

PULLING UP ROOTS

**The Coming
Of
Bernhard and Elisabeth Barg
and Their Family
To Canada
1925**

**Dedicated to
Kathrine & her cousins**

REVIEW OF CHARACTERS

Bernhard – came to Duchess, Alberta, Canada

Elisabeth – his wife, sometimes abbreviated to Liese

Gerhard - George, their oldest son

Jasch – Jacob, the second son

Philip

Hans – John

Lieschen – daughter Elisabeth

Berend – the low German variation of Bernhard

Peter

Uncle Johann – Bernhard's bachelor brother who lived with Bernhard's family in Tiegerweide, Siberia

Liese – niece of Bernhard and Johann

Jaunzi – Peter Janzen, a Tiegerweide chum

Olga – fictitious name

Glossary

Abramke – the sweet, juicy centre of a ripe watermelon

Andacht – brief sermon or meditation

Andenken – keepsake, memento

br-r-r-r – Russian way of signalling horses to stop

Centralschule – high school

cheburecki – a kind of pancake with meat filling, a speciality of the Tartars

chen – diminutive suffix for children; sometimes also endearment

Desjatin – unit of land measurement, a little less than a hectare

geröstete Zwieback – oven roasted buns until they are completely dry

Glums – cottage cheese

Guten Abend – Good Evening

ke/tje – diminutive suffix, sometimes also denoting endearment of a boy

Mamalyga – corn meal mush

Molotschna – a river in the Ukraine; the area drained by the river of that name

Ohm – a Low German term of respect for an older man

Piroshki – a kind of pastry with a fruit centre

Pluma Moos – fruit “soup,” often made from home-dried fruits

Prips – coffee substitute

rakieve sheykie – “crab necks,” a kind of candy with a hard fruit-flavoured exterior, jelly-like centre

Rührei – scrambled eggs

Sängerfest – choir festival

Schinkenfleisch – ham

Schnetke – small tea biscuits

Schwaben villages – Lutheran or Catholic villages, origination in South Germany

Schwabisch – German dialect spoken by people from South Germany

shashlick – five or six cubes of mutton roasted on a skewer over an open fire

**Spritzhäuschen – Fire Hall, which housed the fire “wagon” and a temporary
lock-up unit**

Tante – aunt, broadly used as a term of respect for an older woman

**trachoma – a contagious eye disease, the detection of which prevented
immigration into Canada**

uncle – term of respect for any older man

Vereneki – cottage cheese pockets

Vesper (pronounced “faspa”) – late afternoon lunch break

Witfrau – widow

Wurst – sausage

**Zwieback – literally, two-bake. Buns with a proportionately high
shortening (butter) content; by Barg standards, the bottom bun was
small but an even smaller one was set on top. These could easily be
broken apart for roasting.**

The train wheels kept up their monotonous clickety-clack, clickety-clack, interspersed occasionally with a screech of the brakes, a jolt and a lurch as the train rounded another curve. It seemed that the rocks, lakes and scrub trees of northern Ontario would never end.

Wearily, Elisabeth leaned her head back and closed her eyes. When would they come to the end of this journey? They had been travelling now for over four weeks. Was brother Philip right? Should they have stayed in the Crimea? Were they foolish to take their children into God-alone-knew-what?

When they landed at St. John, their hopes were high. Canada at last! But Canada was full, at least the Canada in southern Ontario! No room for more immigrants in the prime locations of Kitchener and St. Catherine's! Not room!

A cloud shaded Elisabeth's thoughts. Would there be an opening for them at Rosthern? What if that community was full of immigrants too?

The slamming of the door at the end of the coach broke into her thoughts. A C.P.R agent, swaying to the movement of the train, came down the aisle, stopping beside Bernhard, and little Peter and Berend. She listened carefully.

"Oh no!" her thoughts raced. "No room at Rosthern! How much farther will we have to go?" She strained to hear Bernhard's verdict.

"If Duchess is where they want us, then we'll go to Duchess."

"Duchess," her mind queried. "Where was Duchess?"

In 1803, Jacob Barg, his wife, two children and some step-children joined the hundreds of other Low Germans moving into the Ukraine of South Russia. They settled in the village of Rosenort in an area drained by the Molotschna River. Since Jacob was a surveyor, he was kept busy surveying and dividing the huge tracts of land allotted to the Germans by Catherine the Great. In places, his work was impeded by wild grasses as tall as a man on horseback.

On the evening of February 19, 1811, as he and his seven young helpers were returning home, they were stopped by a group of natives. When Jacob, a big strong man, had alighted, one of the men asked for a light for his pipe. Jacob reached for his stone and flint, and leaned over to light the tobacco. Suddenly, he was struck from behind by a tremendous hammer-blow that completely penetrated his skull. Horrified, the boys watched until one grabbed the reins and urged the horses into a gallop to escape. As they fled across the steppe, the Nogais pursued them. In the darkness, the boys failed to see a ditch. The wagon overturned and they were mercilessly beaten to death.

Greedily, the nomads ransacked the bodies for valuables. What they did not realize was that Jacob's watch, his "Nurnberg Egg," a watch designed with the face on the flat side of the oblong "half egg," would help the law officers identify the murderers when they tried to pawn it. One of the women of the tribe is also reputed to have informed the police for 100 rubles.

Little is known of the son Jacob except that he too lived in Rosenort with his wife, six daughters and one son, another Jacob.

By the time that the younger Jacob had reached his twenties, he was travelling to Tiegerweide, a neighbouring village upstream on the Kuruschan Creek, to visit Katharina Mathies. After their marriage in 1862, he moved to Tiegerweide, where he set up a blacksmith shop, which he operated along with his farm.

As their family grew, so did the families of others in Tiegerweide. They needed more room. By this time, all the farm land around Tiegerweide was taken up. The council's regulation stipulated that farms should not be subdivided. Father Jacob was perplexed. True, he had only four sons but there was insufficient land for even four.

Young Bernhard was nearly twenty when he was approached about tutoring the children of a wealthy, Low-German landowner. His love of books, coupled with the dilemma at home over farm land helped launch him into teaching. Later he was asked to teach in a village in the Crimea.

One of the big social events of the year, the Sangerfest, brought together choirs from neighbouring villages. When Bernhard attended one of these, he

noticed one of the girls in the choir from Karassan [in Crimea]: he couldn't pinpoint what attracted him but he decided to become acquainted.

The petite, demure, young lady from Karassan was Elisabeth Warkentin, oldest daughter of Philip and Elisabeth Warkentin. Bernhard did not care that some of the Warkentin clan did not approve of him, a common school teacher. He'd show them! He and Elisabeth might have to wait a while until he had saved enough to set up housekeeping, but he was determined to have her.

The day for the engagement party came. Excitedly, Elisabeth looked out the window as she smoothed the folds of her new dress. Seven-year-old Anna watched as she retied the bow once more.

"I don't see why you want to get married to that man. He'll never be able to keep you," she stated derisively.

Elisabeth disregarded Anna for she spied Bernhard coming across the yard. How handsome he looked in his white homespun linen jacket! It didn't matter that he was "only the teacher." She was willing to be poor with him.

After their marriage in June, 1902, Bernhard and Elisabeth settled in Karrassan, close to the rest of the Warkentin family. Here where there was more land available, Bernhard was able to farm after all. Elisabeth found that keeping house for two was much easier than for the thirteen at home. However, one day when she had gone to visit an older Tante [aunt] in the village, she was startled to see Bernhard coming in with his team.

"Dinner time already!" And home she flew to be there, at least before Bernhard came into the house.

Time flew quickly; it seemed there was always work to be done - water to be carried from the village well, straw to be brought in to fuel the stove and oven, black bread and zwieback to be baked; prips and piroshky to be made for vesper, the cow to be milked, glums to be made into vereneki or cottage cheese cakes, socks to be darned, fruit to be dried. At Christmas, Bernhard and Elisabeth joined the family at Father Warkentins' on the first day, at brother Johanns' the second, and housing the whole family itself with a dinner of Schinkenfleisch and Pluma Moos on the third.

In April, the return of the nightingales was followed by the arrival of a son.

“What shall we name him?” questioned Bernhard.

“Grandfather Wall is still living. Let’s name the baby after him,” Elisabeth suggested.

“Alright, there are no Gerhards in our Barg family. Gerhard will be a good name,” agreed Bernhard.

Now, of course, there was extra work, but Elisabeth didn’t mind. Whenever she could manage it, she would take the baby over to Father’s house and set him on the bed beside her mother. Elisabeth was concerned as she saw her mother, who had not been well for a long time, gradually becoming weaker. Aganeta was already married and Elisabeth wondered how the family would manage when Lena also left to be married. Anna and Marichen were too young to keep house.

Elisabeth’s sorrow in losing her mother was offset by the arrival, on Bernhard’s birthday, of the second son, Jacob, named after the Barg grandfathers.

Bernhard came to sit beside Elisabeth’s bed.

“Is Olga able to handle the work well enough?” he asked. “Do you think she will be able to stay on?”

“She can manage the work now and by the time the other cows freshen, later in the spring, I should feel more like working again,” replied Elisabeth. “But I am thankful to have Olga’s help. I couldn’t do it alone, not with another baby.” And so Olga became part of the household.

“Here Marichen,” called Father Warkentin, “take Jasch and Gerhard outside for a while.”

“Make sure they keep their caps on,” added Elisabeth.

“Elisabeth,” he began after the children were out of earshot, “I am going to be married again soon. Witfrau Ediger has consented. The girls need a mother to teach them how to keep house.”

Slowly, Elisabeth's eyes filled with tears. Another woman in her mother's place! And so soon! But this was the way, she told herself resignedly. A widower with a large family needed a wife; a widow with a family needed a provider. Marriage prompted by necessity if not by love. It would be a relief though to know the girls were being given the guidance they needed.

After Father's marriage the family was bigger than ever, with the addition of Henry, Liese, Neta, and the twins, Maruschka and Nutta.

Mail! Quickly Bernhard flipped through the little packet a neighbour had brought back from town. Ah, a letter from his parents! He had not heard from Tiegerweide recently. Eagerly he slit the envelope.

"Elisabeth, listen to this," he called. "Peter is getting ready to move to Siberia in the spring and Jacob may go too. Deleskes, Klassens, Driedigers, and Hüberts (all Bernhard's sisters) are talking of going too. They think the area west of Omsk sounds like a good place to settle. Maybe I should try to go to Tiegerweide before they leave. Mother says Peter wants to be ready to leave by April." Then he added, "Do you want to go too?"

"Not really. Anyway, there's still land available here. It's not so crowded here as in the Molotschna."

"No, I have no desire to move east either," he stated.

In April, 1907, the six families did move to Siberia. After travelling for two weeks, most of them settled in the new village of Tiegerweide, Peter building the first house there.

