

The Parsonage on the Prairie

A tale from the life and activities
of a German-American Lutheran pastor,
as told by Uncle Henry

Heinrich J. Vogel

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Translator's Forward

Heinrich J. Vogel, who was my grandfather, died when I was only a few months old. Above the bookcase in our home were portraits of him and my grandmother, so I was very much aware of his appearance. In that bookcase was a copy of "*Das Pfarrhaus auf der Prairie*," which I knew he had written but which meant little to me.

I remember seeing the same book in my brother's library. My sister-in-law recently mentioned that her children and grandchildren would not appreciate this book since it was written in German. From this the idea developed that we would translate it.

The events of this story seem to fit into the time of my grandfather's early ministry. He graduated from the Iowa Synod Seminary in Dubuque in 1864 and not long afterwards received a call to four congregations in the West Union, Iowa area. This was on the prairie which he so vividly describes in the first chapter of his book.

This story is not an account of his own life, since he spent only three years in Iowa before accepting a call to Madison, Wisconsin. Later he became disturbed about the Iowa Synod doctrine of election and through a process similar to a colloquy became a member of the Wisconsin Synod. He served Zion Church in Columbus, Wisconsin from 1876 to 1881 and then St. John's, Jefferson, Wisconsin until his death in 1910.

As we proceeded with the translation we became aware of the fact that mission work 100 years ago and today are really not so different. The lifestyle of the people who were pioneer settlers was more primitive. However, the ideas of skepticism about the inspiration of the Bible, liberalism and ecumenism were problems then just as they are now. The people who opposed sound doctrine considered themselves more enlightened and modern than people of earlier times.

The early history of some of the older congregations of the Wisconsin Synod would be somewhat the same as the one pictured in this story. For this reason this story can

provide a picture of the early history of the Lutheranism in midwestern America.

Leonarda Vogel
1986

Editor's Forward

"*Das Pfarrhaus auf der Prairie*," or "The Parsonage on the Prairie," first appeared in the *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt* ("Evangelical Lutheran Congregation Newsletter," the bi-monthly magazine of the Wisconsin Synod) on November 15, 1912. The story was serialized in 16 installments, concluding in the July 15, 1913 issue of the *Gemeinde-Blatt*.

In 1916 Northwestern Publishing House of Milwaukee, Wisconsin printed the whole narrative in a book of 106 pages. The book also contained six illustrations by Edward Kornreich. It cost 50 cents.

Neither the *Gemeinde-Blatt* series nor the book indicated the author's name. Evidently the reader had to guess from the subtitle: "*Eine Erzählung aus dem Leben und Wirken eines deutsch-amerikanischen lutherischen Pastors, erzählt von Onkel Heinrich*" ("A tale from the life and activities of a German-Lutheran pastor, as told by Uncle Henry"). Heinrich Vogel was a humble man!

Vogel died on June 7, 1910, more than two years before his story first appeared in print. No one knows when he wrote "*Das Pfarrhaus auf der Prairie*." My conjecture, which stems from the description of Martin Paulsen's twenty-fifth anniversary in Chapter 22, is that Vogel wrote it after his own twenty-fifth anniversary at St. John, Jefferson. This would place the date of writing some time between the summers of 1906 and 1910.

As Leonarda Vogel indicates, "*Das Pfarrhaus auf der Prairie*" is not an autobiography. There are many features in the story, however, that accord with Vogel's own life. For example:

- 1) Less than a year after graduating from Wartburg Seminary, Vogel became a pastor on the Iowa prairie.

2) In early 1864 Vogel organized a congregation among the German railroad workers in Toledo, Ohio. And although Vogel did not found any of the four Iowa congregations he served, none of them was more than five years old when he came in the fall of 1864. The result: Vogel knew all about a young congregation's struggles to draft a constitution, construct a suitable building for worship, and the like.

3) Pastor Paulsen served the settlement near the town of W_____. Pastor Vogel's main Iowa congregation was near West Union in Windsor Township.

3) Pastor Vogel, like Pastor Paulsen, married a young German lady from a different part of Iowa early in his ministry. He was wed to Miss Augusta Gropp of MacGregor in 1865.

4) Vogel, like Martin Paulsen, had a daughter named Sophie. She died in Jefferson, Wisconsin in 1883 at age 12.

5) Pastor Vogel, like his fictional counterpart, taught grade school. Vogel taught school everywhere he served except in Jefferson.

6) Pastor Paulsen's conservative, biblical Lutheran theology reflects Heinrich Vogel's own faith.

In re-translating "The Parsonage on the Prairie" I relied heavily on the original translation by Hilda Vogel, my grandmother and Leonarda Vogel, my great-aunt. I am thankful for their initial work.

I have enjoyed discovering what my great-grandfather wrote almost a century ago. His story makes me see vivid pictures. It makes me smile and laugh. Most importantly, "The Parsonage on the Prairie" makes me glad to know that Heinrich J. Vogel trusted in Jesus as his Savior. I hope to meet him some day.

Daniel Witte
April 14, 1992

Chapter One

In the month of April, 18__, after a long, snowy winter, the spring thaw had finally begun. During the winter only the peaks of the posts had been visible at best. But now the fences which separated the fields reappeared above the snow, and soon one could see dark-brown patches of ground between the snowflakes. These signs awakened the hope that the earth would not always be covered with snow and ice.

The dark patches grew noticeably bigger, and within a few days the entire prairie became visible. Parts of the prairie were blackish-brown, because of the grass burned off last autumn; parts were a lighter yellow-brown, where last summer's dry grass still remained. These areas would also be burned off so that new growth could emerge. Only a few dirty snow piles remained along the fences. The farmers were already busy preparing the soil for the new crops. The prairie soil was so light that farmers could do this almost as soon as the snow disappeared.

The color of the prairie changed to a lush green as the new grass sprang up. In the ponds the frogs began their croaking, and the call of the prairie-chickens could be heard in the mornings and evenings. The endlessly-rolling prairie, which for a time had seemed like a sea of ice, teemed with life. In this way the settlers found relief from the long winter's gloom. It had been weighing on their hearts for months.

Now comes the time of year when the prairie is truly beautiful. Blossoms of red, yellow and blue turn the sea of green into a wonderland of color. Every week brings a new scene. Many kinds of birds also return to the prairie. They brighten hearts with their gorgeous plumage, and they break the monotony somewhat with their beautiful, though wordless, songs.

Of course, all this glory does not last long. By mid-June, when the summer heat sets in, the prairie again resumes its yellow-brown hue. It lasts for most of the year.

Let us return to April, however. On a typically changeable April day in the year of 18__ a man has come to this prairie by stage coach from a town named W_____. This slender young man does not appear used to strenuous walking. He is wearing a dark overcoat because April weather cannot be trusted. He is loaded down with a large, heavy suitcase, and in his other hand he carries an umbrella. For the moment he is using it as a walking stick. No wonder he makes frequent stops to mop his brow!

The man's face shows signs of curiosity as he looks in all directions, slowly making his way. At times when the sun suddenly disappears behind a cloud, a shadow seems to cross his face for a moment. It registers worry, and almost fear. All in all, though, the young man looks like a friendly, determined and trustworthy person who will have no trouble winning over those with whom he will associate.

But who is this young man? What does he want out on the prairie? He is surely not a farmer or a homesteader. His hands are not hardened by manual labor. He might be a land speculator eager to buy farms, or perhaps someone who buys farm products. Yet he does not appear to be a peddler who sells any and all goods, useful or not, to the settlers. He does not have the calculating look that those people are known to have. Could he be a tourist? No—they look for beautiful scenery and natural wonders which are not found here. If he were a hunter he would be carrying a gun. Rather, the young man looks to be learned, and his spiritual appearance and black clothing suggest that he is a young pastor.

We are right in that assumption. The traveler has just ended his theological studies, passed his exams, and has been assigned to gather a Lutheran congregation among the new German settlers near the town of W_____. The prairie is to be the scene of his work in the Lord's vineyard and, if God wills, his new home. The young man is firmly convinced that he wishes to serve his Lord and Savior, help build his kingdom and win souls for him.

Thinking back to the shadow that appeared to cross the young man's brow as we observed him, we understand his concerns. Yet he knows that the success of his mission is not in his hands but in the Lord's. For this reason he goes on his way determined to reach his goal. At times he asks himself, "What problems will I encounter?" or "What success may I have?" But his believing heart quickly banishes these doubts and fears.

Near dusk, as if the Lord intends it just for him, the sun reappears from behind the clouds and settles in golden glory beyond the horizon. The young man catches sight of the first house in a settlement. It seems to be a sign of promise, and it bolsters his confidence. He knows there will be much struggle and opposition ahead, but he trusts that his work will eventually be crowned with success.

Chapter Two

Well, we are finally here!" Pastor Martin Paulsen exclaimed in a half-whisper, as he walked down the path that led to the settler's home. Curious, he looked around for a moment, when suddenly the door opened and the farmer strode out. He headed toward the nearby barn, no doubt to do his evening chores. The farmer, a stocky man of medium height, was dressed in blue work-clothes, and over his tousled hair he had an old, well-worn plush cap. The wooden shoes that he was wearing indicated that he might be from the same area as Fritz Reuter.¹ Although his appearance seemed gruff, his friendly face soon erased this impression.

"Good evening, friend," the traveler called.

¹ Fritz Reuter (1810-1874), a popular German storyteller and humorist, wrote several books about the peasants of Mecklenburg in northern Germany (a la Garrison Keillor). Reuter himself was from Stavenhagen, about 80 miles north of Berlin.

The man turned and stared at him open-mouthed for several seconds until he finally drawled, "Good e - ve - ning, al - so."

"Will you allow a stranger to come and have a word with you? You are no doubt Christian Karsten?" Paulsen continued.

"Yes, I am," the farmer replied, "but how do you know me?"

"Don't be surprised. I learned that in W_____.

"You want to know who I am and why I am here," continued Paulsen, walking toward the farmer. "So listen: I am a Lutheran pastor. My name is Martin Paulsen. My synod has sent me here to locate any German Lutherans who have settled in this area and preach God's Word to them. There are quite a number of Germans around here, aren't there?"

"Ah - h! So - o - o," the farmer answered slowly. Paulsen could tell that he couldn't figure out how to react to this news. Suddenly the farmer pointed to his forehead as though an idea had struck him. He turned in his tracks and walked to the house—leaving his bewildered guest standing there. The farmer tore open the door and called into the house, "Gesche, Gesche, come quick! There's a man here"

Through the open door, Paulsen could see a hefty woman busy at the stove. Hearing her husband, she turned and stood in the doorway. Her face was red from the heat of the oven. The large wooden cooking spoon she held in her hand made her look as if she were armed for battle. She appeared a determined woman, with cleverness in her eyes and a motherly expression. "But, old man," she called to her husband when she saw Paulsen on the path, "but old man, why didn't you bring the man into the house? Come in, come in, stranger," she said kindly as she turned toward Paulsen.

As Paulsen greeted the woman and entered, his eyes quickly took in his surroundings. On one side of the spacious room was a cook stove, and on the other a massive bed. In the middle was a large table on which a girl of perhaps twelve was



"But old man, why didn't you bring the man into the house?"

arranging the cups and plates for the evening meal. A shelf held a clock and several books. Above the door was a gun. A simple kitchen cupboard and an old chest of drawers, together with a number of wooden chairs, completed the furnishings of this large room. A child of about two was playing on the floor; a five- or six-year-old girl ran behind her mother's skirt as the stranger looked toward her. A boy of about nine was leaning against the bedpost.

After Paulsen explained the purpose of his visit once more, the woman said, "I'll finish cooking supper. You must be hungry too. My old man can do his chores, and then we can talk more while we eat, and after supper." With that she busied herself at the stove, unconcerned about her guest, and Christian Karsten tramped out to the barn.

Since Paulsen had some time on his hands, he tried to get acquainted with the children. He asked their names, their ages, and what they enjoyed doing. Soon his friendly ways won them over, and they lost their shyness. He began telling them stories, both Bible stories and others. The children were drawn to him and began crowding around him, and even the oldest girl neglected her work to listen. Several times her mother had to remind her of her duties.

Mrs. Karsten had seemingly not paid much attention to Paulsen's conversation with the children. But when her husband came back inside the house, washed up, and combed his tousled hair a little, she invited Paulsen to the table in such a friendly manner that her mind was clearly made up: she wanted him to stay. Paulsen was pleasantly surprised when, as soon as they were seated at the table, everyone folded their hands and the father prayed, "The eyes of all wait upon you . . ." ² in his monotone. After that each of the older children said a short table prayer. Paulsen silently prayed, "I thank you, God, for

leading me to the right place and preparing the way for me."

They visited about the settlers and the conditions in which they lived until late into the night. Paulsen found that there were twenty to thirty German families in the area. Quite a few of them, including the Karstens, wished that the true Word of God could be preached among them.

Paulsen also learned that some of them did not share this concern and had already fallen into the hands of a man who, as Karsten said, called himself a pastor but was no pastor at all. Some kind of revivalist also had a following in the area.

The greatest concern of the Karstens and others was their young people. There was no one to instruct them, and unless the parents took the time to teach them from the Catechism themselves, they learned nothing. Many of the children could not read or right, and many of them had not been baptized. In the Karsten family, only the oldest girl had been baptized, before leaving Germany. Many had been baptized by the would-be pastor, but no one knew whether those were was a real baptisms.

Shortly before midnight Paulsen was shown a small corner under the roof where a bed was prepared for him. He fell on his knees to thank God for leading him to this fertile field that sorely needed his services. As he pondered the difficult work and fierce battles that lay before him he also prayed earnestly for strength and wisdom from heaven.

Chapter Three

The day after his arrival Paulsen set out to acquaint himself with the settlement. His first destination was the English schoolhouse where a young girl had taught during the winter. He hoped to get permission to use this building for divine worship, since it was the only one in the community that would be adequate for the purpose. He then began to call on the

² All Scripture quotations in this story are from the New International Version (International Bible Society, 1984).

individual settlers to get to know them and to invite them to worship services.

These calls gave Paulsen many looks at how the people and families of the settlement were doing. In the end he had quite a clear picture of his future field of work. The calls were so interesting that we must tell our readers a few of them.

To obtain permission to use the schoolhouse Paulsen called on the head of the school board, Herr Florian Nobel, who was now signing his name "Mr. F. Nobel." Nobel's house and business place seemed to set him apart from the rest of the settlement. It was clear that he was the wealthiest man around, who had been in America longer than his "green" neighbors. His whole set-up had American class.

As Paulsen came to the house, Mr. Nobel and his oldest son were busy harnessing the horses to the plow. When the pastor introduced himself, Noble turned the team over to his son and invited Paulsen into the house.

This house was very comfortably furnished. There were muslin curtains on the windows and a hand-woven rag carpet on the floor. The furniture pieces in the "sitting room" were also of good quality. Mrs. Nobel and her two daughters wore simple house-dresses, but they were not made of the same German fabric which one saw on the other women of the settlement. The Nobels had been in America quite a few years and had recently moved west.

"So, you are a Lutheran pastor and plan to stay in our settlement," Mr. Nobel began after introducing his wife and daughters. "Well, I'm in favor of having a church here, but I'd rather have an evangelical pastor than an old-fashioned Lutheran. They cling to their antiquated ideas and they are so conservative.

"You know, we already have a preacher in W_____. He tends to ramble, and his sermons don't have much substance, but we're satisfied with him. He baptizes our children, performs marriage ceremonies and conducts funerals. What more can we ask, since we are so poor? Still, it is too bad we have to be

ashamed about his life-style. He drinks to excess, and our American neighbors resent that. And he doesn't instruct the children.

