field with the heavy smoke, for the hay was rotten. But we were not successful, although we tried in other ways to rid ourselves of our enemy.

In the morning all that was left of the vegetables and potatoes were stumps and much grain was destroyed. At about nine in the morning a strong south wind began to blow and the grasshoppers began to rise. The noise of their wings grew stronger until it again became a roar and the whole armada, that had worked such woe, flew to the north, to repeat the destruction.

It was a sad sight. At that time of year it was not probable that a new growth would appear, and so each one thought how best to ward off impending want. Some of our countrymen went to other parts of the state, some even to Chicago, afoot, without money, to earn a livelihood for themselves and families. These they had left on the homesteads, in order to perfect their title. But their cup of sorrow for that year had not been drained.

A short time after the grasshoppers, on June 30th., at four in the afternoon, a terrible hail storm finished the work begun by the insects. When on that afternoon, a very hot one, clouds began to appear foretelling a storm, father sent me for our stock, consisting of a pair of

oxen, two cows and a heifer. At that time there were no fenced in pastures and the owner was not obliged to herd or watch his stock. The settlers lived wide apart and so in the morning they let their cattle roam in the direction where there were no fields, at night it was necessary to find it and bring it home. Usually one of the cows had a bell around her neck, so that it would be easier to find the cattle in the hilly country.

I left home lightly clothed, without a coat, it being very warm. On my head was an old hat full of holes and my feet were encased in broken shoes. I hoped to find the cattle near the house, but after walking through a ravine which stretched from our home about a mile and a quarter to the east, partly covered with timber, I could not find any tracks, no bell was heard, but what I did hear from the northwest was thunder, growing louder constantly. I got to the end of the ravine, to the upland, level for several miles. The sky grew dark and I hurried, for it seemed to me that over to the northeast I heard the bell. I did not get far, for I was overtaken by a strong, cold wind. The next moment I was blinded by lightning and the thunder roared like cannon. Over my head flew black birds along with the wind and a large ~~prairie~~ prairie rabbit sped past me, - all was fleeing before the storm. The icy wind struck me to the marrow. I had never encountered a storm in the open, alone, having been brought up in a city, and so I did not realize my danger. It was only when a heavy rain began to fall, accompanied by thunder and lightning, that I gathered up my strength and ran over the prairie to the west, hoping to reach our neighbor John Holecek. But I had not gone a hundred feet when I was fairly blinded by the rain and could go no further. I turned in a southeastern direction, with the wind, the prairie, as straight as a table, stretching before me for three and a half miles, without a windbreak. Down by a creek lived

a Bohemian homesteader, Mr. Frank Tichy. The rain abated somewhat, but changed presently to a hail storm and I flew over the prairie like wild. So far I had held my hat on my head, but the blows of the falling hail prevented that and I ran on hatless, hail as big as eggs pounding me in the head ~~and back~~ and back. I screamed with pain and cried for help, then I fell unconscious.

I do not know how long I ~~lay~~ lay that way, but when I came to I could not move. I ~~lay with~~ had lain my face to the ground, I was wet to the skin and shivering with cold. I could not recollect what had happened to me, but little by little my poor head, which ached terribly, grew clearer. As far as my eyes could see, destruction everywhere. Then for the first time I saw my danger, alone on a vast prairie, far from any habitation. I tried to get up, but was too stiff. After a while I tried moving my arm, and after some effort and pain I was able to do so, then my feet. As the last ray of the setting sun showed on the horizon, I finally got up:

I did not know whether I should go home or to Tichy's, which place was nearer, but I decided to go home, for I knew my parents were worried about me. I started out very painfully and ~~slowly~~ slowly, stopping every few steps to rest on the wet ground. It was growing dark and I was two miles from home. Blood flowed from a wound in my head. When I had gone half a mile, I met our dog, who greeted me joyfully. I realized that father was looking for me, so I called and heard his voice in reply. I gathered fresh courage and called often, hearing his voice coming near and nearer, until we met, both of us crying with joy. Father took off his coat and wrapped me up, put a heaving walking stick in my hand and supporting me led me home. He told me that soon after my departure the cattle came home and he and mother thought I had

driven it home and had stopped in some cave and shelter or animal's den, for I was fond of hunting. When it grew dark and I was not home, father started out to look for me. Finally we reached the hill nearest the house, where we met mother. She heard our calling, but could not leave the smaller children, and was most impatient to see us. Seeing that father had to support me, she began to cry, embraced me and helped to get me into the house.