One noon, Bernhard came into the house with a preoccupied air. He scarcely ate the vereneki Elisabeth had prepared. Was he thinking of moving to Siberia after all? Finally he spoke.

"Liesa, how would you like to move?"

"Where to? Siberia?" And her mouth dropped open.

"No, not that far away. Right here in the Crimea. To Boschlitscha. We can rent a farm there and then seed it in wheat."

“Then we could see the family once in a while. I’m not anxious to move right now but if you think that is best, I am willing to go.”

Bernhard’s wagon was not large enough to hold all the belongings and the little family as well, so some of the Warkentin brothers hauled the extras as well as the seed wheat that Bernhard still planned to seed that fall.

Busy days followed. Bernhard worked long hours using the “bugger,” a kind of seed drill with shallow plow shares that could seed grain into stubble. Elisabeth continued to make butter, for that was the source of the household money. In the evenings, she would sew. The boys needed larger clothes and she needed a few more diapers, the old ones were wearing thin.

One day, Father and Mother Warkentin came to visit. Elisabeth’s fingers flew as she mixed and cut the dough for the schnetke for vesper. As she worked, she listened to Father.

“Yes,” he was saying, “We found out that that the Armenian, Topolov, is wanting to sell; in fact, he has to sell. He has lost so much in gambling that he needs the money.”

“How much is he asking?” questioned Bernhard.

“More than I can get together myself. But this is where the family comes in. If you and Fast and Enns would each buy a share, (Johann and Philip and Gerhard think they can get the money for their shares) I think I can handle the rest. There are 900 hectares. I’ve thought that if we divide it equally for each of the children, that would be eleven shares. I’ll take the five for the unmarried children. Eighty-two hectares is big enough for a farm, don’t you think?”

“What about houses?” asked Bernhard. “Are there renters on the farm now?”

“Yes, there are,” replied Father. “But we want to get the deal through before they find out about it or maybe someone else will try to buy it. You know how hard it is to buy farmland.”

“Yes,” agreed Bernhard. His mind turned briefly to his brothers and sisters moving to Siberia for that very reason.

Elisabeth brought the food to the table. While she returned for the coffee pot, Bernhard absent mindedly lifted little Jasch onto the wicker seat of the high chair.

“Wir beten,” [We’ll pray] he stated and immediately Gerhard bowed his head. Little did he know of the turmoil in his parents’ minds for their urgent pleas for guidance in the decision facing them.

After the grandparents had left and the boys were settled in bed, Elisabeth wearily turned to Bernhard and waited for him to speak.

Finally he began.

“I’ve been thinking that since we have that wheat crop growing, it should be fairly easy to borrow the money we need from the Land Bank. Then what we now pay as rent could go towards the land purchase.”

“But what about your dream to go to America?” questioned Elisabeth. She thought of her little boys. Already, Gerhard was a dependable lad, taking on many small jobs for her. And little Jasch! Would he too have to grow up in a country where frequent wars called for many soldiers, men who were trained to hate and kill, and be killed?

“We are hardly ready to go to America now anyway, even if we could get the papers,” replied Bernhard. “Let’s pray now that God will show us His way.”

Together they knelt and committed this proposed move to their heavenly Father.

Before long, the joint decision had been reached. The Warkentins would buy the Topolov estate, which would then be known as Topolovka. Most of the families would still move that fall, but the Bargs would follow in the spring.

In November, Philip joined the family. It wasn’t long before his little, round face broke into a broad smile when anyone leaned over the cradle to talk to him.

In the early spring, the wheat looked better than ever. One day when Bernhard came into the house, he announced,

“The wheat’s sold. Friesen came this morning and wants to buy the standing crop, so I made a deal with him. Now we can move to Topolovka any time.”

Elisabeth’s eyes shone. It would be nice to live close to the family again.

How the boys enjoyed living in Topolovka! There were always cousins to play with, but Elisabeth’s youngest sister, Marichen, was their favourite. Eight years older than Gerhard, in turn, over the years she served as nursemaid, story-reader, kindergarten teacher and Sunday school teacher.

Just after Christmas, 1909, Hans arrived. According to Russian thinking, Bernhard was now a wealthy man with four sons to help defend the fatherland. Elisabeth could not agree. Sons were not to be raised to hate and kill.

The seasons came and went. Some years the cows were still in pasture at Christmas; other Christmases would be so cold that the boys had to refill the straw baskets frequently to fuel the fire in the wall heater in the centre of the house. In spring, the scent from the apple orchard north of Grandfather’s house would drift east to the village houses.

Bernhard bought shell stone, which had been harvested from prehistoric sea beds and cut into blocks. With this lightweight, porous material, he built a barn south of the house. On one of his trips to Spat, he also bought a pocket knife for Gerhard. How grownup Gerhard felt with that knife!

The main cash crop was winter wheat. Winter barley was too subject to smut to be worthwhile, but Bernhard did seed some oats and barley in the spring. At harvest, the men would help each other with threshing until all the grain was under cover.

The crop in 1911 was a good one. The threshing machine was set up south of the barn, facilitating storing grain in the barn and stacking straw and chaff behind it. Bernhard had worked hard, and God had blessed his labour. Day after day he worked at fanning the grain. When the sacks were filled with cleaned grain, they were taken to the house and carried up the stairs to the attic

for storage. What a load! Two hundred pound sacks took some muscle and balance!

Jasch and Philip played together by the hour during those crisp, fall days. They were big boys now, five and almost four. Gerhard was in school, and Hans was too little to play with them.

“I’m cold,” stated Jasch as they huddled beside the straw stack. “Are you cold, Philip?”

“Yes,” and he gave a little shiver.

“I’m going to make a fire,” continued Jasch. Off he dashed.

When he returned he struck a match on a stone, just as he had seen his father do. Then he held it to a handful of straw.

Bernhard sniffed the air sharply. Where was that smoke coming from? Quickly he stepped outside to be confronted with a raging inferno a short distance away. From the neighbouring farms, the men rushed only to watch helplessly as the winter’s cattle feed and fuel vanished in smoke and bits of black ash.

“The fire can’t get a start on that tile roof,” remarked one.

“Nor on those stone walls,” added another.

Two scared, little boys finally faced their father. Philip shivered even more now than before. Jasch already tingled in anticipation of the spanking Papa would administer.

“Young’uns,” he began. How they shook inside! “I think you have been punished enough already today. You didn’t think that the whole straw stack would burn up. And you were scared. Your scare is your punishment.”

Jasch and Philip looked at each other in amazement and disbelief. No spanking after all? Did Papa really mean it?

“Remember boys. No more playing with matches,” he warned.

“We won’t,” they promised and ran off to bed.

In a few days, the representative of the Mennonite Mutual Aid group in the Crimea called on Bernhard.

“What value do you place on your fuel and feed loss?” he asked. “How big were the piles?”

As Bernhard gave the sizes of the stacks, the man made notes.

“But,” added Bernhard quickly, “my boys set the fire. I should not be compensated for a deliberately set fire.”

“You lost your feed, no matter how it started, didn’t you?” dryly remarked the agent. “We’ll see what we can do.”

Then on October 1, came word from Tiegerweide that Bernhard’s mother had died.

“You will have to go to the funeral,” whispered Elisabeth. “I’ll be all right until you come back. And if not,” she paused, “Mother will come over anyway and the girls will help out.”

“I feel I must go. Poor father. They’ve been married for almost fifty years. And with the others in Siberia! Only Katharina and Susanna still in the Molotschna. Of course Johann is still there, but I feel I should go. I’ll come back just as soon as I can.”

Ten days later, Mother Warkentin was called hastily and the little boys dispatched to the aunts for the day. When they returned home, Bernhard led them to the cradle where lay a new baby.

“You have a sister now,” said Bernhard proudly. “Her name is Elisabeth.” The boys gazed at the little, red squirmer. So that was what sisters looked like!

Ten days later, the mutual aid man returned. Quietly he spoke to Bernhard.

“I have the money here for you. Three hundred thirty-three rubles.”

Gratefully, Bernhard accepted the bills. This fire was proving to be a bonanza-all the straw and chaff he needed he got from Father Warkentin, and now all this cash besides. This was Christian brotherhood at work.

The next fall, word came that Father Barg was sick.

“Be ready to come at any time,” wrote the sisters. And so at the time of Lieschen’s first birthday, Bernhard and Elisabeth were travelling by train to Tiegerweide. Philip revelled in receiving his parents’ full attention on the way. No big brothers, no younger babies along!

After Father Barg’s funeral, the four “Geschwister” [siblings] discussed what to do with the remainder of the estate. Half had been appointed to the children following Mother’s death a year earlier. Who would take the farm? And the blacksmith shop? Johann had no farm, but he had no wife either; Susanna’s husband, Thiessen, was teaching in Paulsheim; Katharina’s husband, Schoenke, had his farm at Margenau; the rest were in Siberia. Finally, it was decided that Bernhard would take the farm and with its income, and what he could borrow, he would pay off the other family members within a year’s time as Father’s will had specified.

One day, before Bernhard and Elisabeth returned to Topolovka, there was a shout as a boy sped down the street.

“Fire! Fire!”

Immediately, the Bargs rushed out the door, the men grabbing buckets as they went. Amidst the general confusion, Philip darted here and there, wondering what was happening. He had a recollection of fires!

Directly across the street lived the Penners. Behind their house and barn blazed the straw pile, making a spectacular show against the steppe beyond. Philip cringed behind the corner of the house, wanting to watch and yet fearful of that flaming monster. Amidst the crackling of the burning straw, he heard a new noise. Someone had taken his team to the Spritzhäuschen just west of the Bargs’ lot and was bringing the fire wagon to Penners. It was parked close to the barn in readiness should the fire spread. He watched, intrigued, as a couple of men climbed up and began swaying in rhythm to operate the pump. Philip had never seen anything like that.

As the flames died down, Elisabeth suddenly appeared at the door.

“Philipke!” she exclaimed. “What are you doing here? You should be in bed. Come, I’ll wash you.”

“Mama, I don’t want to go to bed now. I want to wait for you. Will Uncle Johann’s straw burn too?”

“No, we hope not. If little boys don’t play with matches and if big people are not careless when they smoke, Uncle Johann’s straw will not burn. Here, lie on this big soft feather bed. You are on the floor just close to where we will sleep too. And your Heavenly Father is watching over us. Gute Nacht [Good night].”

Bernhard stirred sleepily. What was wrong with Philip? He was thrashing around on the floor. Finally he yelled,

“It’s burning! It’s burning,” and sat up. Quietly Elisabeth tried to soothe the frightened child.

“Our Father in Heaven is caring for us, Philipke. You don’t need to be afraid. We can trust Him to protect us. Let’s go to sleep again.”