"You know, I am more interested in a school than a church. We have a so-called English school, but the children do not learn any German or religion. So, Pastor, if you would consider teaching the children—as well as the young people who have much to catch up—I wouldn't mind what church affiliation you have." He patted Paulsen on the shoulder as if they were buddies. "You're still young. Just be liberal enough and everything will work out."

"My dear Herr Nobel," Paulsen replied, "I am thankful that you expressed your opinion so freely. However, I realize that you do not yet share my religious convictions, and I hope you don't expect me to deny them. I can only do my work in agreement with the confession of the Lutheran church, because it is my heart's conviction. I hope to God, however, that you will someday recognize that Lutheran teaching is true.

"Now, as for working with the young people, that goes with saying for a Lutheran. The kingdom of God must be built through young people.

"Another thing—could I get a little more information? This so-called preacher—what is his name?"

"Dr. Wind."

"Has this Dr. Wind been called by the settlers here, or by just a group of them perhaps?"

"No," Mr. Nobel offered. "If anyone needs his services they go see him, and if they want to attend his church they go to W_____ and find him there on Sunday. That's all."

"I'm glad to hear that," Paulsen said. "As much as I have heard of him, I would have consider him a false teacher. But I certainly would not have it appear that I was invading his territory.

"You say this Dr. Wind has baptized children? How does he baptize them?"

"Oh, he makes a very formal occasion of it and has a beautiful ceremony. He says, 'I

dedicate you to God, virtue, and immortality.'"

"Then the children whom he has 'dedicated,'" Paulsen replied, "have not received a Christian baptism. I am sure you recall that Christ commanded, 'Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.'"

"But Pastor," Nobel said, "those are only ceremonies. It really doesn't matter which words you use."

Paulsen was getting concerned. "My dear friend, how can you say that? Shouldn't we follow what our Lord and Savior said in every detail? Christ himself demands as much. He says, 'If you hold to my teaching, then you are really my disciples.'"

"I've never really thought about that," responded Nobel. "I was a sponsor at a baptism once. That is when I heard Dr. Wind's ceremony for the first time, and I thought it sounded very nice. But you may be right. I won't argue about it. I would like to give you some advice, though. Visit our Squire Weiser as soon as possible. He is rather odd, but he has a lot of influence since he advises the settlers in legal matters. Also, he is very jealous. He may make trouble if he feels he hasn't been consulted."

Paulsen thanked Mr. Nobel for the advice. "I will try to visit him today yet. I would no sooner pass him by than anyone else. Nonetheless, I feel that poorest settler should be just as important to the church as the most influential."

Mrs. Nobel had noticed that during the conversation Paulsen had frequently glanced at the parlor organ. She took advantage of the pause in the conversation. "Pastor, you must be musical, aren't you? Lizzie, play a piece for the pastor."

After some coaxing, Lizzie, the oldest daughter, hammered out a waltz. Paulsen asked whether she could play any other pieces such as songs or hymns, or could perhaps sing them. But he found that her musical knowledge was very limited. Before he left they arranged that he would give organ and singing lessons to both Nobel girls.

As Paulsen was on his way out, Mrs. Nobel told him, "You will have to stay here. I'm so happy that we finally will have the opportunity to attend worship regularly and have other kinds of spiritual stimulation. What we have now is good otherwise; we have gone forward quickly. But I am almost dying of homesickness, since we haven't been able to satisfy the needs of our hearts and souls. I think God has sent you to keep us poor people from becoming completely demoralized."

Chapter Four

Not far from the Nobel's home Paulsen found a dirty hut which seemed ready to collapse. A few miserable-looking cows stood near the hollowed-out smokestack which served as a barn. The whole property looked thoroughly neglected. As Paulsen came closer to the hut, he saw a remarkably dirty woman. She was washing some children's clothes in a tin pan. Evidently she also used the pan to mix bread, since there were traces of dough around the rim.

"Good day, Frau Schlump," Paulsen greeted the woman, who was bent over the pan. She sprang up, startled at hearing a voice, and tossed her braids over her back. As she sized up the well-dressed stranger, she yelled excitedly, "We don't buy nothing! Nothing English! Nothing English!" Alarmed by her screaming, a mangy dog ran out of the open door. He barked and yapped in support of his mistress.

With much effort Paulsen finally made himself heard. "You don't have to buy anything, my dear woman! I am a Lutheran pastor and I have come to invite you to attend our divine service at the schoolhouse on Sunday."

At this she was very embarrassed. She curtsied, kissed Paulsen's hand, and said, "Excuse me, Pastor. I thought you were an inspector or a peddler. Won't you come in, if it isn't too messy for you?"

Paulsen couldn't refuse, even though the overwhelming odor coming from the house

made him hesitant to accept. Paulsen could almost have said with Schiller's Taucher:

. . . How glad is he
 who breathes in rosy sunlight there -
 But inside it is fearsome, and
 To tempt the gods one must not dare.
 Oh! Never, ever wish to see
 The terrors of that darkest lair.³

What a sight met his eyes! The floor was bare ground. Near the door he had to step over a puddle from which two small pigs emerged. Opposite the door was a homemade wooden frame covered by a featherbed. A rooster perching on the frame crowed a welcome, while a hen objected to being disturbed in her egg-laying. An old stove appeared in a state of collapse, with no doors or lids. Along the empty walls were rough-hewn benches, and in front of one of them four poles had been driven into the ground. Boards covered the poles, and this constituted the table. It was still covered with unappetizing remnants of previous meals. A traveler's chest and a store-crate in which a baby was sleeping completed the furnishings. It wasn't the poverty as much as the disorder and filth that made Paulsen so uncomfortable.

He sat down on the one rickety chair available. "May I offer you a cup of milk?" Mrs. Schlump inquired. "It's quite warm out today." She hastily dusted off the cup a bit with her apron.

"O no, not that!" Paulsen thought, but politeness obliged him to accept. He soon regretted this decision, because the cup she brought him still had the traces of perhaps weeks of coffee dried on the edge. The milk in the cup seemed liberally sprinkled with black specks. Paulsen carefully put the cup to

his lips and pretended to drink. Then he set the cup down and began to ask questions about the family. After inviting Mrs. Schlump to the service again, he took his leave.

Chapter Five

Toward evening Paulsen reached an attractive looking house, where he hoped he might be asked to spend the night. When he entered he found the Selig family about to enjoy their evening meal. The group consisted of a young couple with one child and a hired man who was the wife's brother. Paulsen could tell that the woman "ruled the roost" just by her greeting. The husband was very quiet, although friendly, and the teen-aged hired man seemed quite reserved. It seemed odd to the Lutheran pastor that the woman spoke to him in a very familiar manner and addressed him as "Brother Paulsen." She invited him to join them for supper.

After they were seated at the table, Mrs. Selig asked their guest to say grace. Paulsen prayed the common table prayer found in the Catechism. Later, during the course of the meal, the woman asked, "Why don't Lutheran pastors usually pray from the heart?" She also added that it was a pity most of them were not converted.

Paulsen first pursued the second comment she had made. He asked whether there was any one pastor or other who had led her to this conclusion.

"Well, yes," she said. "I was thinking of Dr. Wind in W_____. But there are others, too, better pastors, who still are not truly converted. You can tell because they do not pray from the heart, and they also don't try to convert people, since they themselves aren't converted."

"Tell me, Frau Selig," Paulsen answered, "are you Lutheran?"

"Do you know, Brother Paulsen," the woman said, "I was baptized and confirmed as a Lutheran, but more recently I've been converted." (She said this with a glowing look upward.) "Since then I don't call myself

³ The original reads:

. . . . *Es freue sich,
 Wer da atmet im rosigen Sonnenlicht!
 Da drinnen aber ist's fürchterlich,
 Und der Mensch versuche die Götter nicht,
 Und begehre nimmer und nimmer zu schauen,
 Was sie gnädig bedecken mit Nacht und Grauen!*

Lutheran. I call myself Evangelical, and those who are converted in all churches are my brothers and sisters."

Paulsen said, "Then you must still be a little familiar with the Lutheran Catechism, and you should be aware that Dr. Wind is not Lutheran. I don't know if he calls himself Lutheran, but anyone who knows the Catechism can tell that he does not teach Lutheran doctrine. It really isn't fair of you to lump all Lutheran pastors together just because some who call themselves Lutheran are so bad. They would not be tolerated in a single Lutheran synod.

"But if you are claiming that doctrinally-correct Lutheran pastors are not converted and do not pray from the heart, you ought to heed the words of the Lord: 'Do not judge, or you too will be judged.' For instance, you cannot look into my heart to see whether I prayed the table prayer from my heart. If a person professes to believe in Jesus Christ as his Savior and does not lead an openly unchristian life, we must assume in Christian love that he is converted. Only the Lord can judge the heart."

Mrs. Selig answered, "I really didn't mean that you aren't converted. I do hope you are, but I don't know you well enough to tell. I'm glad you have come, because so many of our neighbors are still not converted and it's time a man of God has come to do this."

A smiling Paulsen continued, "I'm glad you didn't condemn me right away; first you want to test what I have to say, don't you? That is the right thing to do. But please, use the correct guide—namely, the Word of God."

He shook his finger at her, saying, "You decided I was not converted because I didn't say a spontaneous prayer. That is using the wrong basis for judging. God's Word doesn't condemn a standardized prayer, for Jesus himself told his disciples, 'When you pray, say, "Our Father" So he himself has taught us words we should use when we pray. Plus, I have noticed that Herr Selig is becoming uneasy. He must still have chores to do, so we really ought to break off our

discussion and continue later."

After both Mr. and Mrs. Selig had finished their evening work, they sat down to resume their talk. Mrs. Selig asked, "Brother Paulsen, won't you please tell us how you came to be converted?"

Hearing this for the third time irked Paulsen, but he quickly collected himself and said, "I enjoy talking about what the Lord has done out of pure grace for me, a miserable sinner—as long as it can serve to honor God and to instruct and encourage others. But it is wrong to talk about one's spiritual experiences just to satisfy someone else's curiosity. I really can't see what good it would do if I were to tell you about my conversion today."

Mrs. Selig seemed quite offended. "I believe that 'out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.' It could have been instructive to hear about it. . . . Oh, I hate to tell you, but my husband—who is such a good man that I really can't complain—is not converted. Three years ago we attended a revival in F_____, and I was converted, but he would not follow through. We were not married at the time, only engaged. After we were married, I begged him to be converted. The preacher from F_____ tried to persuade him and even prayed with him, but he always refused. He says, 'I have let you have your way; now let me have mine. I don't even believe that you were converted.'"

"Pastor," Mr. Selig interrupted, "let me say something. To please my fiancée—now my wife, and a fine one, I must say—I did attend a revival in F_____. I wanted to see what it was all about. What I saw did not appeal to me. I didn't mind the sermons so much, but some of the speakers could hardly be heard over the shouts of the crowd.

"And then it started! They sang spiritual songs with wild, worldly melodies. Those up front sang religious songs, while the young people in the back sang, "*You are almost thirty years old.*" Then they prayed. I couldn't help thinking of Jesus' words, "When you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their

many words."

"But that was only the beginning of the spectacle! Plop! Someone lay down on the ground, and others joined him. They kicked and yelled and screamed while other people fell on top of them, hugged them, pounded them and wrung their hands. I can't really describe it. I felt I was surrounded by fools! In the rear the young people were laughing and joking. Then they came after me. I asked, 'What do you want with me? I have been baptized and confirmed, and I believe in Jesus Christ.'

"They laughed and said, 'What are baptism and confirmation? They can't help at all. Unless you are converted, you will be damned.'

"I said, 'I know differently. In my Catechism it says, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not *believe* will be condemned." And I know very well that I need to repent every day.'

"But they shouted, 'Brothers, let us pray for this poor soul!'

"That's when I left. I had had enough. I was so angry that I thought, 'If my sweetheart wants to keep this up I'm through with her!' But I loved her too much, and soon I had to see her again. She was so kind and good to me that I decided I should forget about what had happened. We got married. I may be henpecked, but I won't have anything to do with that 'conversion' business of hers, so help me God! Am I right, pastor?"

Mr. Selig may never before have made such a long speech. It seemed as if the floodgates were opened and everything that had been dammed up gushed forth. He had finally gotten it off his chest.

Paulsen took some time to explain from God's Word what conversion really is. Mrs. Selig found it hard to contradict what he said, but she still seemed convinced that her dramatic conversion was better. After the three of them joined in an evening prayer and wished each other "Good night," Paulsen was shown a comfortable bed where he could rest. It had been a strenuous day.

Chapter Six

The following day Paulsen visited Squire Weiser. The architectural style of his house indicated that he was quite different from the other settlers. He lived in a low, rambling structure with an impressive entrance in the middle. This led to a hallway which divided the house into two parts. To the left was a living room furnished with old-fashioned over-stuffed furniture. To the right was a door with elaborate lettering: "*Office*." In the office was a massive desk and a bookcase holding several sheepskin-bound law books. A leather-upholstered arm chair sat in front of the desk. There was also a table in the middle of the room, a bench along the wall, and several straight wooden chairs. In front of the house ran a poorly constructed veranda. It stretched the width of the building but did not add anything to its appearance.

After inspecting the place for a while, Paulsen began to look for the owner. His knock at the front door received no answer, so after a few minutes he headed for the back of the house. A small addition in the rear appeared to be a kitchen. Here he heard a faint stirring, and when he looked through the half-open door he saw a quaint sight.

A man of about sixty was sitting on a stool. He was dressed in a dirty pair of tight-fitting deerskin trousers. His well-worn coat, which was trimmed with brass buttons, must have been navy blue originally, but now it seemed to be of all sorts of colors. An extremely tall top hat was perched on his bumpy but almost bald head. A few straggly grey hairs protruded from under his hat. In this costume the man was peeling potatoes for his noon meal. He was a widower, and this was his bachelor quarters. His wife had died soon after they came to the settlement. She was buried near a corner of the fence.

Paulsen introduced himself to Squire Weiser, but the squire did not let this interrupt his potato peeling. Finally he said, "Vell, I hab already from dee neighbors geheard dat a Lut'ran Rev ist here. Come again after da



"The man was peeling potatoes for his noon meal."

dinner. Den I'll hab time dat vee ken 'schwätz' [chat]." Thus Paulsen was dismissed. Weiser did not look up from his potato peeling.

When Paulsen returned later that afternoon he found Squire Weiser sitting in an armchair on the veranda. At first he looked to be asleep. But the squire sensed Paulsen's approach and extended his hand in greeting. Since there was only one chair, he invited his guest to be seated on the edge of the veranda.

In the course of conversation Weiser expressed his opinions, which were just as curious as his personal appearance. He told how when he had lived in "Ohio State" he had "gejoined" a Lutheran congregation at one time. He would not do that again, though, since all religions were "humbug." He said he had read some of Bob Ingersoll, and that was "his man." For a well-educated man, as he called himself, there was no need for religion. Educated people know by themselves what is right. Of course, it's all right for those who have no education, like most of his neighbors, to have some religion—otherwise they might become "too bad." That is why Weiser was happy that the "Rev" had come. He would be glad to help him "shtart" a congregation.

When Paulsen said that he also planned to work with the children and young people, Weiser replied, "In dees country a German school is net necessary. Dee children need to learn dee lankvich of da country. Da main ding is dat dey get a gut education. Da shcool ma'm here hasn't amounted to much. She didn't hab very much shcooling." Weiser went on to suggest that Paulsen teach the District school during the winter. "A man mit a college education ken teach da children better den a dame."

It didn't seem to make an impression on Weiser when Paulsen explained that he intended to found a congregation and open a school. There he could teach both German and English. The school would concentrate first and foremost on religious instruction, especially to the youth.

Weiser willingly gave permission to use

the school-house for services. He was not as willing to accept the invitation to attend. He remarked that he had not been at a "meeting" for twenty years and really didn't care to do so now. Still, he was curious to find out whether the "Rev" was a good "shpeaker"—if he felt like going, that is.