I struggled for several days with a high fever and was often unconscious. But in eight days I was able to leave my bed, and my wounds gradually healed. I had no doctor, of course, for in those days there were none here except the Indian medicine men.

I do not know how we would have lived that year if my grandfather, mother's father, had not sent us money from the old country, and if we had not been able to earn a little. With our oxen I used to haul flour from the mill in St. James to the storekeeper in Niobrara. The mill was distant fifty miles, and the storekeeper paid us one dollar per hundred pounds The journey both ways, in good weather, lasted four days. Usually two or three went with their teams, for the way was through unsettled and hilly country, there were no bridges over ravines and creeks, so we had to help one another. At the same time, the trip was more pleasant. The first twenty-five miles east of Niobrara was along a hilly, empty prairie, the Santee Indian reservation, ~~the~~ which tribe had been taken here by our soldiers in 1862 after the massacre in New Ulm and other places in Minnesota, in which they took part with other tribes. Their chief was Little Crow. These Indians had settled here permanently, but those who at that time had shed so much innocent settlers' blood have all died out. This tribe is independent and prospers.

The rest of the way led through country sparsely settled by Germans, who came mostly from Pomerania. The road was some better here, for the country is not so hilly, but there were no bridges anywhere.

While the weather was pleasant and dry, I used to like to make these trips in company with one or more neighbors. It was a gypsy life and I liked it. But when it rained, or a storm overtook us, and we shivered with the wet and cold, all the charm vanished and I wished heartily to be at home with my parents.

In the summer of that year I made three trips to St. James for flour without any unusual experience. When November came, Westermann, the storekeeper in Niobrara, asked my father that I go once more with our neighbor Wenzel Kurka (A Bohemian-German), we were each to bring a load of flour, so the storekeeper would have enough for the winter. We started out early on the morning of November 16th. It was a dreary day, the air chill and raw. Kurka was about 45 years old, a jolly man. He came from Zatec, Bohemia, where he used to haul freight, in the days before the railroad came. He still wore a fur cap, a coat lined with sheepskin, leather trousers and high boots, in Bohemian fashion. I was sixteen years old and quite large for my age. I wore a blue soldier's coat and shirt, a badger skin cap (made at home), army trousers, cowhide boots and mittens made from an old coat. We carried with us each several blankets and two buffalo robes, in case of rain. The wagon boxes were filled with hay, we had a store of bread, butter (in tins), ground coffee and sugar in sacks. Besides that we took with us cooking utensils, and of course a gun and ammunition were not lacking.

The first day we made eighteen miles from Niobrara and camped under a hill by Bazile Springs Creek, on the Santee reservation. We unhitched the oxen, watered them and tied them to the wagon, to feed.

Then we gathered brushwood and boiled coffee. The night was unpleasant, damp and cool, but without wind. After supper we spread under my wagon blankets, wrapped ourselves in the buffalo robes, and lay down to sleep, fully dressed. We had put out the fire and I placed my gun near at hand. From the east came the howling of the wolves, which presently changed to a while uproar. In the grove under the hill we heard a screech owl, and somewhere in a hollow tree the night owl sang her "who-who". But we both were used to such concerts and lullabies, so we soon fell asleep.

I do not know how long I had been sleeping, when Kurka awoke me. The oxen showed some impatience, and when I fully awoke I heard from the west the tramp of horses'feet . Just then three shots rang through the air, frightening us considerably. The oxen became wild and tried to tear themselves away. I grabbed my gun and Kurka an ax. We saw several horses go by, panting hard, their riders beating them unmercifully. We heard them ford the creek and then the sounds of their steps grew fainter and fainter. But soon we heard from the west a new tramping and two riders stopped. One called: "How - koda!" We knew by that that they were Santee Indians and I answered: "How!" The Indian, in broken English, asked us if the riders who had gone by had a woman with them and if they forded the creek or not. Kurka knew only German, beside Bohemian, and so I had to do the talking. I said we could not tell, owing to the darkness, but that we heard them go through the water. Both riders vanished in the darkness, after fording the creek. We felt a little more calm, for we judged this to be a fray caused by "fire water". In about half an hour we heard, about a mile distant as it seemed, fifteen shots.