By late winter, 1913, Bernhard had made arrangements to rent out his farm in Topolovka. Once again the family was moving, this time about 150 miles northeast. Elisabeth’s feelings were mixed, sad at being away from her family, but joyful at the improved location, the better soil, more rainfall, and greater farming potential.

The boys soon found new playmates in a village much larger than Topolovka. And those chums were not cousins! Gerhard and Peter Wiens soon spent their free time together, while Jasch and Philip clicked with Jaunsi who lived across the road beside the school.

Bernhard’s brother, Johann, as well as their niece, Liese, who had lived with her grandparents after her mother’s death, had now joined Bernhard’s family circle. The little boys marvelled at how tall and thin Uncle Johann was. They were accustomed to the short, stocky Warkentins, so Uncle Johann, even though no taller than their father, struck them as funny.

“Lang Bein,” [long legs] they would whisper behind their hands to each other. “Lang Bein,” they would say from the safety of the corner of the barn as he walked across the yard. However, having “Lang Bein” around meant that he and Bernhard often discussed what they had read about life in America. Wide-eyed and long-eared, the boys listened to tales about Mexico or Paraguay and dreamed of someday travelling to faraway places.

Christmas time was book time for Bernhard’s’ children in those years. Even though money was scarce at times, the parents always spared enough to buy a book for each child. What a treasure that was!

“Papa,” asked Bernhard one day as they walked past the garden, “why don’t we have grapes here as Grandfather Warkentin has crawling over his portico? Nobody in Tiegerweide has grapes. Why not? They taste so good.”

“Well,” Bernhard began, “there used to be lots of grapes grown here. They do well here and they taste good as you say. But too many people were using them to make wine. Then the Molotschna council put a ban on grape-growing. That cut down on a lot of drinking.”

Gerhard was thoughtful. Nobody at Topolovka ever made wine. But those grapes were good to eat!

In late spring the following year, Elisabeth and her Russian hired girl were busy preparing for company from Topolovka. Her sister, Neta, and Fast were bringing the children for a visit. A happy occasion indeed!

For Gerhard, Fast, Jasch and Philip, the visit was like old times. Tante Marichen was not here to read adventure books to them so they would have to make their own. And they did!

On Sunday afternoon, the Fasts accompanied the Bargs to the church service held in the school, where one of the adults read a sermon for the admonishment of all. But the boys could hardly wait until the service was dismissed.

After dinner, the grownups wanted to nap so Gerhard Barg was told to watch the three boys. They decided to play in the woods near the creek north of the village. Gerhard felt good; that was a safe place; they couldn’t get into

much mischief there. After extracting their promise to stay there, he returned to the shade of the house yard.

As the boys' interest in their play began to wane, Philip exclaimed,

"Let's go to Wilms to get a puppy. You know, Jasch, Uncle Wilms said we could have one."

Jasch hesitated. He didn't think his parents would like them to go after a dog on Sunday, but it would be nice to have one of their own.

"Yes, let's go," he decided.

"What will Gerhard say?" asked cousin Gerhard.

"We'll have to go behind these trees and then sneak along the creek until we're over there." And Philip pointed to a spot farther east.

Off they went on a trot. Philip's heart beat in anticipation; Gerhard and Jasch were glad for an adventure.

The sun beat warmly on them as they walked and ran by turn. The road to Fürstenwerder went east for a few miles to Rückenau and then north, but they were saving miles by cutting across the fields. Off in the distance, they could see the buildings of Rückenau. How many boys there would like to go too if they could get a dog?

"Do you know where Wilms live?" asked Gerhard.

"Oh, yes," chorused Jasch and Philip. "We were here with Papa."

By the time they reached the Wilms' door, uneasiness came over them but they couldn't withdraw now. There stood Wilms.

"Well, young'uns," he exclaimed. "Are Papa and Mama here too? Did you come for versper? Here, come in," and he held the door ajar.

Hesitantly Jasch began, "We came to see the dogs."

"Oh," Wilms laughed. "Yes, the pups. Is Papa going to let you have one?"

"We think so," chimed in Philip. "If we take one home today, then he will see how nice it is and then he'll let us keep it."

“Well, now,” mused Wilms. “Let’s go and look at them.” Eagerly, the boys followed him to a corner in the shed.

“Oh!” Philip exclaimed as he picked up one and laid his face against its side. “What a beautiful puppy!”

“You come in then, young’uns, and have a bite to eat before you head for home again. That’s quite a walk you’ll have.” Wilms walked back to the house.

Gerhard turned to his cousins. “Are you going to take one? He didn’t tell you you could, did he? Will you just take one anyway?”

“I don’t think we’d better do that. Papa wouldn’t like that,” observed Jasch.

“Let’s go in and eat,” suggested Philip. “I’m hungry.”

Later as Wilms escorted them to the door, Philip eyed him hopefully.

“Thank you for vesper,” he said, then added lamely, “and for letting us look at the dogs.”

“Yes,” boomed Wilms, “you come with your father and pick out the one you want.”

Disconsolately, they headed down the road and then struck out across the fields again. Even though the sun was lower in the sky, it seemed much hotter than on their way over. Suddenly, their bodies seemed so tired. But home was still a long way off.

Meanwhile, the peaceful Sunday afternoon at home was shattered when Gerhard discovered the boys were no longer playing in the woods. Reluctantly, he admitted to his parents that he had not watched them as he had been told to. A hasty search at the neighbours’ homes was fruitless. Not even Jaunzi had seen them for hours. Bernhard and Fast each set out by horse to search the roads leading east and west.

Wearily, the boys approached the house, apprehensively too.

“Here they are,” shouted Hans. “Here they are. Where were you? Papa and Uncle Fast are looking for you. Were you hiding on purpose?”

They ignored him. This was not the triumphant homecoming they had planned. Quickly they were going to go to bed, but not quite in time. The fathers returned.

As Fast prepared to administer punishment to his son, Bernhard intervened.

“This was not your Gerhard’s idea,” he stated. “I do not want him to suffer as a result on my boys’ wrongdoings.”

“Well,” hesitated Fast as Bernhard reached for the whip in the corner. “But if one is let off, they should all be let off.”

“All right then. But boys,” Bernhard spoke in a low, firm voice, “you will not be getting a puppy at all after this.”

The boys’ disappointment was soon overshadowed by reports from Central Europe. Then on a warm, August day, when the watermelons had been harvested and the syrup boiling had begun, the shock came. A rider came through the village blowing his horn, shouting the news.

“War with Germany and Austria! Mobilize immediately.”

Orders issued previously now had to be followed. Johann was to have horses and a wagon ready at a moment’s notice to move troops or supplies. Conscientious objectors not in the non-combatant service were sent to forest work camps where they were supported by the churches at home. Throughout all the German villages in South Russia, be they Lutheran, Catholic or Mennonite, assemblies of Germans were forbidden. That meant no more Christmas programs, no more Sangerfest, not even the weekly church services in the school.

Bernhard’s family soon organized their own worship services with Uncle Johann playing the organ, Elisabeth and Liese singing with the children and Bernhard reading the scripture.

Life in the village continued much as before except that some of the men were gone. Russian peasant girls, always available to work, were hired to take the place of the men.

The days dragged on for Elisabeth. In November another son joined the family.

“It’s about time we named one Bernhard, don’t your think?” suggested Elisabeth.

“Bernhard Bernhardovitch! Yes, I guess we might as well,” agreed Bernhard.

The front did not move into the Molotschna, but Russia’s increased involvement in the war meant that older men were conscripted, too. By late 1915, Bernhard received his notice to report to a forest camp in the Crimea. Now, the added weight of farming fell on Elisabeth’s shoulders. Johann was home periodically to help her but she carried on with the help of Liese and four Russian girls.

One day, as she glanced toward the barn, she noticed three boys sitting on the cribbing of the open well just beyond the corral. Her hand flew to her throat. She wanted to yell but did not dare to. As she walked towards the corral she could see them more clearly; Jasch, Philip and Hans, perched around the well’s edge like so many birds on a fence wire. What should she do? If she spoke and startled them, one might easily enough lose his balance. No, much as she wanted to dash and grab them all, she returned to the house and calmly called them to come to her.

During this time, Elisabeth suffered much from rotten teeth. Tiegerweide had no medical facilities, but Waldheim, about fifteen miles away, did. When Johann was home, he took her to the dentist there. She was in such misery that the pain of having the tooth extracted was not much worse than the tooth ache. However, when she had recovered from the extraction, the toothache persisted. The dentist had pulled the wrong tooth.

Elisabeth’s wealth of boys exhibited a wealth of energy during those hard months. One evening in early July, Jasch, Philip and Jaunzi looked for fun as they meandered along the creek. As Philip glanced toward Abram Fast’s watermelon field, his eyes gleamed.

“Let’s pick Fast’s watermelons,” he exclaimed.

“What’ll we do with them?” asked Jaunzi

“We can pile them by the trees and cover them with the vines,” he continued.

“Let’s go,” yelled Jasch.

Melon by melon, the pile grew. At last they decided to quit. What a pile of green watermelons they had! What would Fast say? What would Mama say if she found out? That thought disturbed Philip. He felt uncomfortable inside.

When bedtime finally came, Philip came into the house reluctantly. If only Mama would not pray with them, he could jump into bed and pretend nothing was wrong. But how could he do that when she would be talking to God about her boys? He was sure God was not pleased that he picked Fast’s watermelons.

Finally, he could hold out no longer, and, bursting into tears, confessed his naughtiness to Elisabeth. Tenderly, she put her arm around this mischief making son and said,

“Philipke, I’m glad you told me and that you are sorry. Whom else should you tell?”

“God,” he replied in a small voice.

“Anyone else?” she asked.

“Uncle Fast.” His head dropped lower.

“Yes, Philipke, tomorrow you must go to Uncle Fast and tell him all about it, and that you are sorry you did it. Now let us pray.”

What a relief! But there was still tomorrow.

Next day, Philip was fearful as he set out. And there by his gateposts, stood Uncle Fast. Philip quaked inside. But it had to be done.

Finally, it was over. Uncle Fast had forgiven him. He was free!

Even though Bernhard was away, the boys must have their schooling. In the fall of 1916, Gerhard left for the Centralschule at Ohrloff, boarding in the home of one of the teachers.

By March, 1917, the country had begun to fall apart and a political group deposed the Czar. The army disintegrated, with soldiers killing their officers, taking their arms and returning home. The stage was set for anarchy. With the military machine falling apart, the conscientious objectors also began to return home. Bernhard went back to Tiegerweide.

In early summer, the boys and Lieschen greeted their beloved Tante Marichen with joy. How long it had been since they had seen her and listened to her read stories. And now to have her with them to conduct a summer Bible School! Wonderful!

“Mama,” Bernhard reflected, “Would it be good to have one of the boys go back to Topolovka? If those two are separated, maybe you won’t have quite so much trouble.”