Chapter Seven

The Sunday on which Paulsen was to conduct his first Lutheran service arrived quickly. From the schoolhouse, which stood at an intersection, one could look in all four directions and see the settlers coming for worship. What a fine sight!

For example, a heavy farm wagon was coming with its owner and his wife enthroned on the high "Shanghai" seat. Quite a few neighbors were riding in the box of the wagon, too. A one-horse "Democrat wagon" approached from a different direction. Its owners were somewhat more wealthy, and they rode on upholstered seats. A cavalcade of men, women, boys and girls rode up on horseback—many of them without a saddle. Another vehicle, drawn by two oxen, was making slow progress, despite the driver's long whip. Others came on foot.

Mr. Nobel, his wife and two daughters arrived in an old fashioned surrey which he had brought along when they moved west. Anyone could tell that they were the wealthiest people in the area. Their two sons rode horseback on fine saddles that made them the envy of the other riders.

Last but not least came Squire Weiser, recognizable even from a distance by his tall top hat. He was nodding at every slow step of his nag. And what a comical sight his cart was! Each of the four wheels seemed to follow a different track. Though these seemed to be the only parts of the wagon which a wagon-wright had made, they were minus several spokes. Over the axles he had fastened two pliable boards which also served as springs. The wagon box was made of store

crates. The scissor-hitch harnessing the old nag consisted of two tree branches. Weiser's top hat must have had a clever head inside it—true genius, even.

Just as people's means of transportation were varied, so were their costumes. Some wore clothes which they had brought along from their German homelands. Others wore American homespun clothing made without any eye for style. A few had more "citified" attire, but even more striking were the costumes which showed a mixture of styles. One man wore military drill pants and a shabby but formal jacket. A woman wore her husband's boots, topped with a pleated skirt that must have come from along the river Weser.⁴ Her hat, on the other hand, looked modern. It even had an artificial ostrich plume. Another fellow had obviously been a German forest ranger, but the only features of his uniform left were a military mustache and a hat trimmed with a rooster feather.

Not all people had planned their outfits to match the weather. Even though it was a warm spring day, many of the men and boys wore fur caps, which they did not remove when they entered church. (This shouldn't strike an American strange, since we still see the same sort of thing, even in more civilized areas.) What almost made a person laugh was the young woman in the thin cotton dress. Her skirt fluttered around her legs like a flag, while on her head was a heavily padded winter cap!

When the group finally assembled, the tiny schoolhouse was packed. There were not nearly enough seats. People stood in the aisle, and some of the children sat on the edge of the platform which held the lectern. Many of the younger people stood outside at the open doors and windows.

Pastor Paulsen, dressed in his gown, stood at the lectern and wondered if the crowd would ever stop moving and making noise. The buzz

of conversation reminded him of a swarm of bees. As it was, he could have waited a long time. No one seemed to take notice of him!

Finally he cleared his throat and shouted as loudly as he could, "Let us begin our divine service in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." At last it became quiet. Noticing that many of people were carrying hymnals, he said, "Let us begin with the hymn, '*Lord Jesus Christ, be present now.*'" He could not announce a number since they had come from various parts of Germany, and there were at least five or six different hymn books among them.

He had hardly stopped speaking when the racket began again. Not only did people rustle pages as they frantically searched for the hymn, but some shouted, "In our book it's number so and so."

A woman screamed to her husband across the room, "John, the number is 14!"

"Where is it?"

"What number is it?"

"What hymnal do you have?"

This kept on for some time until just about everyone had found the hymn. The pastor took advantage of this calm to give the pitch. At first he sang alone, but then a few began to hum along and even sing. After a line or two suddenly everyone joined in at the top of their voices. It was enough to "wake up stones and make people furious." Men growled, women screeched and children squeaked. There was no melody. It seemed as if the people had read the heading "after its own melody," so they had all decided they should improvise their own.

Pastor Paulsen was relieved when the hymn was done. He rose, said a prayer and read the Epistle lesson. All confessed the Apostles' Creed. Then he tried another hymn. He picked one which he hoped very few had heard before. That allowed him to sing several verses by himself without worrying about brave individuals trying to sing along. Next he delivered a sermon based on the Gospel lesson. He tried to impress on everyone that "only one thing is needed."

⁴ The river Weser [VAYzer] flows from central Germany to Bremen and empties into the North Sea.

The service closed with the benediction, but there had to be a second act to this event. There was much to discuss. Did the settlers want Paulsen to stay and conduct Lutheran services regularly? Yes, it was unanimous. There wasn't a single negative vote. Many wept tears of joy at the thought that they would once more have the opportunity to hear God's Word regularly.

Before Paulsen could speak further, Squire Weiser got up and said, "Neighbors, dis ding mus hab its right shape. If you want a Rev you must hire him orderly. It muss be a legal contract. You hab to know vat da Rev asks for his service and a subscription list muss be made, so dat it's known vere dee expenses come from. You muss elect a president, secretary and a treas'rer. Dat is my opinion!"

Paulsen replied, "Herr Weiser has given us a splendid explanation of how a business of this world is founded. But this is not a business or a club. This is a Christian congregation. To organize we must make every decision in line with God's Word, since it is the only standard and guide for Christian faith and life.

"Unfortunately, since today the Christian church does not have just one understanding of God's Word, but is divided and split, we need to have the right understanding of God's Word clear in our minds from the start. I am a Lutheran pastor. That means I am convinced that the Lutheran church has expressed the right understanding of God's Word in its confessional writings. Most of you were instructed in the Lutheran teaching and brought up according to it. At your confirmation you yourself promised to be faithful to the teaching and faith of the Lutheran church. Therefore, we will organize a Lutheran congregation.

"It is absolutely necessary that all of us agree to the same principles so that we all know what we teach and practice. I have brought along a copy of a constitution for a Lutheran congregation. This is not something I have written. It is the result of studying ever since the Reformation how a Christian

congregation should operate. My synod has revised it to suit conditions here in America.

"If you agree, I suggest that we discuss a section of this constitution each Sunday after our service. Then anyone can ask questions if something is not clear, or someone can disagree. After we finish this process, we will be ready to organize a Lutheran congregation on a firm foundation."

The assembly accepted this proposal, and Paulsen could now begin to present the constitution.

Chapter Eight

Let's listen in on some discussions that took place after the services in the course of several Sundays.

On the first Sunday Pastor Paulsen began by stating what the congregation needed to believe and confess: 1) that they recognized the Holy Scriptures as the only divine rule and guide for believing and living; and 2) that they considered the confessional writings of the Lutheran church to be the correct exposition of God's Word.

Old Mr. Weiser objected completely. He believed the Bible was an ancient book, but people were wiser today. There was no need to accept everything the Bible says. The Lutheran church had traditionally taught any number of things which enlightened people of our day couldn't be expected to believe. If the "Rev" wanted to preach from the Bible, he should interpret it in accord with common sense.

Paulsen said that Weiser spoke about the Holy Scriptures as a blind man would speak about colors. God's Word is truth, and man's wisdom cannot change it or improve it. Those who read and hear it without purposely closing their hearts to it will become convinced that it is true. People who say that the Bible isn't God's Word do not even agree among themselves in their criticisms. So who really has the "common sense" to be able to interpret the Scriptures?

Mr. Nobel was willing to accept the

Bible, but not the Lutheran confessions. He did not think it was proper to condemn the teachings of other Protestant churches. A pastor shouldn't bring the controversies between churches into the pulpit. Rather, he should bear with those who understand minor points differently.

Paulsen replied, "Herr Nobel is speaking of minor points in doctrine. What is a minor point? Jesus says, 'I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything has been accomplished.' Who is so bold as to say, 'This or that teaching of Holy Scripture is so unimportant that I may overlook it or deny it'? For example, there is no agreement among Protestants on holy communion. Would you consider our Savior's last will and testament something unimportant?"

"If a pastor doesn't make a clear, certain confession about a teaching of the Holy Scriptures—if he beats around the bush to keep from speaking against other churches—what should his people think of him? They would either have to consider him someone who has no convictions, who therefore is not fit to teach others, or someone who is too cowardly to express what he believes for fear of offending someone. The Bible calls such preachers 'mute dogs' and pronounces woe on them."

This explanation irked Mr. Nobel, and he resolved to use the next opportunity to get even with Paulsen. The pastor now named the Lutheran confessional writings and stressed the *unaltered* Augsburg Confession.

Mr. Nobel decided the time had come to play his trump card. He said, "Our pastor wants to railroad us into accepting the unaltered Augsburg Confession. The name itself already implies that something was wrong with that confession. It needed improvement. A new, revised edition of a book is always better than the old one. I move that we accept the altered Augsburg Confession."

In Proverbs Solomon says, "Answer a

fool according to his folly," so Paulsen asked, "Herr Nobel, are you familiar with the revised Augsburg Confession?"

Embarrassed, Nobel had to admit he wasn't. He hadn't even heard of it until just then.

Paulsen turned to the assembly and asked, "Mr. Nobel wants us to accept something he doesn't know anything about. What do you think we should decide?" That settled the matter.

Then Mrs. Selig spoke up. Even before the pastor could prevent it, she took the floor and would not be interrupted: "All of this talk about correct doctrine is pointless. The pastor ought to get busy and work at converting people. That is the important thing. He should keep visiting the unconverted and invite them to our meeting, whether they are Lutheran or not. Then all the converted people would be church members, and we wouldn't need any creeds. God would teach us all, and the right way to go would be whatever way the Spirit leads us."

In the friendliest manner possible Paulsen pointed out that it is not proper for a woman to speak in the congregation. Holy Scripture requires that all things be done decently and in order. That includes conforming with what the Scriptures prescribe. They expressly state that a woman should not speak in the congregation. She should listen and learn. If she has questions she should ask them at home or privately.

"But since you have already spoken your mind publicly, I will give you an answer. There may well be, in fact, there probably are unconverted people in this assembly. But lumping all the people around here together and calling them heathen is wrong. How dare you do so!

"I'm sure most of us were baptized when we were children. That is when God himself received us in his covenant of grace and made us part of his kingdom. Most of the adults have been confirmed, and at that time they promised to stay faithful to God and his church. The fact that they have assembled

here and intend to establish a Christian congregation shows that they want to keep that promise. How can anyone claim that they are unconverted heathen? If someone hasn't denied his faith or hasn't shown by living in a godless way that he has forsaken the Lord, we must assume that he is a Christian. Only God can see into our hearts and know who are his own.

"To condemn people who confess their faith and whose words and conduct back that up is a double sin. First, it is not at all charitable to call people liars for no reason. Second, and worst of all, it is making God a liar. He tells those who are baptized, 'Through Christ I am your Father and you are my children.' How can anyone say, 'No, you are not God's children. You are unconverted heathen. You need to go through a man-made ceremony in order to become God's children.' That is a terrible thing to say!"

This seemed like quite a beginning! Already Pastor Paulsen had three people opposing him. Old Mr. Weiser didn't come to any more meetings. Mrs. Selig had previously asked Paulsen to stay with them, but now she told him he was no longer welcome. Mr. Nobel said that he did not intend to join the congregation. But Paulsen took courage. He knew he could not have answered in any other manner, and the outcome was now in God's hands. There was one consolation. While Paulsen was wondering where he could stay, Mr. Karsten came up and offered the attic room in his house. Paulsen gratefully accepted.

Chapter Nine

The time came for Paulsen to present the article on church membership. It stressed that everyone joining the congregation would have to confess the same Lutheran faith as all the other members.

Mr. Nobel again made an attempt to promote his unionistic ideas. He said, "Naturally we can't expect a Lutheran pastor to preach anything but Lutheran doctrine. I've

been thinking about the matter, and I have come to the conclusion that it is proper to accept these Lutheran confessions. But a pastor has no right to dictate to his members what they must believe. If he has the freedom to preach his own convictions, each member has the freedom to retain his own faith, even if he doesn't agree with the pastor in everything. Luther protested against the papacy and the priesthood. His followers shouldn't set up another priesthood."

To this Paulsen responded, "Herr Nobel is right. We must not establish a priesthood or enslave anyone's conscience. It would be tyranny to force someone to confess with his mouth a faith he did not have in his heart. A true Christian would rather sacrifice his property and life rather than be a hypocrite and deny his faith. We can sing with Luther and our fathers, who protested this tyranny of the pope, 'And do what they will—hate, hurt, steal and kill—though all may be gone, our victory is won. The kingdom's ours forever.'

"I will definitely not force anyone to accept the Lutheran confessions. Even if I wanted to I couldn't. A congregation cannot force anyone to join them, but neither should they be forced to accept someone who does not agree with them in matters of faith. That would be real tyranny if a congregation had to take in members of a different faith.

"Even if a congregation would become indifferent and accept members who have other convictions, the Lord, the Head of the church, forbids it. His word says, 'I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.'

Mr. Nobel sensed that most of the people agreed with the pastor. He had failed again.

Now came a point which Paulsen had been pondering for some time. It was the requirement that no member of a Lutheran congregation should be part of a secret society or lodge. Should he bring it up now? Or should he leave it to be discussed later if the

need should arise? There were no lodges active in the community, so bringing up the issue now might only allow his critics more ammunition for arguments.

Then again, lodges tend to work in secret, and often they succeed in drawing church members into their net before they or the pastor realize what is going on. For this reason, Paulsen decided it would be better to bring the matter up immediately. He explained the basic false teachings of the lodges and showed from God's Word that a Christian should not join such a society.

He was right! There was an immediate reaction. Most of the settlers were privately horrified at these secret societies. They had heard some gruesome stories about what went on in them, and they felt that they were evil.

Once again, however, Mr. Nobel got up to do battle. He said, "I don't belong to a lodge, but the aversion toward the lodges that I sense around here is pure superstition. I know a number of men who have very good reputations who are lodge members. A church has no reason to be at odds with lodges, since they both have the same goal. They both set out to improve the world by promoting brotherly love and kindness. Lodges do not tolerate evil-doers. They require all their members to believe in God. They even use the Bible during their meetings, and they have prayers."

Paulsen answered, "I don't deny that lodge members may be good citizens. But that does not change their dangerous false teachings. Just the fact that they use the Bible is reprehensible, because they misuse it. They only pick out passages that seem to agree with their ideas, and they pass over the ones that speak against them. They speak of "one god" and pray to him, but that is also reprehensible. Their god is not the true God, for they do not accept Jesus as the Son of God. The Lord, however, says, 'No one comes to the Father except through me.'

"Lodge members' prayers are worthless, because they do not pray in Jesus' name. Their brotherly love and kindness are not true

Christian love and kindness, either. It is as Christ said, 'If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?'"

The assembly voted, and they agreed not to accept lodge members into the congregation. Mr. Nobel had lost again.

Another point provoked heated discussion. It was the article on church discipline. In the settlement there were two families who were related. There had been a feud between them while they lived in Germany. Here in America these two families met by chance and even settled on adjoining homesteads. For a short time they were on friendly terms, but because they were neighbors the old differences resurfaced. Their old feud heated up again, and they ended up sworn enemies. They sensed that Paulsen might admonish them if church discipline were carried out, and they were determined not to reconcile. So one of them suggested dropping the article. He felt sure that a pastor should preach the gospel, but he had no right to interfere in the personal home life of any of the church members.

"You're not saying," asked Paulsen, "that a pastor should ignore the souls entrusted to him, are you? That is what he would be doing if he knew about someone's unforgiving actions but would not reprimand him. Christ said, 'If you do not forgive men their sins, my heavenly Father will not forgive your sins.'"

Those who were feuding admitted that perhaps the pastor had that duty. But was it the congregation's business? They ought to "sweep in front of their own doors."

"First of all," Paulsen said, "every Christian must examine his own conduct before accusing his neighbor of the same sin. But was Cain right in questioning, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' No. Anyone who sees another person in need but does not offer assistance does not really love his neighbor. Now, what should a Christian do if he notices that someone is in danger of losing his faith? Should he think, 'That doesn't concern me.