In the valley by the creek, south of our camp, was a cabin, occupied at times by a white man Otto Knudsen, called by the Indians "Wacha - zuité" (Long White Man), whose wife was an Indian. He was born and raised in Denmark, where he received a good education, but he did not care to make use of it. He could speak five languages, but in spite of that he lived in laziness and dirt, worse than many an Indian. Later he realized that he ought to appreciate his education and use it, he became a candidate for county surveyor, and was elected. He was re-elected several times and filled the office acceptably and honestly. At the time of which I write he lived alternately on the Santee and Ponca reservations, and was a good friend and advisor to the Bohemians.

The episode had excited us, so that we could not sleep any more. At dawn we made coffee and set out again. Before noon we reached the first house, on Weingandt's farm, the owner being a German and most kind and industrious. He had lived here about five years then and undoubtedly was wealthy, for he had a large herd of cattle and many improvements. We used to stop at his place regularly, water and feed the teams and camp in a grove by the creek back of the house. On our way back we used to spend the night here. After we had resumed our journey and had gone about five miles, a northwestern wing sprang up, growing stronger and colder, and snow began to fall. We crossed Beaver Creek, the snow fell heavier, the wind grew colder. Kurka rode ahead. Before we got to Antelope Creek, eight miles from St. James, the snow storm changed into a real blizzard. It was fortunate that we were going along with the wind, to the southwest. In those days there were no settlers all along the road from Beaver Creek, so we could not find shelter. At times we could not see each other and could not see

the tracks, for it began to get dark and drifts filled the hollows. Our oxen began to grow faint, they were covered with snow just as we were. We wondered what we should do. We could not stay and perish in the storm, we must at any price try to find a human habitation. We had not met a living soul during the whole afternoon, and I cannot tell, dear readers, how dreadfully I felt. It was no use to urge the beasts, they could go no faster. They stopped again and I saw it was because Kurka's team had stopped too, refusing to step into half-frozen Antelope Creek. By dint of our combined efforts we got the first team to ford the narrow creek and I followed. But on the other shore appeared a new obstacle, a deep ravine about five feet deep, filled with snow. The banks were almost perpendicular. We did not have any shovels, so we tried to make a road by pounding down the snow with our feet, but the wind rapidly filled it up again. We decided to hitch both teams to Kurka's wagon and finally made it. We did not go back for my wagon, but loaded my stuff on Kurka's vehicle. We knew that near the ford, to the southeast, was a sod house of a new settler. Presently we saw a feeble light, which vanished again in the storm, but gave us hope. It was noteworthy that the oxen, though hungry and spent, walked faster to the place we hoped to reach. Pretty soon we heard a dog barking and the front pair of oxen turned due north. I realized that it was making for shelter, and surely enough there was a long hay stack. The dog barked furiously and pretty soon the light re-appeared and a strong voice with a German accent tried to quiet the dog. A man came out and asked what we wanted. I had already unhitched the front pair and begged the man for shelter. I spoke in German and when Kurka heard the man reply in that language also, he took up the conversation. The man asked us to wait and went away, re-appearing presently with a lanter but minus his gun. He had a barn back of the

stack, made of sod and brushwood and covered with long hay. In this barn there was room for our oxen. The man gave our beasts plenty of lovely, prairie hay, which they began to eat with alacrity. The man invited us into the house, saying we could bring our things in. His home was made of sod covered with cottonwood boards. The roof rested on peeled cottonwood beams, supported by elm posts. There were two rooms, one was a kitchen and dining room, the other a bed room. There was a stove in the kitchen, a fire-place in the other room, a table, two beds, a shelf for dishes, three benches and a foot stool, all made at home of cottonwood. On the walls hung several holy pictures and a crucifix with a rosary, an old clock probably brought from Germany, and on a perch hung in the corner was clothing. Back of the bed stood two barrels and several sacks filled with something. Near the fireplace was a quantity of firewood. The flames in the hearth lit up the room feebly.

