

If my memory serves me right, it was July 4th, 1880, that we had our first, really good, big general rainstorm. There was a large crowd at the grove and everyone enjoyed the day even though it was intensely hot, even in the dense shade of the grove. By that time we had become almost accustomed, though not quite reconciled to the heat, the drought and the hot winds.

The Blossom's had a sheep ranch at what is now known as Big Springs Ranch, southwest of Meade, Kansas. The family consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Blossom and a grown son of Mrs. Blossom by a former marriage. His name was Will Lee, a dark rather sullen looking chap, and adored by his mother. Mrs. Blossom was a tall, handsome woman, a Kentuckian, fearless and self-reliant, as all pioneer women should be. However, she found ranch life lonely and wanted a girl for company so mother let me go.

I was rather homesick at times, for I missed the other children so much. I had never been away from the home folks before, but there were compensations. For one thing, there was a great supply of reading matter there, stacks of novels and fashion magazines of that day. Always fond of reading, this was a great treat for me. Mrs. Blossom carefully picked out the books she considered fit for my young mind but I delved into all of them, or as many as I could.

Mr. Blossom usually spent the evenings reading aloud to us. The "Wandering Jew" was one of the books he read to us. I never forgot it, although at the time, I did not wholly understand it.

I spent many hours wandering along the Spring Creek. It was so pretty, a shallow stream flowing over a pebbly bottom and shaded by cottonwood trees in which many birds nested and sang joyously. Happy little songsters, many of which fell victims to the greed of "Rowdy," a beautiful Maltese cat that was Mrs. Blossom's special pet and pride. But it was the bane of my young life for regularly every night he came in through the window that was left open for him, carrying a live bird. Invariably, he brought his "catch" into my bedroom where he released the terrified thing, letting it fly and flutter about. Always catching it every now and then, teasing it as cats will, and at last I could hear him crunching and eating it.

Mrs. Blossom loved pets and sometimes found young mocking birds in the nest. Some of these she raised and taught to whistle tunes. By splitting their tongues, these birds could talk almost as well as a parrot. She had one that could talk quite plainly, whenever he saw a cat he would call, "Rowdy, Rowdy, look out, look out."

Cimarron Chronicles

Being a Kentuckian, Mrs. Blossom loved good horses and knew how to handle and train them. She had a team of driving horses that were beauties and real steppers. Once every two weeks or so, they were hitched to the buckboard and we would drive up to the settlement for the mail. We always stopped at my home for a little visit and those were red letter days for me, for I was very lonely, at times, and wished with all my heart for the little sister and cousins who were my playmates at home.

After I had been at the ranch a short time Will Lee, the son, became tired of the lonely life of a sheepherder and decided he would try the more glamorous life of a cowboy. So much against his mother's wishes, he left home and for a time she did not know where he was and was greatly worried. However, by diligent inquiry he was finally located at a ranch about a days journey east of the home. Mrs. Blossom decided she would go to him and if possible persuade him to return home as winter was coming and there would be little chance for a green hand to be kept on at the cattle ranch during the winter months. So taking me with her one morning, we started for our unknown destination. She knew the general direction we must take but there were no roads to follow so we set off across country.

By noon we reached Uncle John's sheep ranch where we found my cousin Silas in charge of the herd and we stopped at his dark little dugout for something to eat. He set out for us what he had cooked, which was a pot of beans that had been prepared the day before and they were just slightly soured, so we had to count them as 'out' and that left biscuits, sorghum and coffee. After a rest and some further information as to our destination, we continued on our way to the east.

All afternoon we drove, mostly across rough country and without seeing a human being. Toward evening we came across several bunches of grazing cattle and this was an encouraging sign but as the sun sank low and still lower, we still had yet found no sign of the ranch we sought. Mrs. Blossom became worried and considered the possibility of having to spend the night in the open wilds. Then just as the sun was sinking from sight, we saw, coming in our direction, a solitary rider who proved to be a line rider from the outfit we were looking for. He was a friendly Texan and when Mrs. Blossom told him she was looking for her young son he told her Will was in camp and that he would show us the way in. Our meeting this cowboy was fortunate indeed, for we were still some distance from the camp that was but an incomplete dugout in the hillside near a little creek and it was after dark when we finally arrived.

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Great, indeed, must have been the astonishment of those men when a woman and a small girl suddenly appeared out of no where, in that place probably forty miles from any settlement and half that distance from any other ranch. However great their surprise, none of it was shown by word or look and we were received with the utmost courtesy. Everyone was very nice and expressed their pleasure in making the acquaintance of Will's mother, and the little girl received a good deal of attention, to her great embarrassment. At that time, I was a shy young creature.

Mrs. Blossom was a good talker and I am sure these men enjoyed the unexpected company as we all sat about the campfire chatting until bed time when they robbed themselves of enough blankets to make us a bed on the dirt floor of the small dugout. The men slept on the ground outside. Our bed was hard, oh very hard indeed, so we were glad when morning came. Outside the cook was getting breakfast over a campfire, the air of early autumn was crisp and sweet. As I stood looking about at my unfamiliar surroundings, I was suddenly quite dismayed to see the sun rising over the horizon's rim exactly in the direction I had fixed in my mind as being due south. And I could not get straightened out as to directions until we got back in more familiar territory.

I cannot recall the name of the cow outfit to which we paid this unlooked for visit, but the location was on some creek west of where Ashland, Kansas now stands. Breakfast was served us on a couple of tomato boxes for a table, the men making profuse apologies for the slimness of the fare as the wagon had not been in to Dodge City for supplies for a long time and they were about out of everything except coffee, bacon and bread.

Our mission accomplished, for Will had promised to come home in a few days, we turned homeward once more accompanied by our guide of the night before. He now showed us a shorter and better way than the rough country we had wandered over the evening before and so our high stepping team carried us safely back home from what, to me at least, seemed a real adventurous journey. I think it was the following spring that the Blossoms sold out and left the country.