I'm not going to touch that'? Would that be showing love?"

"You always get the last word, Pastor Paulsen," someone exclaimed. "That makes it seem as if no one can say anything more. But I don't believe in the 'ban.' My grandfather told me that years ago when a person was accused of a sin he was forced to sit on a bench where everyone could see him. Even on the street people would shun him. That is what they called the ban."

"Don't let that alarm you," Paulsen assured him. "We will not put anyone under that kind of ban. And only in very extreme cases would we excommunicate someone. That simply means being excluded from the congregation. Jesus says, 'If he refuses to listen to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.'"

"Practicing church discipline and excommunication is not punishment, but an attempt to have a sinner repent and mend his ways. That is why the church admonishes people who publicly sin, and that is why we ultimately excommunicate unrepentant sinners. We are clearly saying to them that they are not Christians, and that they have lost the spiritual rights Christians have. Hopefully this will terrify them and make them reexamine their hearts."

"The state church in the Germany often confused church discipline and the duty of government to punish crime. This custom was a misuse of power. In America we do not have a state church, and the church has nothing to do with civil affairs. The church is not supposed to be a police agency."

Another argument arose about the paragraph on calling a pastor. Squire Weiser no longer attended the meetings, but privately he tried to influence some of the men to carry out his ideas. He told some who ordinarily followed his advice that they should be very cautious not to let the pastor trick them. If they found they did not like him, they should make sure to leave a loophole so that they could get rid of him. He suggested they specify that the pastor be re-hired annually.

When Weiser's pupils brought up this plan, many people thought it over and wondered whether this would not be better than a firm commitment. A permanent call meant that a pastor would stay in a congregation until God ordained otherwise. In that case the only reasons for dismissing a pastor (and these would be mandatory) would be if he teaches false doctrine, if he leads an obviously offensive, wicked life, or if he grossly neglects his duties.

Paulsen explained, "According to God's Word, Christian pastors are 'servants of Christ and those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.' You don't chase away someone who looks after earthly property, if he is faithful—you try to keep him for a long time. It would be a sad situation if a congregation would seek to get rid of a pastor who is serving them faithfully."

"Besides, the congregation really doesn't have the right to do so. When a congregation calls a pastor it doesn't do this under its own authority, but as God's servants. Actually God is the one who provides a pastor for them. In the New Testament it often says that God puts pastors and teachers in place. He does this through the Christian congregation when they issue a call. If they dismiss a pastor without just cause, they are sinning against God. He might ask, 'How dare you dismiss *my* servant whom I sent to you?'"

"If that is the case," said one of the men who did not want to give in, "the congregation has no rights whatsoever. We would end up just as enslaved as the Catholics. It would be just like their priesthood, and we should guard against that."

"That is true, my friend," Paulsen replied. "We should guard against any semblance of the papacy and priesthood in our midst. But how do they proceed? A bishop assigns a priest to a congregation without consulting them, and if the bishop wants to transfer him it is his choice once more. The congregation has no say in the matter. With us, only the congregation has the right to call, and if the pastor is not faithful

only they have the right to dismiss him. How then can anyone suggest this is a ruling priesthood? Clearly, the congregation has to conduct itself in accord with God's Word and cannot deal arbitrarily."

But the man still wasn't satisfied. "It could happen that even if a pastor is not unfaithful, the congregation might prefer a change. Do they have to keep him even if it may ruin the congregation?"

Paulsen said, "Pastors and congregation members are all sinful, so there will be times when they are at odds. There may be times when the congregation would like a change, and the pastor may also wish to go elsewhere. They should consider the situation prayerfully and entrust it to God. He will take care of everything. The pastor may accept another call, for example. Unfortunately, place changes of that sort are happening far too often. I think a congregation should be more concerned about not losing a pastor too soon, rather than keeping him too long."

Chapter Ten

After the entire constitution had been read and discussed, fifteen of the twenty-five settlers present announced that they were ready to accept it and to found an evangelical Lutheran congregation on it. They set a date for this important occasion.

When the day came, Pastor Paulsen began by asking God's blessing on the work they were undertaking. Fifteen men solemnly signed the constitution. Then they issued a call to Paulsen to become their pastor. In order to qualify for legal incorporation they elected church officers. Each member also promised what he would give the first year toward the pastor's salary. The total amount pledged was a large sum: \$150!

Now what? The schoolhouse was very inadequate for their services. Besides, the members hoped to find a suitable place for Paulsen to open a church school in the fall. Until then he planned on gathering the children on Sunday afternoon for some instruction.

Then too, the pastor needed a place of his own where he could study undisturbed and speak with members privately.

The congregation seemed to be in dire straits. They needed a church, a school and a parsonage. If only these buildings would magically materialize on the prairie! But money was scarce. No one could contribute very much. One member, Mr. Fix, suggested, "We'll have to build a church, not too big and not too small, with a parsonage next door. The church will have to serve as a school, too. We'll have to borrow the money and pay off the mortgage every year."

Mr. Gram shook his head and offered his opinion. "Who do you suppose would lend us the money? Besides, we'd have to pay a lot of interest, and, hey, we haven't even given a thought about where we could build."

"No problem," Mr. Fröhlich interjected. "You know that next to my land there is a forty-acre tract which still belongs to the government. No one has homesteaded it because it is too small for a farm. We'll acquire that for the congregation and have room for our buildings and even a cemetery. If the pastor would like, there would be enough land for him to raise some potatoes. Later, if he decides to get married, he could also keep a cow and some chickens."

This plan appealed to everyone, especially because the land was ideally situated in the middle of the settlement. They passed a motion to buy the land.

"That's fine," said Mr. Gram. "But once we have the land, how do we build a church there?"

"Hmm," Mr. Fröhlich said. "That will take some thought. How would it be if we keep it in mind until next Sunday and then see what we can come up with?"

"I've been pondering this for some time," Paulsen said. "If you like, I'll tell you my plan. There is a proverb that says, 'Nothing

ventured, nothing gained;⁵ Another says, 'Rome wasn't built in a day.' If we keep these two sayings in mind, it shouldn't be too hard to arrive at a solution. We know we can't start with an imposing church. So let's start by erecting one building which can serve as a church, school and parsonage at first. In the end it can be a school or a parsonage. I'm somewhat knowledgeable about drawing plans, so I will have a set ready for our next meeting.

"Meanwhile, we must figure out how to raise the money. Each one of you will have to decide what you are able to pledge as a yearly contribution until the building is paid for. Just now it's time for planting corn. When that is over everybody should be able to donate some time to the project. Some could dig the basement, others could haul stones and lumber. Mr. Halt is a mason by trade, so he could lay the foundation with some help. We would have to hire someone for the carpentry, but our members could do as much work as possible. The money we could raise this year should cover part of the materials and wages. The rest we would have to borrow, but since we wouldn't need it until the building is finished, it shouldn't be too burdensome. With God's blessing I think we will be able to pay it off in three years."

This plan appealed to the members and was accepted. Mr. Fix made another suggestion. "Couldn't some older and larger congregations also help us a little? I mean, our pastor could write to other pastors and they could take up a Sunday collection for us. They wouldn't miss a small contribution, and it would help a lot."

Paulsen replied, "When you first arrived in the country most of you were poor, and most of you had to struggle considerably to make a living. Did you appeal to people in older and more populous settlements for assistance? No, you tightened your belts and

worked hard. You trusted in God and hoped he would bring you through it all and make things better. If poor harvest or accidents had caused unendurable hardships, you could have asked for assistance with a good conscience.

"Just as an honest man is ashamed to beg if he can work, so a congregation must be ashamed to beg if, with God's blessing, they can do things themselves. Let's follow my suggestion and begin with a modest building which can fill our immediate needs. Let's see what we can do ourselves. If after all our efforts we just can't accomplish it, and if that would mean our church was in danger of folding, then we would be justified to ask for help. I really believe we can do it ourselves!"

They bought the forty acres and immediately set to work. Paulsen presented the promised plan. Energetic hands began to dig for the foundation and the cellar, which the pastor would be able to use later for storing potatoes and other things. Men hauled stones and lumber to the site, and soon they finished the foundation. Paulsen could now announce the cornerstone-laying ceremony. Even settlers who hadn't joined the congregation attended the impressive service. The carpenters began their work right away, and soon the building's framework began to take shape.

By this time there was plenty of work to keep the farmers busy. Paulsen had to supervise the work of the building to make sure that the terms of the contract were carried out. In addition, he had the difficult task of persuading some of the farmers to give up a day's work on the farm to haul building materials.

By the time autumn arrived and the grain had been harvested, the building also neared completion. It was a simple, but handsome structure. A partition separated the rear third from the main area. The larger room was to serve as a church and school, while the smaller area was to be the pastor's living quarters. An attractive entry was built at the front of the church. Inside there were plain, but well-built pews on either side of a middle aisle. Some of the front pews had desk tops attached. These

⁵ *"Man muß sich nach der Decke strecken."*
Literally, "One must stretch toward the ceiling!"

were hinged, and could be folded down during the church services. A doorway in the partition led to the pastor's quarters. Up front in the center was a plain altar on a raised platform. To one side there was a pulpit elevated on two steps.

The altar and pulpit wore no paraments. But Paulsen had planned a surprise for the dedication. The congregation to which his parents belonged had recently built a new, tastefully-decorated church with all new furnishings. At Paulsen's request they donated to his young congregation altar and pulpit cloths, Lord's Supper vessels, candlesticks, a crucifix, flower vases, and the like. Their pastor also wrote a congratulatory letter to the new congregation, but all this was kept a surprise for the dedication.

The rear portion of the building was subdivided into two rooms. One became Paulsen's living room and study, the other his bedroom. What joy he felt to arrange his dear books on the shelves and have a desk where he could do his studying! And what a luxury it seemed to have a comfortable bed of his own where he could rest his weary bones!

The church dedication was slated for October. Paulsen invited one of his classmates to deliver the dedicatory sermon. That Sunday dawned as a beautiful, sunny autumn day. Many people came from far and near, and soon it became clear that there would not be enough room in the church for even half of the group that had gathered at the locked door. The service began outside with the hymn "*Open now thy gates of beauty*," and it echoed across the prairie. Everyone's heart was stirred!

After a short address Paulsen opened the doors in the name of the Triune God and let the worshippers in. The members were amazed to see their own dear church so beautifully decorated. Tears of joy streamed down the cheeks of many a weather-beaten face. Now the prairie was truly their home, and they could worship in their own church every Sunday just as they had done in their homeland! Even though it was simple and

small, the church was much nicer than the district schoolhouse.

Paulsen stood at the altar and read the eighty-fourth Psalm: "Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young—a place near your altar, O Lord Almighty, my King and my God." As he spoke his voice faltered, and the whole congregation wept tears of joy.

Chapter Eleven

Now that the congregation had a small church and the pastor had living quarters of his own—even if the latter were quite modest—the future of the congregation seemed assured. But not everything had progressed peacefully. During the construction there were differences of opinion that led to arguments among the members. Paulsen, quiet and prudent, always managed to settle them with God's help. However, more serious problems were on the horizon.

As we have seen, there were about ten families in the settlement who had not joined the church. Dr. Wind noticed that Paulsen was causing him damage, since no one from the settlement had come to his services for some time. What was even more painful was that no one was coming to him for marriages, baptisms, or any such ministerial services. That is why whenever he met any of the settlers in W_____ he tried to turn them against Paulsen. He told them horrifying stories about how orthodox preachers really acted—how they forced their members to give huge contributions and ruled over the people like Catholic priests.

The members of Paulsen's church took little notice, but those who hadn't joined were more than willing to listen. Things that were unclear to them Wind spelled out in no uncertain terms. He even suggested that he would also like to preach in the schoolhouse sometime. If Wind had only approached the non-members, Paulsen could not have

objected. But spiteful Dr. Wind took special efforts to invite Paulsen's members to his gathering. That gave Paulsen a definite reason to confront him.

On the designated Sunday afternoon Paulsen went to W_____ and met Dr. Wind outside the school house. Wind exuded friendliness. "I am so exceedingly happy that my esteemed colleague is honoring me with his presence," he said.

"I do not see," replied Paulsen, "why you call me your colleague. I am the Lutheran pastor of the local congregation, and if I am not mistaken you call yourself a Protestant preacher. Those are two different things! I am a spiritual shepherd with a legitimate reason for being here, but you make it a point to invite my flock to your services. You are obviously trying to lure them away. You are a wolf in sheep's clothing."

"But, my dear pastor," Wind interrupted, "we spiritual men shouldn't be jealous of one another. You are still young, and your ambition is getting the best of you. I will forgive you for your inappropriate remarks. You wouldn't make so much of the tiny difference between Lutherans and Protestants, would you? You wouldn't be so narrow-minded, would you? As a Protestant I also honor the great reformer Luther. Didn't the apostle Paul say everyone should serve with the gifts he has received? And didn't he also say he was happy when those who are not duly called, preach?"

"Let me be brief," Paulsen said. "I'll just address myself to your last remark. Paul never said what you quoted. Perhaps you are thinking of the passage, 'The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached.' Do you also preach Christ, the Crucified?"

"What a question!" Wind exclaimed. "Have you ever heard of a Christian pastor who didn't mention Christ in his sermons? He is the founder of our religion and the most wonderful example of virtue, whom everybody . . ."

"Excuse me for interrupting," Paulsen

said. "I didn't ask whether you preached *about Christ*, but whether you preach *Christ*, the only Savior for sinful mankind. Do you say that salvation is found in no one else, and that there is no other name given to men by which we may be saved?"

"What are you trying to tell me?" Wind asked. "In this enlightened century nobody believes those teachings that came from the middle ages, that God could be so cruel and only be reconciled to people by the death of his own Son. Besides, who believes that Jesus was actually the Son of God?"

"That's enough blasphemy!" Paulsen said. "You have announced your own judgment, for it is written, 'If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work.'"

At this Paulsen turned to those standing around them. "Whoever wants to be a Christian and to follow the Word of his God should not let an obvious false teacher, such as Mr. Wind here, lay out his blasphemous false teachings. Otherwise you will be guilty of the same sin."

The Lutheran congregation members who had come now left with their pastor, along with most of the non-members. They knew in their hearts that Paulsen had spoken the truth, and they were ashamed to stay and be considered unchristian. Only Squire Weiser and two settlers who were known to be coarse individuals remained. They traded insults about Paulsen. Dr. Wind did not preach that Sunday, though. Squire Weiser remarked, "Wouldn't be no use," so he invited them instead to come to his house and enjoy some whiskey.

Chapter Twelve

Mrs. Selig had nothing good to say about Pastor Paulsen ever since he had reprimanded her for speaking at the church meeting. When she had a chance to visit the Methodist settlement in the area, she called on their preacher and invited him to

come to her home for a revival meeting. Then she invited all her neighbors.

Mr. Selig was very surprised when one day his wife ordered him to move all the furniture aside and set up as many benches as he could crowd in. Out of habit he did what his wife told him. Then it dawned on him what her plan was, so he rode to see Pastor Paulsen early that evening and asked him to come later. Mr. Selig would need the pastor's support if he had to assert himself and clear out his home. Paulsen agreed to come.

As Paulsen approached the Selig's home that evening he noticed that the meeting was already in progress. He could hear a man speaking loudly, and when he came nearer he heard the man pleading with people to come forward and be converted. Sobs, moans and groans frequently interrupted his words. At times Paulsen could hear someone shouting, "Yes, Amen! O God!" and so on.

Paulsen waited until the speaking and the prayer had ended. Then he entered the house, which was crowded with many settlers. A man, no doubt the preacher, was standing near a table with a Bible in his hand. Two strangers who sat near him had come to assist him, as Paulsen learned later. Paulsen heard the preacher begin, "Our text is 2 Timothy 2:19. 'Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription, "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.'"