“Yes, I think there would be less mischief if they were apart. Should we send Philip with Marichen since those two have always been so close?” Elisabeth’s fingers flew as she darned another sock.

“Yes, I think we should send Philip. Maybe Jasch can go another year.”

So it came about that an excited Philip sat beside Tante Marichen as the train sped south to the Crimea.

Those were wonderful days at Grandfather Warkentin’s; all the cousins in the village, Uncle Franz’s dog, Bello, with which Philip could romp, and Tante Marichen who still read stories to the children.

One day, word came of a raid made on a neighbouring estate. A gang of bandits had killed everyone and ransacked the buildings. Fear and terror threatened to captivate the Warkentins. That night the family assembled as usual for their evening devotions in the coolness of the portico on the west side of the house. The blackness of the night outside seemed even more black and ominous in view of what had happened nearby. When Uncle Dietrich had finished reading the scripture, Tante Anna suddenly jumped in terror.

“There they come to get us,” she said in a strange whisper. “Hear them?”

“Anna,” chided Grandfather. “That was just a nightingale settling on a branch. Don’t let yourself be overcome by fear. ‘Let not your heart be troubled,

neither let it be afraid.' Let us pray." And as they all knelt to lift their silent pleas for protection from the unknown dangers, calm settled over the family group.

Another guest came from the Molotschna that summer; Sara, Uncle Dietrich's bride-to-be. Philip liked to look at her freckles and her big, dark eyes. When it was time for her to return home with Uncle Dietrich for the wedding, Philip accompanied them. Lichtfelde was not far from Tiegerweide.

Now that the Czar was no longer in power, his order forbidding assemblies among Germans was revoked. That meant that the wedding could be at church. Bernhard's children eagerly accompanied their parents. On her part, Elisabeth was anxious that they behave well and make a good impression on Sara's relatives. After the ceremony, it seemed to the boys that their turn to eat would never come. While they waited, they played and swung on the bar of the hitching post. Suddenly, Philip heard an ominous sound; his new black velvet pants that Mama had sewn had caught. Now they were ruined!

Watermelon harvest time again! Only the biggest, ripest melons were picked; the small and immature ones were left on the vines. One Sunday afternoon when the three were together again, they played in their favourite spot in the bush. Philip had picked up a lighter, which an Austrian prisoner-of-war had made from an empty cartridge. Jaunzi examined it admiringly. When they realized they were hungry they dashed to the watermelon field flecked with dead-ripe, juicy melons. What fun they had eating Abramkes. Playing war with melons for ammunition, wiping juice from their faces, ducking and running and eating more melons.

When they had had their fill, they turned toward home. Jasch kicked at a little heap of straw that had fallen from a wagon. Suddenly, Philip pulled out the lighter.

"Let's see how it works," he yelled.

The little flame tore along the dry bits of straw, quickly enveloping the little heap. A gust of hot, dry wind whipped the blazing stems around, scattering them on the dry stubble on the opposite side of the road. This was an unexpected turn of events. Frantically, the boys tried to arrest the flames but it

was useless. The wind continued to fan the flames toward the stooks of grain standing in the stubble field. When they realized they were beat, the boys ran for home and hid.

Nothing was said about the fire or the Rückenau farmer's loss of grain. When Philip accompanied Uncle Johann a few days later, he exclaimed,

“What happened here? When did this burn?”

What the three did not know was that some neighbours returning to Tiegerweide had spotted and recognized them as they ran away. That which they thought so well covered was not hid after all.

The country's political instability following the Czar's overthrow affected everyone in the country. Then in November 1917 came the Bolshevik uprisings in Petrograd and Moscow. Where they took control there was a semblance of law and order. However, periodically, gangs of roving terrorists would make forays into the villages, often in revenge for some bygone ill-treatment. They exercised little mercy in their demands for horses, feed, money or food.

Back in Topolovka, the Russian workers demanded that the new workers' legislation be carried out. Accordingly, Father Warkentin doled out his grain and horses to the farm workers, four parts to the one part he kept. He even moved into the empty Barg house, allowing three or more workers' families to move into the big house. Through this, the workers' loyalty to him was strengthened. When bandits came to the big house demanding to know where he was, they intentionally informed the would-be killers that he was not there, thus sparing his life.

A new fear struck Elisabeth. What if their house would be ransacked and the family pictures examined? True, they were not nobility, but her brother Peter had been a doctor in the Czarist army; his uniform would give him away. Then there was the picture of the younger brothers in school, all in uniform, seemingly all children from wealthy, upper-class families. Cautiously she packed all the suspicious photos into a box and when darkness fell, Bernhard took it to the barn where he hid it well back under the pile of chaff.

Amidst all the extra work of “cooking on demand” for any number of men, Elisabeth gave birth in February, 1918 to her sixth son: Peter. With what

foreboding she cared for this little one. Into what kind of life had he come? Would there ever be an end to this hatred and terror?

Since the country was still officially at war with Germany, the German armies took advantage of the internal disarray to advance well inside Russian territory, some penetrating as far as the eastern Ukraine. Their coming into Topolovka helped the workers relinquish their designs on farm management and return to their former positions and houses. In the Molotschna, there was a brief respite from terrorist attacks.

That summer, Jasch had his turn to go to the Crimea. Now that he was twelve, he was becoming adept at handling horses and helping Grandfather and the uncles still at home.

On his return to the Molotschna, Jasch soon left home again, this time to go to the Handelschule [tradeschool] in Alexandrone, about eight miles from home. There he boarded with a teacher's family.

That fall, with Germany losing ground in the west, those soldiers who had infiltrated the country retreated, giving occasion for the bandits to come out of their underground.

Not all was terror for the young school boys. If soldiers were marching through the village, it was much easier to dream of going to far places as all soldiers were supposed to do than to keep their mind on school work. Their games were war oriented, much to the sorrow of Elisabeth and Bernhard.

Terror struck even the daring boys the day the bandits took revenge on Blumenort, a few villages west of Tiegerweide. As Philip and Hans stood in the street in front of the house, they could see columns of smoke rising in the west. No one knew whether Tiegerweide would be next. Hastily, Bernhard and Elisabeth consulted, deciding to leave as quickly as possible for Paulsheim to the east, where Bernhard's sister, Susanna, lived. If things became quiet within a few days, they could return easily from there.

Meanwhile, Gerhard and Jasch were off at school. Word reached Alexanderkrone of the massacre at Blumenort, but Jasch also learned his parents had fled. His main concern was to reach the relatives at Paulsheim as quickly as possible, so he gathered his belongings and walked about ten miles

across the fields. How relieved he was that his parents had not left for the Crimea after all as he had feared.

A few days later, Uncle Johann returned home to find that the bandits had indeed come to Tiegerweide, but had made no more trouble than emptying drawers and creating general chaos in their search for valuables.

By this time, the army opposed to the Bolsheviks had had time to reorganize, resulting in three groups vying for control—the Whites (anti-Bolsheviks), the Reds (Bolsheviks) and the anarchists (bandits). Fighting between two of these within earshot of the village was common, with retreats and advances in either direction. Either side was likely to conscript local men to haul men or supplies just as the women were required to feed the hungry soldiers.

One such day came in early summer, 1919. Bernhard had been forced to haul army supplies with his team. Elisabeth and Maria, the Russian hired girl, had been butchering chicken after chicken to provide for the stream of Red soldiers retreating through the village. Johann was at home but he hid in the barn. An army in retreat is liable to be desperate and kill indiscriminately. The boys heard a commotion in front of the house and ran to look. Approaching the house on horseback were two mean-looking soldiers. One jumped to the ground, handed the reins to his companion and walked towards the door.

“Where is Bernhard Barg?” he shouted. “Bernhard Barg!” he repeated, pounding on the door.

The color drained from Elisabeth’s face as she picked up the screaming little Peter and tried to calm him while she walked to the door.

“Tell Bernhard Barg to come out here,” he shouted again, swinging his revolver in her face.

“He is not here,” she stated quietly, the other children crowded around to see what this evil man would do to her.

“You ___” he sputtered. “You lie. You know he is hiding. Bring him out before I go in there.” And he shook the gun before her eyes again.

“He is not here,” she repeated. “He is away hauling equipment for your own men. He is not here.” She shifted Peter on her hip.

“You-u-u!” he growled as he backed away from the door. Thankfully, Elisabeth watched him mount his horse. When she was sure he had left, she dropped into a chair and clutching her children to her, offered thanks to God for sparing her life and for sparing Bernhard’s.

But why did they want Bernhard? He always tried to treat his Russian associates in a God-fearing way. But one never knew what harboured ill-will might surface at any time.

She listened. More cavalry men! Oh no, not more to feed! But these were Whites in pursuit of the fleeing Reds. Deliverance from another quarter!

In spite of the political uncertainties that fall, Gerhard returned to the Senior Handelschule in Halbstadt, while Jasch once again stayed at the Enns family in Alexanderkrone. However, Bernhard and others in the village were making preparations for flight to the Crimea, where the Whites were still in control. The horses were fed an extra ration of grain to build them up for the long trip. When the ominous rumour reached Tiegerweide in December, they were ready to leave.

“They say the Reds are going to come back and clean up on Tiegerweide. What’ll we do?” wailed one. Each family tried to cope in its own way.

“Johann had better go for Jasch in the morning,” said Bernhard as he and Elisabeth talked that night. “We can hardly get Gerhard. But then, he’s old enough to find his own way back later on.”

“Oh,” interjected Elisabeth. “We mustn’t forget to get those photos tomorrow morning. Remember, those you hid in the chaff?”

Bernhard’s face looked troubled as he carried the box into the kitchen next day. One corner had a hole in it; shreds of paper dropped as he moved its contents. Elisabeth came to look.

“Oh,” she groaned, “What happened?”

“The mice must have got into the box,” he replied. “That’s how it looks. We’ll keep what is good enough. We’d better burn the rest so there will be no trace of them lying around here.”

On December 19, the procession of covered wagons set out, about ten families in all, Bernhard driving one team, Johann another. Maria chose to go along even though she was going still further from home. On the way, they picked up two of Elisabeth’s step-sisters. Even though the weather was cold and damp, the children looked on the trip as a holiday, a great occasion because they were going back to Grandfather Warkentin’s.

As they jolted along over the ruts, Hans pointed to an object off in the distance across the steppe.

“What’s that?” he asked.

Bernhard’s eyes followed Hans’ finger.

“It must be a house,” he replied.

“A house! That big? It must be bigger than Grandfather Warkentin’s.” he observed.

Gradually, they could see more details. It was indeed a big brick house, three stories high. There were brick workers’ houses, brick barns and other outbuildings grouped in another corner of the big farmyard. But the whole place had an eerie look about it. Something was wrong.

“Maybe we can stop there to feed and rest the horses,” suggested Bernhard. “There must be a well so we can get water too. Hey!” he shouted to the driver ahead, jerking his thumb toward the estate.