The host was about forty years old, by name Jacob Schaefer. He had come from Michigan, married a young Bohemian widow. They had four children and were most hospitable, because they had known privation themselves. Mrs. Schaefer quickly made tea and gave us bread and squash preserves. After we had warmed ourselves we were glad to eat, so that the housewife could hardly keep up cutting bread for us.

After supper Kurka regained his usual humor and entertained us with various anecdotes from the old country. The storm raged like mad. The little windows were covered with snow, the wind whistled and howled and complained. Kurka conversed in German with our host, I in Bohemian with the hostess. At midnight we spread our partly dried covers and robes on the floor in the kitchen and soon fell asleep. We awakened when we heard our host making a fire in the morning, so we got up and wanted to attend to our teams, but Schaefer wanted us to wait until he

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not quite as heavy. We attended to our animals and helped Schaefer feed his, but it was not possible to water them, for the new settler had no well and brought water for family and other use from the creek.

The storm lasted three days, the fourth night the wind went down and the sky cleared. When the ~~coon~~ sun appeared, the air was bitterly cold, but everything was covered with glistening snow. The air was cold, but light, pleasant to breathe. We cleared away the snow in the creek, chopped the ice and watered all the stock.

After dinner we wanted to set out for St. James but our hosts begged us to desist. So we got the wagon out of the drifts and started the next day, thanking our kind friends most heartily, who refused to accept any money from us and without whose aid we might have perished. We rode along the high places, there being no fences in those days, to avoid drifts, but when we could not do so, we had to trudge a road through them, for we had no shovel.

The day was warmer but cloudy. We had to go in a roundabout way on account of the drifts, so we got into St. James late in the afternoon, tired and hungry. The snow began to fall again. The settlement consisted of only a few buildings. There was a mill, run by water power, owned by Henry Hoese, his home and a general merchandise store owned by G. W. Foscett, who was also postmaster. Then there was a blacksmith shop, a small hardware store and a few shacks. In one of these our countryman Bedrich Vogel had a shoemaker shop. He had taken up a claim on Verdigre Creek some time before and settled thereon with his family, but the grasshoppers and hail drove him to make a living by his trade.

He accepted Hoese's offer to use one of his (the miller's) empty cabins as a shop, where he "shoemaked" in the one room of the house, 12 x 14 feet in dimensions, and which served as a residence of him and

his family. Upon our arrival we first gave the miller a letter from our Niobrara storekeeper and then the miller's son led us to the stable where we put up our oxen. It was still snowing, but there was not much wind. We knew there was no boarding house in the place, so we went to Vogel's. The miller was known to be stingy and we did not like to ask him for lodging and a supper.

Vogel was at home and much surprised at our appearance. He invited us to spend the night with him and bring our things in, and before we returned he was baking pancakes and making tea. We sat on the floor, Turkish fashion and ate pancakes with brown sugar from tin plates, tea from tin cups. He did not have to urge us much, either. The bread we brought from home was frozen stiff, we had to heat it on the stove to make it edible. After supper we conversed but soon were to sleepy to talk. We slept soundly until morning, on the floor. Over night about four inches of snow fell, but the wind not being high, it did not drift. The miller thought we ought to hitch both pairs of oxen to one wagon and said he would lend us a rack and if we would go to the Missouri River, three miles distant, and load up cottonwood logs, of which he had a store there, he would be glad to pay us. He said we could easily find the way and he would lend us shovels, in case of drifts. Kurka decided to accept his offer.

After a breakfast of pancakes and black coffee, we set out. A cloudy sky prophesied another storm, but otherwise everything seemed all right. We got to a bank above the Missouri and in the valley saw a thick cottonwood forest, in which here and there were woodpiles covered with snow. We could not tell from where we were which would be the best way to get to the woods, so Kurka went on to investigate. We had walked all the way and I was quite warm. Kurka looked a long time,

I saw him sink into drifts every now and then. At last he came back with the infomation that he found wheel tracks and we went on, but we realized that we had better not load up to the full, so we made half a load. The wood seemed light. Before we were through loading, the snow began to fall and the wind grew high, we felt there was a blizzard on the prairie. We must get back to St. James as soon as possible.