He started his sermon with a few introductory remarks and then began to explain the text. His words were clever and instructive, Paulsen thought. "'God's solid foundation stands firm,'" he said. "You know what firm is—a firm house, a firm wall, firm wood, and so on. You know what a foundation is, too. It supports the house that stands on it. Our text says, 'God's solid foundation *stands* firm'—it cannot sink.

"'Sealed with this inscription.' You know how a seal is put on legal documents to make them authentic. In the same way, God puts his seal on those who are converted to mark them

as his own. This is God's seal: 'Whoever confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.' People who are converted have to become holy, and when they don't sin any more, then they are really God's own."

Now the preacher was through with his text, and he elaborated for quite a while on being completely holy. Here is the heart of what he said: "There are many preachers who say, 'You will be sinful all your lives, and you will always have to repent.' I thank God that I repented *once*. I don't want to fight that battle again!"

Then came a nasty jab at Lutheran pastors. "These men have only studied books, but they have never experienced conversion. Plus, they aren't fit for any other kind of work. We Methodists are different. When we aren't needed for work in God's vineyard we use a plow or plane or try to be useful in some other way.

"A Christian who has been converted can be totally holy in this life, and he must be, too. Christ has redeemed us from *all* sins, hasn't he? So whoever belongs to him has to be free from all sins."

Then the preacher tried to prove his false teaching from Scripture passages such as, "Be holy, because I, the Lord your God, am holy," and "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." He added, "Jesus wants to make his home in us. The Holy One cannot live inside of unholy sinners, can he?"

At the end of this "sermon," the preacher invited everyone who was there to come forward. "Isn't there anyone here who wants to be converted?" he asked.

The room was as quiet as a mouse, so one of the preacher's companions spoke up. "I was baptized and confirmed as a Lutheran, but later on I found out that doesn't mean anything! Ever since I was converted—that's when I became a real Christian. Now I'm a new man. Now I feel so blessed, and I know in my heart that I'm a child of God."

Even after this testimonial no one came forward. Then the third man began to sing. The preacher and his other friend joined in,

and even Mrs. Selig tried to sing along. The three men up front set the tempo by clapping their hands and stomping their feet. But it was still no use, so the preacher approached one of the men in the audience who had seemed quite attentive, and he made an individual appeal.

At this point Mr. Selig nodded at Paulsen, who took advantage of the pause at the end of the hymn. "I have been asked by the owner of this house," he said loudly, "to say that he opened up his house for a Christian worship service, not for this mess. He would like this meeting to end now."

Then Paulsen spoke to the preacher. "The people who have assembled here are members of a Lutheran church and have called me to be their pastor. Who gave you the right to interfere in my congregation? Why are you acting as if you were their pastor? God's Word forbids what you are doing. It also identifies you as a spiritual deceiver and a person who causes divisions in the church. But I have an even more important reason for rejecting your unauthorized meddling. You promoted a damnable false doctrine tonight when you talked about being totally holy."

"I have to win souls wherever I can," the preacher countered. "I agree with John Wesley, who said, 'My parish is the world.'"

Paulsen asked, "Are you saying that what John Wesley said is more important than the Bible?"

"O, no!" the preacher replied, "The Bible backs him up. Jesus said, 'Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.'"

"Jesus gave that command to his apostles," Paulsen said. "Are you saying that you are an apostle? Besides, the passage doesn't mean that the apostles preached wherever they pleased or where another apostle had already been preaching. St. Paul says that he preached where Christ was not known, so that he wouldn't be building on another man's foundation."

"Love and the Spirit compel me to preach," he replied. "Surely it can't be wrong, then!"

Paulsen disagreed. "If love and the Spirit compel you to preach to unbelievers, I have no objection. Remember, though—God is a God of order. His Spirit will never compel you to invade a congregation where God's Word is already being preached. God's Word warns us to keep away from sly teachers who mislead people and cause divisions."

"You Lutherans," the preacher said, "are no better than the heathen. Your church is dead. None of you are converted. That's why I need to warn Lutherans to turn to God."

"Who are you," Paulsen said, "'to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls.' Can you read people's hearts? How do you know that my whole congregation is unconverted and on its way to hell? Is that the great love that compels you?"

"But you have judged and damned me!" the preacher charged.

"No, I haven't," Paulsen said. "I haven't judged what is inside of you, and I haven't said that you are unconverted. God forbid! I have only passed judgment on what you are publicly saying and doing. Any Christian can do that—and should."

"Well, then I'm going to judge what you are saying and doing!" the preacher replied. "What goes on in the Lutheran church? Where is your brotherly love? None of you lives a seriously-Christian life. German Lutherans are bringing German drunkenness and German disregard for the Sabbath to our land. And Lutheran pastors don't do anything about it. They just keep preaching, 'As long as you are baptized and confirmed and go to the Lord's Supper, everything is ok.'"

"I have to confess that in our church many sins are committed," Paulsen said. "I don't know whether there are more or fewer than in other churches. But we have never claimed to be leading holy, sinless lives. We confess that we are poor sinners. Still, what makes you think that the Lutheran church doesn't do anything to curb today's sins? Is it because we do not join temperance societies or try to promote laws against these evils? Those methods are too weak—that's why. We

believe that only God's Word can truly heal these wounds.

"What you said about Lutheran teachers shows that you don't know a thing about what we teach. Either that, or you purposely distort our doctrine. Regardless, arguing about it is useless. Battles against ignorance and wickedness go nowhere. Let me give you this last piece of advice. Study our Lutheran Catechism. Ask God to show you the truth. You will end up regretting what you just told me. Until then, may God be with you!"

Paulsen turned and left the Selig's house, followed by his congregation members.

Chapter Thirteen

There were still more battles in the offing for Paulsen. Not long after he arrived he learned that Dr. Wind had baptized a number of the settlers' children—but not in the name of the Triune God. Paulsen made it his goal to get these children baptized properly.

To accomplish this he delivered a sermon on holy baptism. He showed what baptism means and the power it gives, and he also explained the correct ceremony. Afterwards he approached the parents of the children that had been baptized by Dr. Wind and urged them to let their children be baptized in the way Christ had commanded. Some were ready to comply right away. Others were not as easily persuaded.

One man remarked, "I already shelled out a dollar when my children were baptized. I'm not going to pay again."

Paulsen told him that giving the pastor something for baptizing the child doesn't mean that one is purchasing the baptism. The practice of giving the pastor money for performing one of the duties of his office was an old custom based on God's Word: "Those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel." It seemed natural for anyone who received God's priceless spiritual gifts to show his gratitude to the one who delivered those gifts of God to him.

Paulsen also observed, "Let's say your child became very sick, and you hired a doctor whose medicine did not help. If you sent for another doctor, and he prescribed more potent medicine, would you say, 'I have already spent money on a remedy that didn't do any good. Why should I pay for another?' When a child is baptized in the name of the Triune God, he or she receives the promise of eternal life in heaven. Dr. Wind's pseudo-baptism carries no such promise. It is useless. Is a small amount of money a reason to deprive a child of God's wonderful promise? Besides, I did not ask for a fee, and I never will, nor would I withhold a spiritual gift because someone didn't want to give me anything in return!"

"That's just the point," the man replied. "I know you wouldn't ask for anything, but I also don't want to take something for nothing, and paying twice is too much for me."

Finally Paulsen persuaded the man to make an exception in this case. The child's first birthday was the following Sunday, so Paulsen said, "I tell you what, my dear friend. How would it be if next Sunday I baptized your child as a birthday present?" The man smiled and agreed.

Several others came with a different objection. They said, "In Germany no one ever questioned a child's baptism. One simply had the child baptized, and that was that. If that isn't the way it works in America, how can we ever know whether someone has been baptized or communed in the right way? Then everything is up for grabs. A person doesn't know what to believe. Somebody else might even claim that your baptism is wrong."

Paulsen admitted that this could be very puzzling to people who had not studied the matter carefully. But he continued, "Actually it is better that here every Christian has to examine things for himself. In Germany the church is tied to the government. Pastors are state officials. There are laws prescribing how church ceremonies are to be performed, and as long as those laws agree with the right way for Christians to do things, everything is fine. Even if a baptism is performed by a pastor

who doesn't believe what the Bible says about baptism, we can be sure that the baptism is valid. In Germany Dr. Wind wouldn't dare change the words of the baptism ceremony on his own. That kind of system gradually makes everyone indifferent about the validity of pastoral acts. Everybody just assumes that the government will make sure that they are done right.

"But here in America it is different. The government does not have any authority over the church. This forces Christians to examine church practices carefully so as not to be misled by false teachers. Fortunately there are synods in America that are doctrinally correct. A congregation can call a pastor from one of these synods and feel quite sure that he will preach God's Word and administer the sacraments in the right way. Just the same, a congregation ought to test the synod's teaching to make sure it is correct. And congregations with orthodox pastors should still compare what they say with God's Word. When you add it all up, we have big advantage over the church in Germany, and we ought to thank God for the freedom we have from government control."

He added, "When it comes to baptism, it is not hard to know what is right. Jesus commanded, 'Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.' All we need to do is follow this simple command, just as Christ has told us. Dr. Wind doesn't baptize in this way, so his baptism is not right. We must have our children baptized by a pastor who baptizes in line with Christ's command."

In time all of the children received a proper baptism.

Paulsen was happy to see the congregation growing. By the time the church building was dedicated all the remaining settlers had joined except Squire Weiser, Mr. Nobel, Mrs. Selig, and two families who were known to be crude. During the latter part of the summer several more families arrived from Germany. They became members of the congregation as well.

Several men from other states came to inspect the land also. They liked the area, and they especially appreciated the fact that they would have access to a Lutheran congregation. They were Lutherans too, and they wanted only to farm land which was near a Lutheran church and school. These men hinted that some of their neighbors might also buy property in the settlement.

Chapter Fourteen

It was a time of beautiful fall weather. There were no signs of winter yet, although the prairie grass had dried up long before. A few red, blue and yellow flowers could still be found along the road and fences. Here the bees were busily gathering nectar, which they stored in their hives in the hollow trees of a distant woods. Plows had uncovered the black soil of the grain fields. Corn was being husked in other fields, and some of the stalks were cut and bundled for winter fodder. Bright orange pumpkins which had grown under the shade of the corn stalks now seemed to cover the fields. The nights had turned colder, and occasionally the grass and roofs were covered with frost in the early morning. Even though the sun was much lower in the sky, its rays still warmed the prairie and its settlers.

During this splendid time of year Paulsen was eager to open the school. Even the younger children and those who lived far away could attend regularly now. This would not often be the case when the winter storms set in. Many parents didn't want to send their children to school, however, since they could use their help in the fields at harvest time. But Paulsen managed to set the opening day for school right after the church dedication.

No doubt about it—it was high time someone looked after the needs of the children. They were growing like the lilies of the field! Ten- and twelve-year-old children had still not learned the alphabet, and they couldn't read German or English. They knew hardly anything about their Savior God. Even in

worldly things they were ignorant. Very few could add or subtract. Most of them did not know the name of the state or county they lived in.

"O, if only I could teach it all at once, especially the Bible stories and Catechism," Paulsen thought many times. But haste wouldn't help. He knew he would have to start at the very beginning and be patient. He would have to feed the children fundamentals just like a mother feeds a baby—one spoonful at a time, waiting patiently until the little one has swallowed.

The autumn weather, which had hung on into November, abruptly gave way to winter. The prairie wore its winter dress—or was it a shroud? It looked dead, like a frozen sea.

Christmas drew nearer. Up to now none of the settlers had celebrated Christmas, although for Germans it has always been a favorite holiday. In previous years quite a few settlers spent Christmas sitting around the stove and telling their children how wonderful Christmas in Germany had been. This year, though, the settlers looked forward to a happier festival. Paulsen hadn't told anyone about his plans. But parents heard their children singing Christmas songs and memorizing Bible verses, just as they themselves had done long ago.

On the last Sunday in Advent Paulsen announced that they would not only celebrate Christ's birth on December 25, but also the evening before. This would be a children's service, to which the whole congregation was invited. All the families were full of anticipation—parents no less than children.

Paulsen had been very busy these last weeks. If anyone had taken notice they would have seen a lamp burning in his room long after midnight. One day a neighbor picked up a large box from town which had been sent from a large city. And one afternoon Paulsen dismissed his pupils early and walked four miles to a stream where several evergreen trees were growing. He cut the best-shaped one and dragged it home.

Now Paulsen's artistic talents showed.

The box he had received contained some fancy cardboard shapes, which Paulsen fashioned into an attractive creche. The box also held some colored paper, which Paulsen made into flowers and other ornaments for the tree. On December 24 Paulsen trimmed the tree with candles and the ornaments. He set it next to the altar and placed the creche underneath.

At last the evening arrived. Even nature seemed to be celebrating. The moon was full, and the cloudless sky was dotted with stars. A gentle breeze wafted over the snow-covered prairie. The snow crunched underfoot, and it was bitterly cold, but as long as the weather wasn't stormy, people didn't seem to mind.

Settlers began coming from all directions. Nobody wanted to stay home this evening. The people entered the dimly-lit church and felt its welcome warmth. Children sat up front and gazed with wide-open eyes at the sheet stretched out in front of the altar. Behind it something was shining. All of a sudden Paulsen pulled the sheet aside, and there was the tree! It was beautiful. Children who had never seen anything like it gasped and whispered excitedly.

Paulsen had to let the children to get used to the sight for a few minutes. Then he led them in singing, "*O, how joyfully, O, how merrily, Christmas comes with its grace divine.*" The narration of Christ's birth followed. Paulsen asked the children questions about the story and what it meant for them, and after each section the whole group sang another hymn. The pastor gave a short, simple sermon which he addressed both to the children and the older ones. The service ended with a prayer, and when it was over each child was presented with a little Christmas booklet.

Happy faces and misty eyes filled the church that evening. Many people thanked God that just as Jesus had come to Bethlehem's stall, he had also come to their prairie with his Word and his grace. No one felt homesick this Christmas Eve. Their service had been so beautiful—yes, even more beautiful than any they had experienced back home.



"All of a sudden Paulsen pulled the sheet aside, and there was the tree!"

After New Year's Day Paulsen started a second school session. There were quite a few teenagers who had never received Christian instruction and were not confirmed. They couldn't (and wouldn't) be in the same class as the younger ones. In fact, Paulsen had a hard time at first persuading them to come at all. Paulsen had suggested having lessons in the evening. First the young people would have to learn how to read so that they could study God's Word, sing along in church, and, above all, learn the Catechism.

It was difficult for the new students to apply themselves at first, but gradually they became eager scholars. God's Word was planted in their hearts, and it bore fruit. When the course was over, they volunteered to confess their faith in front of the congregation. Their conduct also showed that the Holy Spirit had worked faith in most of them.

The congregation was experiencing one happy occasion after another. First came the Christmas services. The winter that followed was long, but it seemed to pass more quickly than previous ones. Spring returned and on Palm Sunday the first confirmation took place. The settlers' children were becoming young adults. What a joy!

Paulsen decided to give the children several weeks of vacation from school, but first he held a public examination. All the parents were surprised to hear what the children had learned. Most of them could read both German and English fluently. They had prepared neat penmanship samples. They also knew a little geography and American history. But the parents most enjoyed hearing their children tell Bible stories. How quickly and correctly they could answer questions from the Catechism, too! How wonderfully they sang! Even Squire Weiser, who attended the examination, remarked, "'Tis a pity dat da Rev ken net teach die Districtshoolee."

So ended the first year of Paulsen's activity on the prairie. And what a fruitful year it was! Paulsen had to thank God for blessing his work so marvelously.