“Look Papa,” ventured Berend. “What’s wrong at that farm?”

“Can’t you see it has no windows and doors?” stated Lieschen. “I don’t like this place. Does anybody live here, Papa?”

“It doesn’t look like it,” he replied as the horses plodded up the driveway.

“There’s nobody here,” shouted a boy from one of the other wagons. “Let’s look around.”

Elisabeth was glad to move around without having the wagon bump beneath her. She reached for the wicker basket which held their food. How many more days would the bread last? And the sausage? She would have to cut the pieces a little smaller so they wouldn't run out. Twelve people eating from one basket needed much food.

Meanwhile the boys were exploring the house that once must have been so wonderful. Now it was stripped of everything that could be moved, even doors and windows. The boys ran to the attic and looked down from the gaping hole that had once held a window. How far down to the ground! They had never been in a house like this. Off in the distance they could see a troop train crawling along.

Outside Jasch was examining a new kind of machine. Papa said it was a tractor, an iron horse. It was much, much bigger, though. One said "CASE" on it; another had a German name. The people who had lived here must certainly have had very much money to own all the land for miles around and this house and all these machines. But where were they now?

Day after day the wagon train jolted on. One day, an indignant voice could be heard coming from the wagon ahead of Bernhard's.

"Mama, Mama! Marichen took a wurst!" Another family was rationing supplies too

Christmas Eve came and here was the family alone, cold and hungry. There would be no books for Christmas this year; the adventure had worn off; the other families had gone in various directions. Now a village appeared ahead. Would they be able to stay there for the night, Christmas Eve of all times?

"Br-r-r-r," Bernhard called to the horses. They were glad enough to stop. He handed the reins to Hans and jumped down. Warily, he walked to the door.

"Guten Abend," he greeted when the door was opened. (He had been sure this was a German village.) He could see the kitchen was a-buzz with activity. Quietly, he stated his family's predicament but had not said much when his host, soon joined by his wife, insisted the family spend the night there.

“We’ll be going to midnight mass,” explained the host, “But you are welcome to come in and go to bed even if we’re not at home”

Gratefully, Elisabeth crawled down over the wagon wheel. How kind these strangers were! To think they were Catholics.

One after another the children were washed and tucked into bed. Berend’s eyes grew big when he saw the bed where he was to sleep.

“Look, Lieschen!” he exclaimed, sliding his hand over the smooth sheets. “Do you have a soft, white bed like this?”

“Now children, lie down and go to sleep,” Mama said. “Tonight we will all have a good sleep.”

Another day of travel lay ahead of them but excitement was mounting. Soon they would be at Grandfather’s place. Berend and Peter had never been there and even Lieschen was too young to remember living at Topolovka.

On the 26th, all the children wanted to sit where they could see Grandfather’s house.

“There it is,” chorused the bigger boys as the wagons reached the summit of the last ridge. They felt like jumping from the wagon and running ahead to announce their family’s proximity. The Warkentins would be at Uncle Johann’s today and they could run to the right house. Wouldn’t everyone be surprised! They could hardly wait; the horses seemed so pokey.

What a welcome the weary travelers received when they pulled up at Uncle Johann’s gate. Tears, laughter, handshakes, cheers and bashful withdrawals intermingled until the women realized that here was an extra tableful to feed.

How good that food tasted! Fried ham, Pluma Moos, fresh bread, Christmas cookies and rakieve sheykie. Berend’s eyes bugged. Before long, Peter’s mouth was running over with sticky juices.

During the succeeding months, Bernhard and Elisabeth faced many situations that tested their faith in God in spite of the circumstances they were

in. The Warkentin house was already full when they arrived, as Uncle Dietrich and Aunt Sara lived in with his parents. Another family renting the Barg house was reluctant to move out. Jasch was “farmed out” and when Gerhard returned from school in the spring he stayed with Uncle Johann’s. Day after day, Elisabeth tried to care for her family in the overcrowded house; day after day she wished the renter would move out. After a few months, this little woman who was generally quiet and unassertive, decided to move her family into one room of their own house. When the renter saw she was serious, he moved elsewhere and the Bargs could once again be together under their own roof.

Bernhard had brought his best horses from Tiegerweide, but as the White Army regrouped for another push north, those horses were requisitioned, never to return. Grandfather’s horses had already been wiped out similarly during the White occupation of the Molotschna. Bernhard made two trips north to salvage some of the possessions left behind in December: the cows, the extra horses and whatever household articles he could load up.

What added to Bernhard’s chagrin was the knowledge that the Red takeover in Tiegerweide had not been as disastrous as anticipated. Had the family stayed there, they would not be in the financial situation that faced them after their return to Topolovka.

In the fall, with the Whites still in the Molotschna, Bernhard took the three oldest boys to school, Philip accompanying Jasch to Alexanderkrone. However before many months had passed, the Reds once again took control, as they pushed south in their final takeover of the whole of south Russia.

One night after a unit of Red soldiers had moved into Alexanderkrone, the men bedded down at Daniel Enns were more weary than the four schoolboys boarding there. After darkness fell, they quietly left the house.

“This way,” breathed Philip. “They left the ammunition wagon over here.”

“Why don’t they have a guard by it?” asked Jacob. “All those shells!”

“They must be glad to sleep for once in a nice place,” suggested Heinrich.

“They know too that everyone in the village is too scared to blow up the wagon,” stated Jasch.

They looked at the various kinds of ammunition in the wagon box.

“Here’s a box of rifle shells,” said Philip. “Let’s take these. Anything else you want?”

“Let’s take one of those cannon projectiles,” said Heinrich in a strange whisper. “I’d like to take one of those apart.”

They removed the box of shells, carefully arranging the remainder to cover its disappearance. The three-inch cannon shell was not quite as heavy as they lifted it to the ground.

“Where’ll we hide them?” asked Jacob. “We’ll have to make sure they’re somewhere the soldiers won’t accidentally walk into before they leave in the morning.”

“Put them under the hedge at the back of the garden,” suggested Jasch. “The soldiers won’t find them there.”

The men moved on during the next day. Now the boys could begin their fun. The big shell was opened to reveal the powder, shaped like strings of brown spaghetti. These would burn slowly when lit. By themselves, these ribbons were quite harmless, not so the rifle shells.

Armed with their loot, the boys would go to school where, beyond the range of the teachers’ surveillance, they would display what they had. How the other boys admired them, their booty and their daring! Many a boy played with his string of fire or fondled a rifle shell. If only the grown-ups had known.

That Christmas, the three brothers came together in Tiegerweide, George staying with his old friend, Peter Wiens, Jasch with Jaunzi and Philip with cousin Liesa. In Topolovka, Bernhard and Elisabeth prayed that God would protect these sons who were growing into independent young men.

When it was time for the boys to go home in the spring, they needed no money for their train fare. At first, the exhilaration of riding on a troop train made the experience fun. But as the hours stretched into days and the boys

continued to ride on their flat car under a cannon, their longing for home increased.

At home, Red soldiers had moved into the house with the family. They listened with disbelief as Elisabeth told of her three boys away at school. To think that three from one family should have the opportunity for further education! Unbelievable!

Once again, as she had done so often before, Elisabeth stepped outside the door and looked along the road to the east. Three forms had appeared over the top of the ridge a mile away. She watched as they came closer.

“There they are!” she cried. “See, there they come. Thank God! They’re home.” The soldier who had come outside to watch their approach was convinced as the boys rushed up to greet their mother.

But home in 1921 was not what it had been. The remaining horses Bernhard had brought south contracted a deadly disease and had to be destroyed; little seeding could be done; drought lowered the yield of grain that had been seeded; inflation and scarcity of food had affected the whole country.

“Here in the city, there are as many books as one could wish for, only one needs money...Mark Twain in Russian, (10-20 volumes) costs 90,000-100,000 rubles...one bushel of (bread) flour costs 150,000-200,000 rubles. So if one would have three bushels of flour or wheat (to sell or trade), one could buy books to one’s heart’s content. But one would have nothing left over.

“It is terribly lonely here. Many times when I think how things were earlier on and how they are now, it almost drives me out of my skin. If we could only get out of here!” (*Excerpt from letter written by Gerhard to Peter Wiens, September 1921*)

But there was to be no escape to America that year, only struggle to stay alive over winter. The boys had to make many a trip to gather enough Russian thistles to keep the fire going. Since there had been so little grain the previous summer there was insufficient fresh chaff for feed. As that ran out, Bernhard and the boys began feeding what had been discarded in previous years. Little

heaps here and there that had been rotting over the months, now became precious cattle feed. Elisabeth tried to bring what cheer she could into their dismal existence. To celebrate Philip's birthday, she made cookies with a couple of eggs from her scant supply, coarse flour almost like bran, and fourteen saccharin tablets for sweetening. But what a disappointment, what a taste! The mamalyga and millet soup were much better than those cookies.

"We hear that there is a serious famine there (Molotschna) too...here things look pathetic enough too. Starving people are walking back and forth from one house to another. We ourselves still have about four bushels of flour, three cows and no horses. The cows are in poor shape, only skin and bones. They don't give milk...and what word is there about the Americans? Have they sent you aid already? Here we are waiting with urgency." (*Excerpt from letter by Gerhard to Peter Wiens, February 1922*)

When Elisabeth wondered how much longer they could hold out on their meagre supplies, a parcel came from Bernhard's cousin in Minnesota. Then came food from the Mennonite Relief Committee. White flour! Corned beef! Green beans in brine! How carefully these were doled out! How every bite of that food was savoured!

One noon, Elisabeth prepared Rubelsuppe, hot milk with dough crumbles dropped in and cooked. As she went to call Bernhard, she saw that Käsemann, the man hired by the villagers to draw the water from the deep well, was in the yard with him. Kindly, she invited him to eat with them. How good that soup tasted! When Philip had finished his, he was relieved to see some left in the bowl. Turning to Käsemann, he asked,

"Do you want some more?"

"No. No, thank you," replied Käsemann.

Philip emptied the bowl into his own dish.

"Philip," reproved Gerhard. "Don't be so greedy." Philip looked up, his spoon halfway to his mouth.

"He said he didn't want it," he retorted and finished his soup.

On their way outside after dinner, Gerhard spoke again.

“Philip, you sure were rude. You know very well that family has almost starved and then you ask if he wants the food. Of course he wants it. He’s too polite though to let on. Next time think a little farther than your own stomach.

That spring, hopes were on the rise. The cows freshened, so Elisabeth could again make a little butter to sell. When families found they didn’t need all the seed grain the government gave them, they could eat the rest.

“Here, Hans,” called Bernhard. “Take this flour to Mama.”

“Where did it come from?” asked Hans

“Ohm Kramer was here this morning to grind some wheat on the grinding stone. This is our portion of the pay,” replied Bernhard.