Going up hill was much worse than down, and we had an awful time. The oxen fell through the frozen snow, but after great difficulties we reached the top, the prairie, and found a terrible storm was raging. I had been perspiring from my hard work and now the icy wind went through me to the bone. My hands and feet were very cold, for I had but thin, wet mittens, and I could not get warm no matter what I did. The oxen began to grow faint. Kurka led them while I ran around the wagon trying to warm up. At last it seemed my efforts were successful, my feet did not feel so cold, but three fingers of my left hand felt wooden. When we reached a corn field on the outskirts of the settlements, our oxen broke into a canter and ran to the place, where they had shelter the previous night. We managed to steer them back of the house, unhitched them and took them in the barn and with tears in my eyes I confided to Kurka that I ~~have~~ had no feeling in my feet or three fingers of my left hand. He was afraid they were frozen and we went quickly to Vogel's, where they took off my boots and put my feet in show. The room was warm and I soon began to feel pain in my fingers, so Kurka wrapped my hand in snow also. He and Vogel never slept that night, they kept renewing the snow, while the blizzard raged without. My feet turned blue and were covered with blisters, the pain became unbearable, and the same was true of my fingers. I thought of my dear ones at home and cried bitterly.

In the morning Vogel went to Foscett's store and brought a bottle of patent liniment, Foscett came with him. They rubbed on the liniment and it relieved the pain for a while, but presently matters grew bad again. So they tried cold water again, but in vain. The miller and the blacksmith came and when they saw my condition, they thought it would be best to bring the doctor from Yankton, Dakota, who would probably have to amputate my feet. Needless to say that I was dreadfully frightened and my pain and sorrow increased. Each advised something different, but in the afternoon came Jess Hamlin, an old backwoodsman, who lived in a cabin by the river. When he heard about my accident, he came to see me. He was about 55 years old, of large frame and rough manners. He wore a beard and his hair fell over his shoulders. He was, in short, a good specimen of the old time trapper. He examined my feet and hand and said: "Boy, don't cry, that won't help you any. It is not so very bad yet."

The blacksmith spoke some word of sympathy but Jess turned on him angrily: "Keep your mouth shut, or your tongue may freeze!" Then he said to me: "Be patient! I will bring a medicine that will cure your feet and hand." He returned at dusk and brought in a whiskey bottle some dark, thick, ill-smelling fluid, which he rubbed on my feet. I was amazed to find what a gentle touch he had, at the same time trying to cheer me up. Then he told Vogel to wash off my feet in the morning sun and again rub the medicine on, and left for his home. I felt a numbness but the pain lessened, so that I slept a while that night.

All the inhabitants of the town came to see me, even people from the country, all sympathized with me and all knew some remedy. The days went by, filled with longing for home. The blisters changed to open, festering wounds, and Hamlin again came forth with a remedy. He

brought a package of dried leaves, of which a tea was made and my wounds bathed in it night and morning. He came to see me every other day and tried in every way to comfort me and give me hope.

The time sped and I had lain for two weeks like Lazarus. The weather was changeable, more often cold and stormy. Kurka let our oxen go with the miller's stock into the corn field and at night put them up in the stable. We lived on pancakes and coffee or tea, at noon a slice of bacon. Sometimes we had crackers instead of pancakes. The mail went from St. James to Yankton, Dakota, twice a week, and from Yankton to Niobrara once a week.

The very next day after my mishap I had written to my parents and asked them for money for my expenses. I received a reply from father on December 2nd., who expressed his sympathy and begged me to be brave, and sent me five dollars. The weather became calmer, some days were quite pleasant. Slowly my wounds healed and were covered by new skin, but I could not get out. Vogel made me cloth slippers.

I grew very lonesome and so Kurka and I decided to go home. Jess Hamlin advised me to buy boots called "snow packs", made of yellow leather, loose and without heels. He got them for me and showed me how to bandage my legs along the way. He wished us a lucky journey and before I could thank him for all he did for me, he was gone.