Chapter Fifteen

So far we have only related Pastor Paulsen's church activities. The reader might also enjoy hearing how our hero fared in other respects.

Until Paulsen's modest residence in the first church building was completed, he lived with Christian Karsten and his family. They were simple folk, but they tried their best to make their pastor comfortable. Paulsen felt very much at ease with these honest people. Mrs. Karsten kept the house orderly and clean. Paulsen was not a finicky eater, so he didn't mind their simple fare.

Only two inconveniences made him impatient for his new quarters. During the summer the attic room he slept in was unbearably hot, so frequently he did not get the good night's sleep he needed to keep up his busy schedule.

The other problem was not having a decent place to prepare his sermons. If the weather was nice, it wasn't so bad. He would carry his little table and his chair out under the shade trees by the house. Studying there was lovely. But frequently rainy weather set in. And sometimes a hot wind swept across the plain, blowing away all his loose papers and making him feel listless. O, how he longed for a little room which he could call his own study!

Once Paulsen moved into his own place in the church building, he felt as rich as a king. But a new problem arose. Where would he get his meals? That worked out better than he had expected. He lived a bachelor's life, of course, but the members provided for his needs generously. The schoolchildren brought him bread, meat, sausage, eggs, milk and other staples. Paulsen knew how to make a cup of coffee for himself. The schoolgirls considered it an honor to sweep his room. And he ate his evening meal at a neighbor's home for a small fee. It was a pleasant life, even though he didn't really have a home where he could spend both days and evenings.

In keeping with his promise Paulsen began

giving the Nobel daughters music lessons. He hoped this would lead to one of them becoming able to play organ for the church services. Singing in worship had improved after the young people had learned some hymns, but it was still a strain to have to lead the singing.

It wasn't long before Paulsen regretted having promised the music lessons. Mrs. Nobel hinted quite broadly that she had further plans. But perhaps we should introduce her daughters before telling more.

The two young ladies were opposites. The older, Laura, was medium-tall, healthy and strong. She often wore a mischievous expression. She was forward, though not really rude. Paulsen thought it was because she had little contact with others. She was outspoken, loud, and not especially feminine.

The younger, Lizzie, was just the opposite of her sister. She was slender, though not very tall, with the gentle face of a dreamer. She was very quiet and reserved, which sometimes made her seem slow. Both girls were gifted musically. Lizzie made particularly good progress on the organ bench, and Laura was a promising singer.

It didn't take Paulsen long to notice that Mrs. Nobel was trying to get him interested in Lizzie. At first he pretended not to notice or understand her subtle hints. He hadn't even considered marriage up to now.

But the more plain Mrs. Nobel's suggestions of marriage became, the more Paulsen realized that he was carrying the torch for somebody else. Whenever he sat next to Lizzie Nobel on the organ bench, he started involuntarily picturing Marie, the daughter of the pastor of his home congregation. She had been his playmate when they were little, and they had gone to school and had been confirmed together. While he was a student he would see her when he came home for vacations, and Paulsen always greeted her as a friend.

As time went on Paulsen was so deeply immersed in his studies and preparations for the ministry that his memories of Marie began to fade. He didn't even know what she looked

like since she had grown up. For several years she had been living with an uncle whose wife was ill and needed help. Nonetheless he always thought of Marie when Mrs. Nobel dropped her hints that it was time for him to find a wife.

Paulsen was convinced that it would be some time before he needed to look for a wife. He didn't want to take that step until he would be able to provide a suitable home. It seemed foolish even to think about being engaged, since he had no idea how long it would be until he could bring home a bride. But one thing was clear—it would not be Lizzie Nobel! To put an end to Mrs. Nobel's suggestions, he told her that he couldn't even think about marriage until he had a home to offer. Paulsen said, "When that time comes, God will lead me to the right one."

Chapter Sixteen

Time passed in the life of our friend. It was evident that God had blessed all his efforts. There was plenty of work to do in order to build a healthy knowledge of doctrine and Christian lifestyle in this young congregation of his. Besides, Paulsen was doing the work of both pastor and teacher. Even though he was busy in his own parish, he was interested in exploring the opportunities in the surrounding area where other children of God could be given spiritual care.

First he investigated the situation in W_____. He soon realized that this was not the proper time to start a congregation there. Not many Germans lived in W_____, and most of them were followers and good friends of Dr. Wind. Paulsen did find two devoted Christian families in the town. He went to see them and conducted a service in one of their homes whenever he came to W_____. Sometimes a neighbor also worshiped with them. Paulsen not only ministered to these families to keep them in contact with the church, but also to have a connection in W_____ in case circumstances there should

change.

During his first summer on the prairie Paulsen had heard of a rather large settlement of Germans about twenty miles away. They had no church. He decided to visit them, and to avoid walking so far he borrowed a horse and carriage. He still wasn't assured of getting to his destination any sooner, though. The "carriage" was an old buggy which seemed ready to break down at any minute; the "horse" was a decrepit old nag which moved so slowly that it seemed to contemplate its every step.

Paulsen set out early in the morning, with the buggy creaking in every joint and Old Jim proceeding thoughtfully. The first five miles were along a country road which led past some settlers' homes. By the time he had passed the last farm, the road came to an end and the pathless prairie lay ahead. Paulsen felt like a navigator on the high seas. He set out on as straight a line as possible in the direction of the other settlement.

It was a scorching, cloudless day. The higher the sun climbed, the more uncomfortable our traveler became, and the slower Old Jim went. At noon Paulsen and his carriage reached a brook meandering through a prairie. It was almost dry. Paulsen decided to rest for at least an hour. He unhitched the horse and let him graze on some of the dry grass and quench his thirst in a depression where there was still some water. Paulsen himself ate some bread he had brought along and stretched out under the buggy where there was some shade. Before long he was sound asleep.

After about an hour he awoke and became aware of a soft, cool breeze which had suddenly begun blowing over the prairie. Paulsen sat up in surprise. Everything seemed the same except for some dark clouds on the horizon. Paulsen knew enough about the local weather conditions to realize that thunderstorms might be approaching. When it is hot and humid, they can come up very quickly.

Paulsen hurried to hitch his horse, hoping

to reach shelter in an outlying settler's house before the storm broke. But where was Jim? Paulsen could see quite a distance in every direction, but the nag was nowhere in sight. Paulsen called and called while running back and forth. Finally he climbed up and stood on the buggy seat, but it didn't help. The horse had disappeared!

Now what? The thunderclouds were climbing higher and higher above the horizon. Should he leave with wagon and continue on foot? No, that would be cowardly, and Paulsen was not a coward. He had to look for Jim. But where?

Fortunately Paulsen noticed that along the bank of the brook there were small patches of green grass where there was still some moisture. Perhaps the horse had followed a trail of these, Paulsen thought—and sure enough, he noticed signs of grazing. He kept following the bank, which was six to ten feet above the bed of the stream. The animal had to be around somewhere! He had gone quite a ways without finding any trace of Jim. Then it dawned on him that the nag might have gone in the opposite direction. So he turned back to explore the brook that way. He had gone only about a hundred steps when the brook made a sharp turn. And look! There was Jim grazing. When the horse looked up he seemed to say, "Why do you want to go on now? It's so nice here."

It was high time for them to be on their way. Paulsen had wasted almost two hours looking for Jim. The sun was getting lower, and streaks of lightning could be seen in the distance. Thunder rumbled. And there were still ten miles left to go!

Paulsen hitched up the horse and let him feel his whip as soon as they got going. After many reminders Jim finally broke into a heavy trot, but after about a hundred steps he returned to his leisurely gait. Again Paulsen applied the whip, but the result was the same. This went on for about a mile. Just as Jim began to trot again the buggy hit an uneven place on the prairie, and plop! Paulsen disappeared into the wagon box. His seat had

collapsed—another delay. He set up the seat and anchored it with part of the reins. Then they continued at a careful pace.

The wind picked up as it usually does before a thunderstorm. It was hard for Old Jim to make any progress. It felt as if the buggy would be blown away. Paulsen tied his handkerchief around his hat to keep it from blowing off.

Soon large drops of rain were falling. A thunder clap followed right on the heels of a bright flash of lightning which seemed to split the earth. Then it began to pour. Rain came down so hard that it seemed as if large buckets of water were being emptied over them. The sky was full of lightning and thunder. In less than ten minutes Paulsen was soaked to the skin. It had turned dark as night. Paulsen couldn't see his way at all, so he entrusted himself to God and let the horse proceed as it wanted.

At last the thunderstorm passed. Little by little the rain stopped and the western horizon grew bright. The sun reappeared as if to say farewell to the soggy earth and our dripping traveler, who had been walking next to his buggy for some time. A promising rainbow appeared against the fleeting clouds. Paulsen needed a comforting sign, because he had a frightening problem on his hands. The sun wasn't in front of them any more. During the storm, instead of heading due west, they must have veered to the north. Paulsen had no way of knowing how far they had gone out of their way.

There was no time to lose. Paulsen had to use the little daylight that remained to get as far as he could. Jim seemed exhausted, but Paulsen couldn't let him rest. So he turned left and headed toward the setting sun, straining his eyes for any sign of the settlement. He saw nothing. Wait—was that a faint light shimmering in the distance? Was that a home? No. After only a few more steps Paulsen could tell that it was an illusion of sorts. Fireflies surrounded him.

Had God forgotten his poor servant? Just as Paulsen was wondering what a night on the

prairie without shelter would be like, he noticed a light on his left. This time it wasn't an illusion. The light glowed steadily. So on then! Get up, Jim! Paulsen got closer and closer to the light. "It must be a home," he thought. Jim seemed to sense that they were nearing shelter too. He raised his head, neighed, and took up a livelier pace.

Soon our tired traveler reached his destination, although it didn't turn out to be a nice home. It was a run-down hut. Light was shining through the hut's one little window. Paulsen knocked on the door. No one moved inside. He knocked again more loudly, and a voice called out fearfully, "Who . . . who is it? Who's out there?"

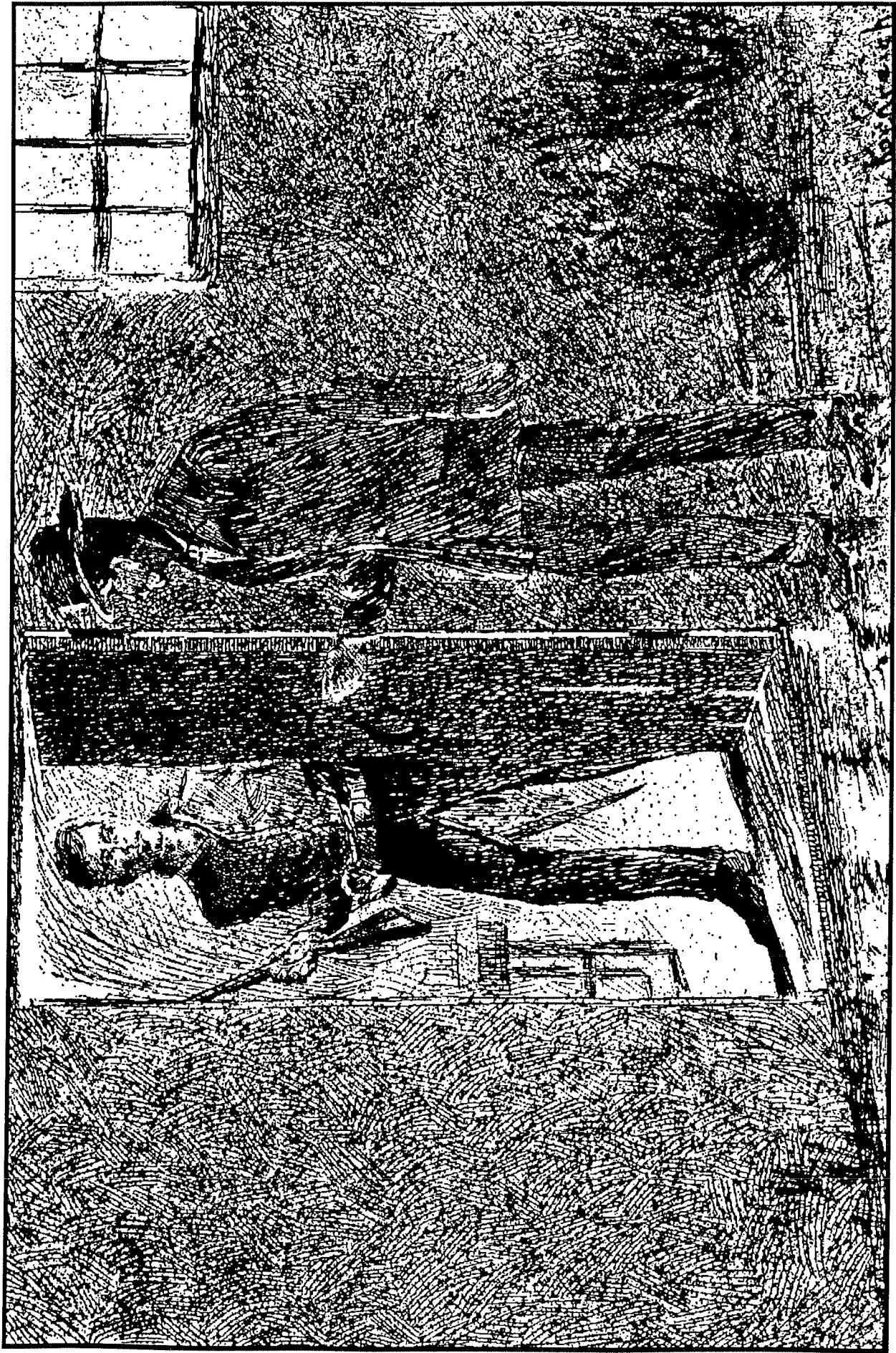
Paulsen answered, "A lost traveler, looking for shelter."

"Wait a minute," the man said.

Paulsen heard rattling sounds, and after a little while the latch was lifted and the door was carefully opened a few inches. There stood a man with a gun in his hands and an old cavalry saber strapped to his hip. Evidently he feared surprise attacks, even in this deserted area. The little hut didn't seem like much of a target for robbery. But isolation makes many people fearful.

The homesteader, who lived here all by himself, listened to part of Paulsen's story, and soon he was ready to give him all the help he could. He took Paulsen into the hut and gave Paulsen his Sunday suit so that he could get out of his wet clothes. While Paulsen changed the man went out and took Jim into his shed. When he returned he fed the fire in the stove and heated water to make some coffee. In the meantime Paulsen told him all about his trip and why he had come. The man set the coffee and some bread and butter on a wooden crate that served as his table. While Paulsen ate the man told him what he wanted to know about the settlement.

The news seemed so good that Paulsen quickly forgot the hardships of his journey. The man explained that about forty people from the same part of Germany had settled there. One of them was an old man known as



"There stood a man with a gun in his hands and an old cavalry saber strapped to his hip."

Father Schirmer, who had brought his children and several other relatives with the first group. Schirmer was a pious, experienced man. Everybody, even the settlers who came later, respected him. He was a type of patriarch for the group, and he gave advice on both mundane and spiritual matters.

Father Schirmer also insisted on strict discipline and Christian order. Every Sunday all the settlers had to get together so that he could lead them in worship. For the sermon he read from a large old sermon book. After the service they discussed life at home and on the farm, and Schirmer was always ready to give counsel, comfort and encouragement. He could also chew someone out if necessary. He even held regular lessons for the children.

At first Paulsen wondered whether Schirmer was some kind of religious separatist. But the man told him that Schirmer taught Luther's Catechism to the children, talked about Luther all the time, and read his works. Schirmer yearned for an orthodox Lutheran pastor in their midst.

After promising to take Paulsen to Father Schirmer in the morning, Paulsen's host spread out their bed on the floor. By the time the two men lay down for the evening it was quite late. Paulsen fell asleep thanking God for a safe journey and for leading him there.