With Uncle Peter living at home again, he was frequently called to treat patients in neighbouring villages. Returning from a call one day in summer, he saw a sick soldier lying beside the road. As he bent to examine him, he soon saw that here was a victim of the dreaded typhus. Gently lifting him on to the wagon, he proceeded home. When he felt a prick on his arm, he saw the reason. A louse from the diseased soldier had bit him.

By the time he reached home, his course of action was clear. He gave detailed instructions to the family as to what should be done to him as the disease progressed and what precautions the rest should take.

During the following weeks, Elisabeth kept going as in a dream. Her brother Pete was dead; her brother Gerhard was dead; Johann’s Gerhard, her own Gerhard and Philip all on the point of death, all the victims of typhus.

During this time Mother Warkentin also died.

“Lord, give us faith to go on,” Elisabeth prayed silently.

“During the time that Father was in Tiegerweide, I had typhus once again...I was sick for six weeks. Now it’s going better again...

“We seeded 12 desjatins, 7 ½ in (winter) wheat and 4 ½ in (winter) rye. The seed came from the Reds. Each could seed as much as he wished. We used the cows for the seeding...there has been a good rain since seeding too so we

have hope again...we have more winter feed than last year but it will be skimpy even so." (*Excerpt of letter from Gerhard to Peter Wiens, November 1922*)

"Jasch," Bernhard called. "Grandfather wants you to go to Simferopol to see how Uncle Franz is. You will have to take one of Uncle Johann's horses. At least his colts are big enough to work now. Before you leave, get the parcel at Grandfather's house for Uncle Franz.

Jasch felt good. To be entrusted to go to Simferopol alone! No matter if the horse was too skinny to go fast, he was going to the city. Part of his route was a wagon trail between fields of wheat growing on either side. The hungry horse did not know the wheat belonged to someone else. He saw it only as feed, so stopped to help himself. Jasch could not persuade him to move on until he had had his fill.

Uncle Franz was involved in the food distribution program of the Mennonite Relief Committee in Simferopol. After Jasch had located him, Uncle Franz gave him enough money to buy some lunch at the bazaar. Jasch tucked it carefully into an inner pocket.

He meandered around the cobblestone square, stopping here to watch a Tarter turn his schashlick over the fire, there to examine some round brooms, still further along where another Tartar was making cheburecki. Ah, this was what he would have for lunch. He was about to bite into his pancake when he noticed a frantic hand movement of the old man in front of him. Quickly, he stepped aside, only then realizing that a group of young fellows had been about to grab his food for themselves.

Over at the big house, Tante Marichen was getting ready for her wedding. She had confided to Elisabeth one day, "My dowry is so small. I wish I'd have more to take along when I go to Hans' village."

"But you know Father has lost so much during the revolution. He is already giving you as much as he can afford."

"Yes, I know. That's just it. Father can't afford much. Hans' family hasn't lost what we did, so that makes me look so poor by comparison."

“You know, Marichen, life here looks so hopeless now. Not as it did when we were married. There’s just no future in this country any more. That’s why we want to go to America.”

America! The family talked about it, read about it, dreamed about it at the school just down the road. However, Lieschen and Berend were not enthusiastic about reading, even about America.

Lieschen wrote on Berend’s slate and then passed it back to him. He read it slowly and faced her indignantly. She snickered behind her hand. Up shot his arm.

“Yes Bernhard? Asked the teacher.

“Lieschen wrote on my slate and it’s not nice what she wrote,” he accused.

“What is it?” asked the teacher.

“‘Bernhard Barg ist ein kleiner Zwerg,’ “he burst out. [Bernhard Barg is a little dwarf.] What a howl of laughter arose. Poor little Berend! He knew he was short but to have the whole school laugh at him on that account was too much. He hid his face in his arms on the desk and fought to keep back the tears. He’d show them!

“According to your letter, you will soon be leaving the (U.S.S.R)...at any rate, we will be leaving in the spring for ‘Washington’ the most north-westerly of the U.S.A. ...Today it snowed again. We’ve had snow now for 7weeks, and so deep that the old timers do not remember anything like it.” (Excerpt of letter from Gerhard to Peter Wiens, February 1924)

It was Sunday morning. The profound stillness enveloping the village was broken only by the crowing of a rooster or the slamming of a door. Otherwise, all was quiet, that kind that comes only to a non-mechanized community. Soon it would be time to assemble at the school for the Andacht [brief sermon/meditation] read by Uncle Fast. After breakfast, Elisabeth spoke quietly to Peter.

“Peterke, run to Uncle Johann’s and ask Gerhard to come to give you boys your haircuts”

“Yes, Mama. I’ll go,” he replied.

When he returned with Gerhard, his older brothers were sitting in the bower-like area under the big acacia tree by the house. Bees buzzed busily at the whitish clusters of flowers. The air was heavily scented by the blossoms.

“You need haircuts?” greeted Gerhard. “Then let’s begin. This sure is a peaceful spot here,” he added.

One by one the boys sat on the stool while he removed their hair. Ah, that felt better—no hair to comb, no hair to catch dirt, no hair to make the head hot.

Gerhard’s expectation of leaving in the spring for the U.S. did not materialize. However, that did not deter Bernhard from continuing to explore any possibility for emigrating.

Elisabeth was making preparations to go to Muntau in the Molotschna for surgery. Peter would go along and stay with Liese in Tiegerweide. Berend and Lieschen would continue to go to school. Hans would do the milking and help around the house. He was good at that. Maria, the Russian girl who had worked for Elisabeth years before, returned to take charge.

One day while her mother was gone, Lieschen wanted to make Rührei. She knew just how Mama did it—so many eggs, so much milk, so much flour and salt. Oh yes, she must heat some oil for frying the egg mixture, too. Quickly, she brought the bottle in in which Mama kept the sunflower oil and poured some into the pan. Ah, these scrambled eggs would be good! Mama would be pleased when she heard.

The family gathered around the table. Silence fell as everyone prayed. The Rührei dish was passed. The boys sniffed before forking in the food. Suddenly one exclaimed,

“What’s wrong with this Rührei? It tastes awful.”

Another sampled his. “Mama’s doesn’t taste like this.”

Lieschen was ready to defend her cooking but when she took a bite, she too made a face.”

“The oil tastes different,” suggested Bernhard “Are you sure you used the sunflower oil, Lieschen?”

“Sure,” and away she went to prove it. “See, here it is!”

Bernhard removed the cork and sniffed.

“The bottle is just the same but this is linseed oil. We’ll let the chickens eat this Rührei. We can eat bread this time.”

After Elisabeth’s return home, she spent several weeks convalescing. An idea had come to her; maybe if she would read a book to Lieschen, her daughter would catch the enthusiasm for reading. This would be a good time to try.

Hour after hour, mother and daughter sat together as Elisabeth read. She noticed a change in Lieschen, who no longer came reluctantly. Now she would bring the book and beg Mama to read. Before the last page was finished, Elisabeth’s strategy had worked. Lieschen was wanting to read.

“Peter,” called Philip Enns. “Uncle Franz is taking his car down. Let’s watch him.”

“May I, Mama? May I watch Uncle Franz?” asked Peter.

“Yes, Peterke, you may. But be sure to stay out of his way.”

“We will,” chorused the boys.

They raced to the shed where Uncle Franz’s Ford had been hanging without its wheels over the winter. Now, Uncle Franz was repairing the tires and mounting the wheels. When he bent to pump in air, they too pretended to pump. Finally, there stood The Touring in all its splendour. Uncle Franz tested the wheels with the sledge hammer.

“Oh no!” he groaned. One tire was hissing ominously. All the morning’s work and already another flat!

“Let’s go schaukel [swing],” suggested Peter.

“I can run faster than you,” challenged Philip.

Away they went across the yard to the rund Schaukel, a tall pole with an iron pivot at the top. To it were attached four ropes with loops at the bottom.

Each holding a rope, the boy ran in a circle, faster and faster, until suddenly they jumped into the loops and swung. When they lost too much speed, they ran again, starting all over.

Outwardly, Bernhard looked calm as he walked into the house that day; inwardly he must have been walking on air. In his hands, he held a letter from Canada! That other Bernhard Barg, who had been the real target of the Red soldiers' vengeance that long-ago day in Tiegerweide, had already arrived in Canada. Now he had obtained visas for this Bernhard's family. Thank God! The future looked a little brighter.

Now began the tedious process of obtaining Russian Passports. As more people applied to emigrate, the government saw an opportunity to obtain more money for its treasury. By the time the Bargs' applications were finely processed, the fee had arisen to 250 rubles per passport.

When a teacher was needed for the village school for a short while that spring, Bernhard handed over the farm work to the older boys and returned to the job he had had so many years before.

"Peterke," Elisabeth called. "Go to the school and tell Papa that dinner is ready"

"Yes, Mama." Eagerly, Peter ran along the dusty road but as he approached the school, his nerve left him. He didn't want to walk in among all those big children. They might laugh at him.

"I'll hide under the window," he thought.

Inside, after a class had finished reciting a lesson, one of the pupils noticed Peter. As she returned to her seat she informed Bernhard.

Reluctantly, Peter entered the room but when he saw Papa's tender look he was encouraged. Papa spoke to the whole class.

"Children, I want to show you where we are going to move." On the map of the world, he traced the route to Moscow, the Baltic and North Seas, England, the North Atlantic and Canada. Peter did not understand at all but he had confidence that Papa did.

That summer and fall, there were preparations to be made for the trip, “when the passports come.” There were the individual photos to be taken (the whole village assembled to witness the event) and medical checkups in Simferopol. Bernhard expressed concern about the possibility of trachoma being detected in his family.

“You don’t need to worry about that,” assured the Russian doctor. “Just go ahead.”

Elisabeth sorted out the clothes and bedding to be taken along.

“We’ll need all our blankets,” she told Lieschen. “They say the winters in Canada are cold, much colder than here.” She wrapped some blankets in a sheet and tied the whole bundle as tightly as possible.

As the days grew colder and more fire was needed anyway, she baked Zwieback. When they were no longer so fresh, she broke them apart, and baked or “roasted” them to a golden crispness. This was repeated time after time until she was satisfied. A family of nine would need a large supply to keep them going during the long trip.

“Look Mama,” said Bernhard as he removed the contents of the packet.

“Did they come?” Elisabeth asked breathlessly as she wiped her hands on her apron.

There they lay, the Russian passports. Now, they could get ready for the auction.

“The boys can take the same lists to the Schwaben villages [Swabian/German],” stated Bernhard. “We should get some to Michailovka, too, I suppose.”

As the items were assembled for the auction, Philip decided to get a little cash too. Shortly before, Uncle Dietrich had given him a watch as an Andenken [keepsake]. If he’d sell it, he’d have some spending money for the trip.

One by one, the items went up for sale. As the auctioneer held up a pocket watch, Uncle Dietrich looked in indignation. That was the watch he had given Philip! That ungrateful boy!