The next day, December 6th. we bade farewell to our friends in St. James and started out, carrying a load of several thousand pounds of flour, leaving my wagon at the mill. The road was much better and the weather also, but the trip lasted pretty long. I sat in the wagon, covered with blankets and hay. I tried several times to walk, but could not. We got to Schaefer's, where Mrs. Schaefer gave us a nice dinner and we went on again. We knew the moon would be up and we could follow the road used by drivers bringing flour for the Santee

Agency, so felt we were secure to travel by night and we were mighty anxious to get home. The night was clear and quite warm. At midnight we reached Weigandt where we stayed until morning. Upon awakening we heard the conversation of several persons. Kurka listened a while rather amazed, then he jumped up (we had not undressed) and vanished into the kitchen, from where I heard the cries and crying of women. I followed Kurka and found that he had thus met some of his countrymen and relatives from the old country, who were seeking him. They had arrived much earlier, for Kurka expected them in the spring, hence his surprise. These immigrants came to Sioux City by railroad, and in that place they bought a pair of oxen and a covered wagon, which they loaded with their goods. When they got to Yankton, Dakota, they crossed the river and fortunately reached Weigandt's. It was a most reckless thing to do, for they knew not a word of English, and had no notion of the dangers that might befall them in a strange, unsettled country, but their desire for independence gave them courage. After breakfast, when I had re-bandaged my feet and paid for lodging and breakfast, we all set out for home. The women rode in the wagons, the men walked, being well dressed against the cold.

The country now was hillier and the snow was deeper. The tracks which we followed now veered off in the direction of foot hills called Devil's Nest, so we had to leave them and turn to the west, thus making our own way through twenty-five miles of snowy, hilly, empty country. The shovel came into good use now, but in spite of that travelling was more difficult than that of the previous day. The women had to get out at times, to lighten the load. By sun down we reached a place, from where we could see Knudsen's cabin by Bazile Springs Creek. The weather had changed, a cold east wind was blowing, and we were thirteen miles from Niobrara.

It was dark when we reached the cabin and there seemed no signs of life. Inasmuch as I could talk English, I was sent to investigate. I knocked loudly, no reply. I tried to open the door and was successful. I struck a match and found the place empty, but to my delight I saw a stove. In a corner stood a box of wood and there was a shelf on which was a coffee mill and some cooking utensils. The snow was falling, it was getting colder and darker, and so in spite of the protestations of the women, who feared to enter, thinking it was the home of Indians, we decided to spend the night there. There was a small windbreak near and a stack of hay, where we took our teams. We made a fire in the stove and melted snow to get water for coffee. One of the new immigrants, Bretschneider, had a small lantern, in which was a piece of candle, so we had a light. The women were paralyzed with fear, even when we assured them that the owner is a good white man, only his wife being an Indian, and that both Kurka and I know them. Nothing could pacify them, every sound, every soughing of the wind, frightened them and they cried and lamented, saying they wished they had never come to America. Especially the young wife of Bretschneider begged her husband to return to Bohemian as soon as possible, she could not bear to think of living in this waste country. Kurka and I made a pan of coffee, we had some bread and pork from Mrs. Weigandt, and our appetite was excellent, for we had not eaten since morning. After supper we brought a supply of fuel, spread our blankets and robes on the floor, also the feather-beds of our immigrants, and lay down to sleep. But I could not sleep, for in my labors during the evening I had skinned my right foot and suffered great pain. The candle burned to the socket, only the fitful gleam of the open stove lit up the room. In spite of constant replenishing the room grew very cold and I suffered with that. I fell asleep toward morning and awoke when all the others were up.

I re-bandaged my poor feet and after breakfast we set out. The sun was setting when we reached the ford at Bazille Creek, from which place the farm of Mr. Frank Jamousek was but a mile and a quarter distant. We got there before it became entirely dark. Mr. and Mrs. Jamousek gave us lodging and an excellent supper consisting of game and other food, and attended to my wounds. We talked long into the night. In the morning we made the two miles to Niobrara, where we unloaded the flour and hurried to our homes on the river.

My father's homestead was five miles from Niobrara and it was afternoon before I got there. I cannot describe the joy with which my parents greeted me, nor my own joy and satisfaction at being home again. Kurka and his European friends reached home that evening also. Dietz and Bretschneider took up claims and did not go back to Bohemia, on the contrary, after years of hard work they became prosperous.

I nursed my wounds all winter, they did not heal until in the spring. My father brought back the wagon on March 8th.

Thus I end one chapter of that interesting time, so long gone by, a time of difficulties and hardships. When now I see all around hundreds of beautiful, well improved farms and prosperous towns, it seems impossible that so much has been accomplished in one lifetime.