As soon as the morning chores were finished they set out to visit Father Schirmer. They reached his home in about an hour. Schirmer was overjoyed to meet a good Lutheran pastor. He had hoped and prayed that his colony would receive a faithful shepherd before he went to his eternal home.

Around noon Schirmer took a large horn which had hung on the wall, went outside and blew a few loud blasts. Paulsen asked what that was for. Father Schirmer smiled and said, "This is my combination church bell and police siren. Just wait a minute." Sure enough! Soon men came hurrying from all directions. When they found out what was going on, they all hurried home to spread the news that a Lutheran pastor had come and would conduct a service that afternoon.

Although this was a busy time of year in the fields, everybody dropped what they were doing and came. What a joyful occasion it was! Everyone sang with vigor and listened attentively as Paulsen spoke. After the service Paulsen explained how they could obtain a Lutheran pastor. A call was drawn up right away. They sent it to the synod president, asking him to send a qualified candidate soon. Paulsen also promised to return in a few weeks and conduct a Sunday service.

Fortunately, the people did not have to wait long for a pastor of their own. One of Paulsen's classmates, who had passed his examinations at the same time as Paulsen, had been assigned to assist a pastor who had been ill. Now he was no longer needed there. Shortly he arrived at Paulsen's residence with directions from the synod president that Paulsen should install him as pastor in the Schirmer settlement. That was a joyful occasion for all concerned. The Lord had richly rewarded Paulsen's adventure.

Chapter Seventeen

It was now spring. Three years ago Paulsen had arrived at the settlement, full of fear and hope. Since then Paulsen's zeal and dedication had been paying wonderful dividends in his young congregation. The congregation had grown both internally and externally. Relatives and friends of the settlers came from Germany. People from the eastern United States joined the westward movement that was prevalent at that time. Those who had been members of Lutheran congregations were happy to settle in an area where they could find not just fertile land, but also a good church and school. As the congregation grew, its little church building became too small, and something had to be done about it.

At the annual meeting, which was always held on the anniversary of the organization, the voters decided to use the entire present building for a church and school. They also resolved to build a suitable parsonage for their

dear pastor.

Construction soon began, and it went more smoothly than the first building project. There were more members who could contribute now, and God had allowed some to become quite well-to-do. There was also more love and understanding.

The people planned a friendly, well-built, if not overly-large home. This was "*The Parsonage on the Prairie*." Now Paulsen had another problem. He needed more furniture than his little room had required. More importantly, the new home needed a "housekeeper" to take care of it. The congregation members—especially the women, who were more than interested in such matters—kept hinting at it humorously. But Paulsen didn't need anyone else to tell him. The new parsonage needed a pastor's wife.

Paulsen did not answer the people when they alluded to it, although he was thinking about marriage more than he let on. Earlier we divulged where his thoughts had been wandering when he considered being married. If anyone had observed him lately they would have seen doodles on many pages of his notebook. They were artistic renderings of two M's connected with fancy swirls and designs. Occasionally while drawing these one could have overheard Paulsen whispering, "Marie," or, "Martin and Marie."

In the spring Paulsen attended the synod convention, just as he did every year. Since his congregation had voted to join the synod, this time a delegate accompanied him. The plan was for the delegate was to return alone, because every year Paulsen took this opportunity to make a side trip to see his aging parents. Paulsen told the delegate, "Report all the news about the Synod when you get home. If God wills, I may have some other news when I get back" Why did Paulsen flash a sly grin as said that? Did he mean that he would come home as a bridegroom?

It wasn't going to be all downhill for our hero, though. We have already mentioned Paulsen's memories of Marie, the pastor's daughter in his home congregation.

Unfortunately, Paulsen couldn't picture what she looked like now, because he hadn't seen her in several years. (She had been living with an uncle who had been ill.) Paulsen could only see the face of a lovely teenage girl.

Even so, he felt drawn to the young woman Marie had become. Whenever he visited his home in recent years he heard wonderful things about Marie. According to Paulsen's parents, she was a quiet, friendly person who sympathized with all who were in need and was always ready to lend a hand wherever there was trouble or sorrow. She was a godly young woman who had won everyone's hearts.

There was still another problem. Paulsen had sometimes thought about paying her sick uncle a visit. He was a pastor too, and he didn't live far from Paulsen's parents. "Perhaps I will get to see my old friend Marie," he thought. Paulsen's former classmate, who was now in the Schirmer settlement, had been aiding Marie's sick uncle. He had spoken about her so enthusiastically that Paulsen was sure they were more than just friends. Paulsen ended up deciding that he shouldn't interfere. It was no small battle for Paulsen to squash his own hopes and leave the field to his friend. But finally Paulsen said to himself, "I should stop being so selfish and just go wherever God leads me."

Following last year's synod convention Paulsen's friend had made a side-trip to see the old pastor for whom he had vicared. When he returned home afterwards he looked depressed. Before long he confided in Paulsen that he had asked for Marie's hand, but she had turned him down. She liked him, but she did not want to marry him. When he had asked her whether she was promised to someone else, she had said, "No, it's not that." Then she had asked him not to inquire any further.

Later, when he and Paulsen discussed the situation again, Paulsen disclosed to his friend how he had been feeling about Marie. "Now I see it all," he cried. "She couldn't be mine because she was carrying the picture of her old

friend in her heart. I was a fool for not realizing it until now."

Paulsen's noble friend now advised him to follow his heart's desire. He said he would be happy if Martin and Marie were united because they were made for each other. He also said he would get over his disappointment, and someday, when God wanted it, he would find the right young lady for him.

When Paulsen arrived at his parents' home he was delighted to find out that Marie had come home too. Paulsen went to call on his old pastor, and Marie answered the door. She blushed with surprise and was lost for words. Paulsen's tongue was also tied, for although he remembered her as attractive, she was far more beautiful than he had expected.

To avoid further embarrassment Paulsen asked to speak with Marie's father. He was happy to see Paulsen, who had once been his pupil. Now they were both pastors, so they had a lot in common to talk about. Meanwhile, Marie sat by the window. She kept busy with her work but listened intently. Then her mother signaled her to come in the kitchen and fix their meal.

Paulsen had been lapsing into monosyllables as he talked with Marie's father, because he could only think about her. When Marie left the room Paulsen took the opportunity to tell her parents what was on his mind.

They said they would be sorry to have her leave, but they couldn't think of a better suitor for their daughter. They consented to the marriage, as long as Marie was in agreement. Marie's mother went back to the kitchen to take over the meal preparations, and her father went into his study. When Marie walked back into the living room she saw only Paulsen. She was so startled by this that she turned back toward the door.

Paulsen quickly got up and said, "Do you dislike your old companion so much that you have to run away from him?" Paulsen could tell from the look in her eyes that she wanted to stay. She was being shy because she was in love with him.

No one else witnessed what the two discussed now, so we may not tell about it. After a time, when Marie's mother called them to the table, they walked into the dining room hand-in-hand. Paulsen asked for her parents' blessing on their engagement. Marie's mother had expected this to happen and had invited Paulsen's parents, who arrived just then. Marie's father laid his hands on them in blessing. His parents were overjoyed at their son's good fortune, and they felt proud when Marie called them "Father" and "Mother."

Before Paulsen went back to his parish on the prairie they decided on a wedding date. It would be in the fall, when the new parsonage would be all ready.

Chapter Eighteen

The summer passed quickly for Paulsen, as well as for Marie and her parents. By the time the wind blew over the prairie's harvested fields the church building had been enlarged and the new parsonage next door had been completed. Today the parsonage was full of activity because of last-minute preparations for welcoming the young mistress. The day after tomorrow was the wedding day! Men were cleaning up the yard and finishing their landscaping. Women and girls were tidying up inside. Paulsen helped move the furniture and arrange it.

It was just as hectic at the home of Marie's parents. Ever since the engagement they had been busily preparing Marie's trousseau. Now they were baking and frying, sweeping and cleaning so that everything would be set tomorrow evening when the bridegroom was to arrive. Of course, no telegraph linked the parsonage on the prairie and Marie's house. But there was regular correspondence. Every mail pouch arriving at either place contained at least one letter. Many more messages were exchanged in their thoughts. Edison may be dreaming about sending wireless messages, but these lovers have already solved that problem.

The day after Paulsen arrived was the wedding day. Marie's father joined their hands and blessed them, and he also delivered a touching wedding address. His entire congregation attended the ceremony. It was a tribute to Marie that many people were sobbing during the address. No one left without clasping the bride's hand, either.

After the ceremony the relatives and close friends of the couple joined in a fine meal at the parsonage. It was a bittersweet occasion, because the couple was going to leave in the morning. Their parents and many friends gathered at the station to say farewell as they boarded the train to their new home. Marie had not seen it yet. When they were seated in the coach they held hands in silence for a moment. Then Paulsen whispered, "Mine now and forever."

Marie's eyes sparkled. "Yours as long as I live," she replied.

When they got off the train in W_____ a group of people from Paulsen's congregation came to meet them. They had brought a wagon, decorated with garlands, to transport the newlyweds. The officers of the congregation followed the wedding wagon home, and a group of young men escorted them on horseback.

The biggest shock for the young couple was to find the parsonage decorated and the rest of the congregation assembled in front of it to meet them. Everyone cheered loudly when the couple arrived. As the Paulsens stepped down from the wagon they were still so surprised that they didn't know what to say or do. The people in front of the parsonage stepped aside. In the open front door stood Paulsen's friend, the pastor of the Schirmer settlement. Paulsen's congregation had invited him to come and deliver a message of welcome. After a cordial address he shook hands with the couple affectionately, and everyone else crowded around to do the same.

It was a beautiful fall day. Inside the parsonage congregation members had set up long tables for the festive meal that was to follow. Paulsen and his wife were escorted

through the house by the other pastor and the church officers so that Marie could see her new home. They also looked at the new addition to the church. Women busied themselves setting out the food they had brought. When the newlyweds had changed clothes they all sat down to eat. The meal was excellent, and everyone seemed to be talking and laughing. Afterwards Lizzie Nobel, who now could play much more than a waltz, accompanied song after song.

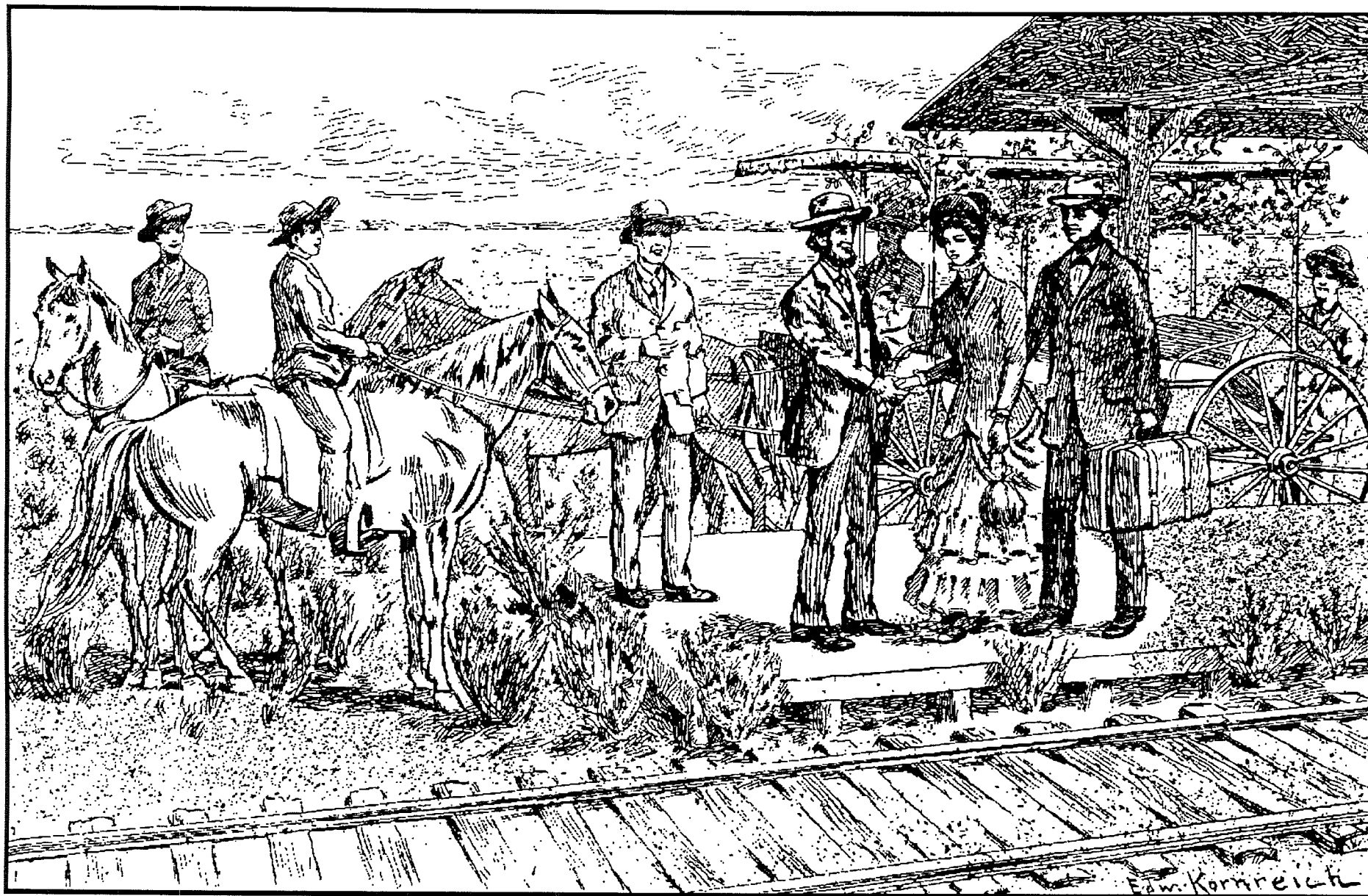
What a memorable celebration it turned out to be! Lovely Marie gradually stole the congregation's heart. At first some people wondered what kind of person she was. Others were hesitant to meet her. But by the end of the day Marie already seemed like an old friend to everyone. On the way home each group of travelers agreed: "Our pastor has brought us a fine pastor's wife."

We might be worried about one family, though. Mrs. Nobel had once had obvious plans for her daughter Lizzie. How would she react, now that her designs hadn't materialized? Let's look back at the celebration for an answer.

Was it just by chance that the pastor from the Schirmer settlement had been seated next to Lizzie? Was it just out of politeness that he spoke mostly to her? How did it happen that whenever he suggested a song, Lizzie would go right to the organ? (Usually she had to be coaxed.) Did Frau Nobel innocently invite him to spend the night at their home, on the spur of the moment? ("The Paulsens wouldn't be prepared for a guest," she told him.) And why did Mr. Nobel drive him home the next day in the family carriage? We have to agree with one of the women in the congregation, who observed it all and commented, "Who knows what this may lead to!"

Chapter Nineteen

It took some time for the young pastor's wife to become acquainted with her new home and with the church members. That allows us to see what has been happening



"When they got off the train in W _____ a group of people from Paulsen's congregation came to meet them."

to some of the people we met at the beginning of our story.

It didn't take old Squire Weiser long before he realized he couldn't dictate church policies. But he still criticized everything Pastor Paulsen did, showed off his "visdom" to anyone who would listen, and gave plenty of advice. Most people let him talk but ignored what he said. Paulsen visited Squire Weiser now and then. Paulsen treated him respectfully and tried to use his old age to get him to think about his soul's salvation. But as soon as the pastor would bring up the subject, Weiser would get restless and bring the visit to a close as soon as possible.

One day some people came to Weiser's house to have him draw up a deed to a piece of land they were buying. They knocked, but nobody answered. They walked around the house and even looked in the barn, but they couldn't find any sign of the squire. Finally they opened the front door and went into his office.