After the sale, Bernhard and Elisabeth stayed at Uncle Philip's house.

"Liese," began Uncle Philip, as he pushed his dirty cup away. "Why don't you change your mind? You don't know what it will be like in Canada. What will your boys do there? Things are going better here now. Why don't you stay after all?"

"What will they do here?" she asked. "There's no future for them here."

Finally, the big day, November 30, arrived. The Warkentins were up bright and early that Sunday morning. All the uncles and some of the aunts were driving to Sarabus to see the family off. The leaden skies, the rain and the gumbo underfoot added to the gloom of the family break-up. Some rode in their wagons, others their two-wheelers. Their route lay through Menlertschick, where Tante Marichen and Uncle Dick lived.

"Marichen will be expecting us to stop there," said Elisabeth. "I want to see her this one more time."

Tearfully, the sisters clung to each other. Marichen, too, had doubted until the action that Bargs would actually leave. Now, the parting was so definite, so final.

After Elisabeth had climbed over the carriage wheel again and the horses were off, Marichen turned to Hans with brimming eyes.

"Would you like to go to Spat, too?" he asked tenderly. "We could still get there before the train leaves."

"Oh, yes," she brightened "Let's hurry."

As she flew around to get ready, she thought of the newly smoked sausages drying in the smoke house. This was something she could give Liese. Quickly, she wrapped a coil in paper and was ready by the time Hans had the horses hitched to their two-wheeler.

Uncle Philip drove into a friend's yard in Spat. Those who came to the door greeted him in surprise and then scrutinized Philip.

"Yes," he said, "Bargs are leaving today for Canada."

“So?” and they looked at Philip again.

“Bernhard thinks they’ll be better off there,” Uncle Philip continued.

“Well, I don’t know about that.”

Between the German village of Spat and the Russian village of Sarabus lay the Sarabus railway station. On the platform was all of the Warkentin clan. Cousins who had spent hours with each other were suddenly bashful of each other. Marichen was presenting the sausage to Elisabeth.

“What will I do with it?” thought Elisabeth. “The grease is soaking through the paper already. Everything is wrapped up. I don’t know where to pack it.”

“There comes the train!” shouted one of the boys.

“There it is!” echoed another.

While Marichen’s attention was diverted, Elisabeth quietly gave the sausage to young Abram Enns.

The train puffed into the station and screeched to a stop. The bundles were heaved aboard, the final goodbyes were called, back and forth, and the train was off. As Elisabeth looked out the window for the final glimpse of her loved ones, she spied Abram in the background, contentedly eating sausage.

The stove at the end of the coach gave off some welcome heat as Elisabeth approached it with her teapot. She would get some boiling water there to make tea for their lunch. The fresh food she had along should last until they reached Moscow and they could always have their tea.

South of Kursk, the railway passed through another wooded, uninhabited area. However, this one had historical significance.

“Boys,” Bernhard spoke up, “this is where the Russians and Tartars fought a major battle back in the 1500’s.”

“Where?” Hans and Philip rushed to the window. “Where?” they repeated.

Somehow, in the push to see whatever there was, the boys bumped the window. Splinters of glass flew around.

“What are you doing?” grumbled Hans.

“It wasn’t my fault any more than yours,” defended Philip.

“Don’t get so hot,” warned Jasch. “Your head hit the glass, Philip. I saw it.”

Philip dreaded talking to the conductor, but that was not as bad as being taken to the rear of the train to the commandant.

“That will cost you five rubles” said the latter. Unwillingly, he paid half his precious pocket money and returned to his coach.

Fresh excitement ran through the family when the train finally pulled into Moscow, where the railway stations coming in from the various directions are arranged like the spokes of a wheel. They were arriving at the Kursk station. They were among the hundreds of people, many of them would-be emigrants, milling about the station. Elisabeth and the younger children settled on the hard benches while Bernhard walked about. From time to time, the older boys strolled around, too. Finally, Bernhard returned, accompanied by a middle-aged man.

“We will go now.” He spoke quietly.

Each picked up his designated bundles and followed the stranger outside. Once there, the stranger led the way to the horse-drawn sleighs, Moscow’s winter cab service.

Snow was falling continuously. If Canada would be colder than this, it must be very cold, thought Lieschen, as she shivered under the robes. Finally, they came to the warmth of the stranger’s house.

The stranger, they found out, was an enterprising Jew who operated a guest house illegally. Besides Bernhard’s family, there was a Russian couple in transit, and an elderly Jewish couple, awaiting passage to the U.S.A.

For five days, they stayed in the black-market hostel while Bernhard searched for the offices of the Canadian Pacific Railway and made the

arrangements there. Since the passports were in order, the visas in his possession and the fare in his wallet, he was readily sold the tickets to Canada.

One night Berend stirred in his sleep. Soon he was trying to climb to the top of the bed.

“Get down,” ordered Hans. “Get down, Berend.” Slowly, Berend subsided onto the bed again, still sound asleep. Before long, Hans, too had dropped off again.

During those days at his house, the Jew took them on a tour of the city. Here were places they had read about—Red Square, the Kremlin, St. Basil’s Cathedral. This time they rode the street cars. Lieschen found so much of interest around her that she was briefly separated from the rest. Quickly their host retrieved her. The parents realized they needed to keep a closer watch on these children, unaccustomed to the rushing crowds of the city.

With a jerk, the train began to pull away from the Riga station. The bags and bundles had been stowed away under seats and on racks. The last train ride in Russia! Or would it be? They were still not across the border; there was still the possibility of being turned back. The pressure on Bernhard bore down more heavily, it seemed, with every wheel click. Elisabeth, too, felt the tension but would not God bring them through this problem as He had through so many others? They drank tea and ate geröstete Zwieback. If they only had Tante Marichen’s sausage now! Too bad they hadn’t tucked it under somebody’s arm.

Sebez! They were just close to the border now. One again, the Russian officials came through the coaches, examining the passengers’ papers. The train began to move again, only to grind to a halt a short while later. These aggravating stops! The door at the end of the coach opened and shut. With a bang the train jerked once again. The trainman walking through the coach wore a different uniform. Slowly, it dawned on Bernhard—that was a Latvian trainman! They must be across the border. Yes, there they were rolling past the Red Gate! He turned to Elisabeth, his eyes lighting up.

“Boys,” he said, leaning forward, “do you know where we are?”

“Are we in Latvia? Are we really?”

As the significance of the moment became clearer, Elisabeth felt in her pocket for a handkerchief. God had answered their prayers.

For the remaining miles to Riga, Bernhard and Elisabeth scarcely noticed the jolting of the train or the weariness of their bodies. They were free! Bernhard's expression relaxed; Elisabeth felt like singing.

At Riga, all the emigrants on the train were taken to barracks-like quarters, where they were under the care and provision of the C.P.R. Canadian doctors examined each person for communicable diseases, trachoma in particular. What heartbreak and disappointment there was when the disease was found in one family member!

Bernhard's family all passed their medical exams, but there was still the disinfecting process.

"Mama," wailed Lieschen, "will they shave me, too, the way they did Tina? I don't want to be cropped like a boy," and she began to cry.

"We'll just wait and see," comforted Elisabeth. "Maybe they'll let you keep your hair. After all, you are fourteen already. Maybe it's only the little girls whose hair is cut right off. There must be some way, because the women who have been disinfected have kept their long hair. We'll see."

The dreaded moment came. The supervising official gave both Elisabeth and Lieschen fine tooth combs with which to check for lice. Both passed, Lieschen without the haircut. But the next phase of treatment! Again Lieschen held back.

"Mama, I don't want to undress in front of all those girls and women."

"I know, Lieschen, none of us does. But all our clothes have to go through the ovens to be fumigated and we all have to shower. Everyone is in the same boat so we'll just make the best of it." Elisabeth shivered. The room was not very warm. They sat and waited.

"Mama," exclaimed Lieschen, "there come the clothes. How will we know which is which?"

“Didn’t you notice that each piece was tagged before it was taken away? Aren’t you glad that is done? Now you can enjoy the rest of the day.”

The family had an opportunity to test their sea legs after the Baldreiger had sailed out of the Riga harbour and bay and southwest through the Baltic.

“Look boys,” called Bernhard as they approached Kiel. “There’s Germany. You’ll likely never see it again.” And look they did as the ship steamed toward Holtenau.

Bernhard explained, “This is the east end of the Kiel Canal. If it wouldn’t be here we’d have over three hundred miles more around the north of Denmark. It was built about thirty-five years ago.” He paused. “I wonder what’s going on there.”

A man in a black suit had sprung lightly from the canal’s edge on to the ship. He was now speaking to one of the crewmen. Soon, he strolled along the deck, shaking hands and speaking with emigrants as he came. Bernhard caught the name “Kroeker.”

“Jacob Kroeker!” he exclaimed, half under his breath. This was another Molotschner, a minister who had published the first Mennonite church paper in Russia and who now lived in Germany. As Bernhard chatted with him, he learned that Kroeker tried to meet every emigrant ship as it came through the canal. What a blessing to have him come like this to give his encouragement.

As the Baldreiger sailed up the Thames that rainy, December afternoon, more and more passengers lined the ship’s railing. The more they saw, the more their minds boggled. To these people, the majority of whom were accustomed to life on the Russian steppes, the glimpses of life in a busy seaport like London was almost too much. Centuries-old brick warehouses set tightly side by side, steep-pitched roofs, loading cranes in front of their warehouses— all these were an introduction to a new life. As the ship was eased into the dock, the boys leaned over the railing, straining to see even more.

Suddenly Hans yelled, “My cap! My cap! Catch it!”

Arms reached out in quick response but they were too short. The wind was carrying his winter cap down into the inky blackness between the ship and dock.

The next day, they were allowed ashore. This gave them time to take a city tour in an open touring bus. But the part of the city they saw was such a disappointment: old, poor, unkempt.

That afternoon they left by train for Liverpool. When the boys looked at the greenness of the countryside and thought of the snow-blanketed Moscow they had left only a few days before, it seemed they were dreaming. But they really were on a British railroad. And what funny coaches, so much smaller than those in Russia. Papa had explained that the tracks here were narrow gauge.

“Mama,” said Peter, “I’m hungry. What are we going to eat tonight?”

“I think the C.P.R. will supply food for us again,” she replied.

Sure enough, there came a white-jacketed man carrying a big basket. He gave a packet to each immigrant.

“Sandwiches,” he said.

“What did he call this?” asked Gerhard as the man proceeded down the aisle. “Sandwiches? That used to be the name of some islands in the Pacific.”

“Well, this is not an island,” stated Jasch. “Look at this! Bread and butter and meat.”

“Mama, look at this funny paper!” exclaimed Berend.

“It feels waxy doesn’t it?” remarked Elisabeth “I wonder if that might keep the bread fresher.”

“Look at the white bread,” gloated Lieshcn. “And feel how soft it is.” She could hardly wait to eat.

“Wir beten,” said Bernhard. Silently, they thanked God for the food and for the foretaste of a new life.

“The way it sounds,” said Bernhard between bites, “we’ll have a few days in Liverpool. That will give us more time to look around than we had in London.”

On one of the sight-seeing jaunts, they walked along a street where women had set up stalls to sell their wares. As Bernhard and Elisabeth spoke to each other one of the vendors turned to regard them sharply. Then she spoke.

“Where do you come from?” she asked in Yiddish.

“We come from the Crimea and are on our way to Canada,” Bernhard replied. “Are you German?”

“No, I came from Poland after the war. I’ve lived here for several years now.”

The boys listened with interest. They had not expected to find people speaking German on a street in England!

Later, Elisabeth noticed some china in a shop window. How that caught her eye! If she could only add to the few pieces she had brought from home. Bernhard looked at the price tag and frowned.

“We can’t afford that,” he stated flatly. “When we’re down to five hundred dollars and a family of nine with thousands of miles to go and no place to call home when we get there, we can’t spend our money on dishes.” Elisabeth glanced at the pretty pattern once more and walked on. She knew it was as Bernhard said.

The evening before they sailed, a group of the young immigrants—Gerhard, Jasch, Philip, Jake Wilms and others—were out for a walk. Wilms was wearing his warm, sheep-skin cap, the kind with the three-inch unshorn wool on the outside. As they rounded a corner, they met some young English girls who glanced up as they met. In the dimly lit street, all the girls could see was the bushy-headed monster almost on top of them. They shrieked in fear and disappeared more quickly than they had appeared.

The C.P.R. ship, Montrose, was already docked when Bernhard’s family arrived at the pier next day. Again the boys gawked in amazement. This was a far cry from Philip’s dream of going to sea in a windjammer.

As the ship steamed out to sea, the family experienced a typical early winter crossing of the North Atlantic; the farther they went, the stormier was the weather. Elisabeth and Gerhard found out they were not sea travelers. The left-over geröstete Zwieback were the mainstay of those too sick to go to the dining room.

One day when the family returned from dinner they looked around the cabin in dismay. Everything was topsy-turvy.

“What happened, Papa?” asked Peter “Who made that mess?”

“Don’t say anything about this, boys.” warned Bernhard. “You may go for a walk to the lounge while I help Mama clean up.”

“Do you notice anything missing?” Bernhard asked after the boys had left. Unconsciously, he felt his pocket.

“No, I think I’ll let Gerhard carry most of the money from now on,” stated Bernhard. “That way, the valuables will be spread around a little.”

The next time the family went to the dining room, Bernhard excused himself and returned to the cabin. As he abruptly opened the door, he startled the steward who was ransacking the bags.

Sheepishly the culprit made his way toward the door, glad to escape with nothing more than a severe look.

Peter and Berend looked at the cards that had been delivered to them.

“Gerhard, what does this say? Can you read it?” asked Berend as he saw the English words.

Slowly Gerhard translated what he could.

“‘Miss Bernhard Barg,’ “ he began.

“Miss!” sputtered Berend. “I’m not a girl!”

“‘Commander E. Landy...requests the pleasure of your company at the Christmas Party in the Cabin Dining Room on Friday, Dec. 25th, 1925 at 3:30 p.m.’ “

“Oh, that will be fun!” exclaimed Peter.

Both boys did have a wonderful time at the party; games, goodies and the presents. Berend's eyes grew wide when Peter received a teddy bear on wheels. What would his present be?

Finally, he heard his name. His hands shook as he tore the wrappings.

"What do you have, Berend?" asked Peter. "What is it? A doll? You got a doll?"

Berend's face began to flame. Did eleven-year-old boys in Canada play with dolls? Well, they didn't in Russia! Someone was surely mean to him, calling him "Miss" and now giving him a doll! Indignation welled up inside him. He pushed the doll behind him.

Angrily he watched as the other children admired their presents. A Doll!
A doll for a big boy;

A girl nearby noticed the beautiful doll lying on the chair.

"Whose doll is that? Is she yours?" she wondered.

"You may have her. I don't want her," he muttered. "A doll's not for a boy like me." She asked. "Do you want these?" she offered him a handful of candies she had received a short while before.

"Sure," he replied. "Anything to get rid of that doll!"

The party was spoiled; the day was spoiled; the whole trip was spoiled! A doll!

On the 27th, someone sighted land. Soon a crowd gathered on deck. That must be Canada! That evening the Montrose docked at St. John, N.B. One more night on board, but at least the ship no longer rolled.

Eagerly, the passengers lugged their bags and bundles down the gang-plank next morning. But how cold it was! This was worse than Moscow.

Another wait while going through Canadian Immigration, where each one was given a Gospel portion and finally the immigrants were on the special train to take them to Ontario. But what a train! This too was worse than Russia's; the soot and dust were unbearable. But immigrants had no choice.

At Montreal, everyone had to leave the coaches. This gave Elisabeth a chance to buy more food as the C.P.R. was no longer supplying meals. How she wished for fresh Zwieback! She'd certainly try to bake some every Saturday when they were finally settled.

Philip walked past a store window that had an oblong, greenish object inside. Could it be a cucumber? In December? What else could it be? He had no idea that tropical fruits were available in a place as cold as Montreal in December.

Day and night, they rattled on. By now, Bernhard had learned that there were no more openings for immigrants in Ontario. They would have to go on to the prairies. As Peter peered out into the blackness of the night and listened to the whistle blowing, he wondered if the train would soon run off the end of the tracks. They couldn't go on much longer, he thought.

The immigration agent came through the coach and stopped by Bernhard.

"You've been thinking of going to Rosthern, have you?" he asked

"Yes," replied Bernhard. "That's what we thought."

"Well, in the next province, in Alberta, there's a place called Duchess where some Mennonites are wanting three families."

Bernhard slapped his knee.

"If Duchess is where they want us, then we'll go to Duchess," he announced.

Word had gone on ahead that an immigrant train was coming through Winnipeg. Not knowing who would be on it, many earlier arrivals were on hand when the train pulled into the station. Suddenly, Gerhard grew excited.

"Peter!" he almost shouted. "Peter Wiens!" He felt like jumping out the window to meet his old friend.

What handshaking all around! What expressions of joy!

"Gerhard, why don't you come back to Gretna with me?" Peter suggested. "We could go to school together and you could improve your English."

Bernhard and Elisabeth consulted briefly and then consented. Already the family shoots were breaking off in this new country.

Now that the train was rolling over the open prairie, the children could see the similarity to the Molotschna. But, oh, they were so tired! It didn't take five weeks to travel from Molotschna to the Crimea, not even by wagon.

At the Moose Jaw station, the boys strolled along the platform while the engine took on water. A priest, standing by a stack of suitcases and bags, motioned to Philip.

"Here, young man, please carry these for me," he said, gesturing to the luggage. Philip couldn't understand the words but he guessed the meaning and picking up the heaviest suitcases, he followed the priest into one of the other coaches. As Philip set them down, the priest reached into a pocket, selected a coin and gave it to Philip.

"Ten cents!" explained Philip to himself. His first earning in Canada! He'd buy an ice cream cone with it.

When the conductor came through after leaving Moose Jaw, he examined their tickets.

"Duchess." He read. "We'll take you to Brooks then. That's the closest to Duchess."

Bernhard was alarmed. He couldn't understand the conductor very well, but it sounded mixed up to him. He didn't want to be taken someplace else. Not then the people at Duchess wanted them!

"No, no, Duchess. We want to go to Duchess." (The name sounded like Doochyess" the way he said it.)

"Yes, you'll get off at Brooks to go to Duchess but you will have to change to another train at Swift Current."

That night, the sleeping accommodation was harder than ever; benches and the floor of the station, but at least it didn't rock under them. The Barg, Peters and Widow Klassen families, all destined for Duchess, spent one last night together. The boys were intrigued by the stuffed moose head hanging on

the wall. Now they were in the land where hunters and trappers and wild animals were real, not just characters in story books.

Meanwhile, representatives of the Duchess congregation had gone to Brooks to meet the train on Friday evening, January 1st. As the day coaches rolled past, they looked for the immigrants they were expecting. But no passengers alighted. Sam Martin spoke to a trainman standing in the doorway.

“Oh, yes, they’ll come to Duchess tomorrow on the train from Empress. They insisted they should go to Duchess. Guess they didn’t understand too well.”

“Well, what do you make of that!” chuckled Sam to John Brubacher. “I guess we’ll just meet them at Duchess then tomorrow.”

When the train puffed into Duchess next day, the newcomers were greeted by a crowd of welcoming faces: Martens, Ramers, Stantons, Lauvers, Byers, Brubachers, Stauffers. And, to make the welcome complete, the Janzens and Koops, who had arrived from Russia only a few months earlier.

Some of these Canadians also spoke a kind of German similar to Schwabisch and although some words were quite different, they could communicate. But when the three families were invited to the church where dinner had been prepared, no further communication was needed!

After dinner, it was decided the Bargs would stay with Brubachers over the weekend. The C.P.R., in their desire to encourage immigrants to settle some of the abandoned farms on the C.P.R. land along the railroad, had a house lined up for Bargs southeast of town. But for the first few days, Brubachers would host them.

How they did sleep that night after cleaning up! What luxury to sleep in a bed! What contentment to feel the warmth and love of this Christian family! They could get up feeling like new people.

The breakfast table was stretched to the limit but all fifteen could crowd around. Even though it was still dark outside, the room was well lit by Coleman lamps hanging from the ceiling. Peter looked at that lamp in amazement. What a wonderful light! But when breakfast was ready, he was even more amazed.

How could anyone have room for such a feast, porridge, fried eggs, fried potatoes, bread, jam, Roger's syrup and coffee? The younger boys immediately liked the smooth, golden sweetness.

"Mama," begged Peter, "will you buy some like this when we get to our house?"

"You like it, don't you, Peterke?" she responded gently.

That afternoon when the immigrant families met for a German worship service, their hearts were lifted in praise and thankfulness to God for bringing them to this new land. The hardships were forgotten as Preacher Janzen directed thoughts to their God who had led them on their long journey from Russia.

In a few days, Elisabeth had arranged their few belongings in the three-roomed house. They were crowded but not like in Topolovka when they moved into one room of their house. With Jasch and Hans working at Brubachers and Philip at Ramers, they could easily manage. The three youngest were gone to school all day, anyway.

One day in late February, Bernhard came into the house with a buoyant step. He held up the papers for Elisabeth to see.

"Well, the deal is in writing," he announced. "Delp will sell us his quarter of land and include the team, a cow, the dog and some red chickens."

Elisabeth's eyes shone. Ahead lay the prospect of putting down new roots.