Squire Weiser was sitting at this desk in his usual attire with his top hat on his head. His head was bowed as if he were asleep. They called his name, but he didn't answer. They shook him, but he didn't move. Squire Weiser was dead.

The people hurried off to report what they had found. A doctor was summoned, and he determined that Weiser had died from a stroke. On his desk the coroner found a note which he had evidently written just before he died:

"I am not feeling well today. My God, am I about to die? Is the Rev going to turn out right? Weiser, don't be a whimpering puppy. Don't be weak! A man should stick to his conviction. If I die, bury me next to my wife. But I don't want any Rev there. My - - - - -" A long wavy line ran across the paper. He must have suffered the stroke that very moment and lost control of his hand.

Weiser's last wish was carried out. Some of his neighbors buried him by the corner of the fence next to his wife. The court settled his estate, and a farmer who had come from an eastern state bought his land. This man joined

the congregation.

When the author visited the area many years later he was surprised to see that all the property was well kept except for a small fenced-in plot which was overgrown with tall weeds. That is when he heard the story of old Squire Weiser. Weiser was a sad, peculiar man, and many anecdotes about him were still circulating.

Another person we met earlier was Mrs. Selig, who thought Pastor Paulsen was not converted and who was miffed for a long time about being rebuked at the congregational meeting. Her husband, however, was a faithful member, and as his understanding grew he knew how to answer his wife's criticisms better and better. She came to the services regularly with her husband and listened carefully. In time clear teaching from God's Word did its job. More and more Mrs. Selig admitted that Lutheran doctrine was correct.

When their second child was born Mrs. Selig came near death. At this point her experiences at the "anxious bench"⁶ and her sweet feelings from the past didn't help any. In fact, she was too scared even to think of them. When Pastor Paulsen called on her he pointed to God's sure promises and encouraged her to hold on tightly to them alone. Mrs. Selig regained her composure and was ready to die. But she recovered, and she became a good Lutheran, because she took great pains to keep learning the treasures of Scripture more and more fully.

O, a few outward signs of her former beliefs remained. She still preferred to call her pastor "Brother Paulsen," and his wife "Sister Marie." But she held Marie in the highest regard, even if Mrs. Selig called her "du" rather than "Sie" when she became

⁶ Revivals often featured a special bench which penitent people approached. Today's altar call is a similar phenomenon.

excited.⁷ It happened quite often to this energetic lady.

The Schlump family was a sad case. Mr. Schlump was a well-meaning fellow and might have got along quite well if he hadn't been chained to a sloppy wife. She could waste and ruin more things than her husband could provide.

Everything went backward instead of forward. Mr. Schlump became lazy and careless in his work. He never planted his crops on time, so he always had poor harvests. Weeds and thistles abounded in his fields. When he went to W_____ (which, thankfully, didn't happen too often) he often looked for comfort in beer. He owed money on his land, and his shoddy farming caused him to fall into arrears. In the end he wasn't even paying the interest. His farm was taken from him and sold. He and his wife moved to W_____, where he earned his living by working odd jobs.

The Karsten family did well. One could see their prosperity in their big barn and their spacious new farmhouse. Even more valuable, however, was the genuine Christian spirit which filled their household. The pride of the family was little William, the nine-year-old boy who had leaned bashfully against the bedpost when Paulsen first met the family. In school William turned out to be a gifted child. He learned quickly, comprehended things easily, was thoughtful and showed good judgment. Now it has been settled: William plans to do further study, God willing. He has been taking confirmation instruction plus some private classes with Pastor Paulsen. Next year, God willing, he will attend college.⁸

⁷ In German, both "*du*" and "*Sie*" mean "you." "*Du*" is used when addressing close friends and family members. "*Sie*" is the polite form, used in addressing less familiar acquaintances or relatives and friends to whom one wishes to show respect.

⁸ At this time Lutheran synods operated colleges which included high school departments.

Last winter the local newspaper in W_____ carried this item: "When the stableman of W_____ House went to the barn yesterday morning he found Dr. Wind lying unconscious in a snow bank between the hotel and the barn. Because of the low temperatures during the night it was thought at first that he had frozen to death. But on closer examination signs of life were discovered. Dr. Wind was hurriedly taken to shelter and resuscitation was attempted, with the result that he began to breathe, regained consciousness, and opened his eyes. It might have been wished that he had not awakened from the eternal sleep, for his hands and feet were frozen so badly that all four limbs will have to be amputated.

"Before this misfortune Dr. Wind had been at the home of Mr. X. for a baptism. During the course of the evening he imbibed quite a bit of whiskey. On the way home his strength must have given way before he could reach the shelter of the hotel.

"P.S. Before going to press we learned that Dr. Wind expired during his operation after suffering excruciating pain. May he rest in peace! In him we have lost a man of remarkable talent who unfortunately traveled a somewhat irregular way of life."

We will have more to say about the Nobel family later. For now we will report that Mr. Nobel never joined the congregation. On the other hand, he attended church fairly often and was friendly to Pastor Paulsen. He had no problem letting his children be instructed by the pastor. In other news, the woman's prediction after Paulsen's wedding came true: a year and a day later, Lizzie Nobel became the wife of the pastor at the Schirmer settlement.

Chapter Twenty

Several years after Paulsen's wedding something happened that changed the whole character of the settlement, the congregation, and Paulsen's field of labor. The summer had been very hot and dry.

Many wells had dried up. Most of the settlers either drilled new wells or made their old ones deeper. Still, water was scarce; some people didn't have any. A number of poor farmers had to drive their cattle several miles to give them water. This caused Mr. Nobel, who was well-to-do, to have an artesian well drilled.

One day while this was being done the drill struck coal, and it looked to be a rich vein. Mr. Nobel was an enterprising man, and he decided to develop a mining operation. He set up test drillings in other places nearby, and they showed that the coal field was extensive.

Coal fever struck. Shafts were dug in various places and workmen started bringing out subterranean treasure. These men, who were of many nationalities and religions, came from all over the country. About a mile from the church a shanty town shot up to house them. It was called Coaltown. Men also came to set up gin-halls and beer-parlors, where the workmen gambled and drank away their hard-earned wages. Also, the railroad company which owned the line running through W_____ built a spur line to the mining area.

All of a sudden the quiet, secluded settlement sprang to life. But it certainly was not the kind of life Paulsen wanted to see. He worried about where all these developments would lead. Would his work, which had been progressing so smoothly, take a turn for the worse? Paulsen could see that "the old evil foe" was trying to destroy God's work, or at least interrupt and corrupt it.

But Paulsen was not the kind of man who let troubles get him down. His unshakable faith gave him the hope that nothing could prevent the Lord from accomplishing what He wanted. Even what seemed so evil would have to turn out as a blessing for God's kingdom. Paulsen decided not to sit by idly, but to work as hard as he could.

He began by visiting the workers in Coaltown. In a friendly way Paulsen warned them that as they pursued worldly wealth they shouldn't forget what their souls really needed—God's Word. He invited them to attend church and cautioned them about the

evils of drinking and gambling.

Frequently men responded with hateful words, and Paulsen had a hard time holding himself back. How often drunken men tried to pick fights with him as he walked by! How often rough customers made fun of him for his black coat or anything else they could think of! At times his life was even in danger. When the tavern owners found out that Paulsen was doing his best to curtail their business, they stirred up violent hatred toward him among their nastiest patrons. Paulsen had to make his calls after working hours and often headed home quite late. More than once some degenerates lay in wait for him to beat him up.

A couple of them plotted something even worse. One night several dark figures emerged between two shanties and charged at Paulsen with clubs in their hands. Something awful might have happened if some other men hadn't approached from the other direction and frightened the attackers away.

Another time a big, strong man who was lying in wait for Paulsen jumped up at him as if he was going to grab him by the shirt collar. Paulsen stood still, looked him straight in the eye and quietly asked, "What do you want with me?"

The man seemed transfixed. He said, "Well, uh, I, uh, thought you were, uh, Jim. He cheated me at the tables, and, uh, I wanted to get my, uh, money back." At that he disappeared between the shanties.

One other time Paulsen heard a shot whiz by his head. The bullet had just missed him.

Paulsen had not told his wife anything about these experiences to keep from frightening her. But she heard about it from some of the ladies of the congregation. Marie was not the sort of person who would ask her husband to neglect his work because of the danger. But she did worry about her beloved, and she prayed earnestly for his protection when he went out. Paulsen's congregation members, for their part, begged him to stop making these dangerous calls in Coaltown.

His visits there paid some good dividends, though. Quite a few of the coal miners were

more upstanding. Most of these were Germans, who not only promised to attend church, but also tried to curb the lawlessness around them. In addition, several who had become involved in drinking and gambling listened to Paulsen's advice and shaped up.

In order to improve the way things were, Paulsen went again and again to Mr. Nobel. He agreed that Coaltown was a bad place, but at first he wouldn't get involved. Paulsen did not want to initiate police measures himself, because that wasn't part of his calling. So he repeatedly tried to sharpen Mr. Nobel's conscience about taking responsibility for the disturbances as owner of the mining operation. In time Mr. Nobel became more concerned about the situation and was afraid for himself and his family. He decided to take steps to bring about law and order.

Mr. Nobel called a town meeting and had the town incorporated. Officers and judges were elected, and a police force was established. The name of the town changed from Coaltown to Nobleville.

Things improved noticeably after that. When some arrests were made and punishments were handed down, a number of the worst drifters left. Several taverns had to close from lack of business. What had seemed bad for the area and for the church turned out for their benefit. The whole region experienced surprising prosperity. Land became more valuable. Farmers had a good market for their crops, not only with the miners, but also with the workers in some factories that had opened up. Several other denominations established churches among the various nationalities. But the Germans, who attended Paulsen's church for the most part, were still the most numerous. Once again the church building became too small to hold all the worshipers.

Chapter Twenty-one

The changes in the settlement due to the mining industry and the influx of different types of people created new problems for Paulsen and his congregation. When the old evil foe couldn't crush them with violence and lawlessness, he tried an even more dangerous approach.

Among the newcomers there were quite a number who belonged to secret societies. At first it seemed as if jealousy between the different orders would keep them from uniting. "If a kingdom is divided against itself, it cannot stand." Nonetheless, all the different lodges are really one kingdom; they all have the same goals and the same spirit (even though this is often denied). This became apparent when the members of the various groups met and decided to unite into the lodge which had been the largest.

And that is just what happened. With great ceremony they organized a lodge under a strange-sounding pagan name. They elected officers with important-sounding titles and engaged in all sorts of other nonsense. But then the lodge members were not satisfied to be a unified group. They wanted to extend themselves and recruit new members. They approached everyone and kept badgering those who listened. They even told men who were just walking by about the great advantages and prestige of lodge membership. They always put the lodge in the best light possible.

Paulsen was glad that he had brought up this issue when the congregation was founded—long before any danger was present. Now it was a defensive battle against the siege of the lodge members, instead of a civil war inside the walls of the church itself.

Paulsen warned his people in public and in private that the lodge was not Christian. He showed how lodges spurn the redemption which Jesus Christ won for us and make it seem superfluous. They tell men to be their own redeemers and saviors. They also encourage men to lay hold of their whole salvation by their own reason and strength. A

Christian, on the other hand, knows that he is powerless to earn salvation and must receive it by the work of the Holy Spirit through God's Word and sacraments. In other words, lodges deny the second and third articles of the Apostles' Creed.

Paulsen also demonstrated that if a Christian took part in the lodges' religious rites he would be denying his faith. They do not confess that Jesus is the Son of God and the Redeemer of sinners, so the God they talk about and pray to is a false god. Their prayers, which are not made in Jesus' name, are nothing but blasphemy.

Furthermore, a Christian would have to defile his conscience in the lodge, because he would be required to swear about things he knows nothing about. He would be in grave danger of losing his independence and judgment, and would be just a pawn of the organization.

Paulsen said, "A Christian would be jeopardizing his faith by being united with unbelievers. The lodge is full of shocking secrets which they are afraid of bringing out in the open. All the good deeds they boast about are nothing but egotistical self-interest. They don't act out of love for their neighbors, but to be rewarded in return." Paulsen gave many other reasons to show that the whole essence of the lodge is contrary to the gospel and the spirit of Christianity from beginning to end.

This led to bitter feelings. At first the lodge members thought the pastor was condemning them because of ignorance and prejudice. They, of all men, were not guilty of trying to rob anyone of his faith! They were only trying to promote the brotherhood of man and to do charitable work which the church either would not or could not do. Everyone could believe as he pleased. The church and the lodge could stand next to each other and work hand-in-hand.

But this tactic didn't get them anywhere, especially with Pastor Paulsen. He pointed out that he knew their basic teachings and efforts well enough; in fact, he was battling against them because they were contrary to God's

Word. He warned his members not to be fooled by the hypocritical, friendly words of these people.

"What would you do to someone," he asked, "if he started undermining the foundation of your house and then gave you a friendly look and said, 'Don't worry about it. I won't harm your home. You can still live in it if you'd like.' Would you let him go ahead? Would you give him a hand with his work? Wouldn't you drive him away? He is trying to destroy your house!"

"And don't you know the fable of the porcupine and the mouse? The foolish mouse allowed the porcupine into her hole. After coming in he extended his quills and pricked the mouse. When she protested, he said, 'If you don't like it, you can move out.'"

That is what the lodge will do to the church. First they ask for acceptance and friendship. If they get it, they spread their opinions throughout the church and use the quills of unbelief to wound you all over in your Christianity. If somebody objects, they say, 'We are in charge here. If you don't like it, you can leave.' This isn't a fairy tale! This has happened in many churches where they were deluded and didn't defend themselves from the lodge. In the end unbelief destroyed these churches. If believers tried to protest against it they were ridiculed and told to shut up."

When the sweet-talk of the lodge members did not induce Paulsen's members to join them, they changed their tune. They said Paulsen was someone from the dark ages who was against all enlightenment and progress. He wanted to keep his people in blind superstition. They said he was an intolerant person who would like to burn at the stake anyone who did not agree with him. They called him a tyrant, a little pope, and many other names.

Nevertheless, Paulsen kept the lodge at bay. A few people let themselves be drawn into its net. But with God's help most saw the dangers to their souls. A few people who had let themselves be caught in the lodge's net

were freed again.

Mr. Nobel supported the lodge's work from the start and made Paulsen's work more difficult. However, the time came when Mr. Nobel was thankful to Paulsen for having resisted the lodge. After a number of years there were labor problems in the national coal mining industry. The workers complained that the mine owners were oppressing them unbearably. To shake off this oppression the workers organized secret labor unions patterned after the lodges. In them the leaders forced workmen to protest and even to use force and break the law in order to make the owners back down.

To his credit, Mr. Nobel had always treated his employees well. They had nothing to complain about. But some agitators came to organize Nobel's workers and tried to create dissatisfaction among them. Some of the workers were easily influenced and felt they had some grievances. There were enough unchurched men that a union was formed. As unrest spread throughout the mining industry, orders came from union headquarters that Nobel's workers should go on strike. The union members supported the move and demanded that all workers comply. This would have caused Mr. Nobel to lose a great deal of money.

However, most of Nobel's work force were church members. They had not joined the union and they refused to go on strike. In the end both parties benefitted. The workers did not lose their wages, and Mr. Nobel's business was not harmed.

Chapter Twenty-two

We will now skip over a number of years. It is early spring again, just as it was when Martin Paulsen, the young traveler, first came to the prairie. Everything has turned green. Most of the crops have been planted.

It is a glorious spring morning, and the W_____ train station is crowded. The incoming train has brought many passengers

who look like pastors. A large number of men, women and children have also come to the station from the little town and its surroundings. They are standing around impatiently. A special train is ready to transport all these people to Nobleville. Everyone looks happy. They must be looking forward to a special occasion.

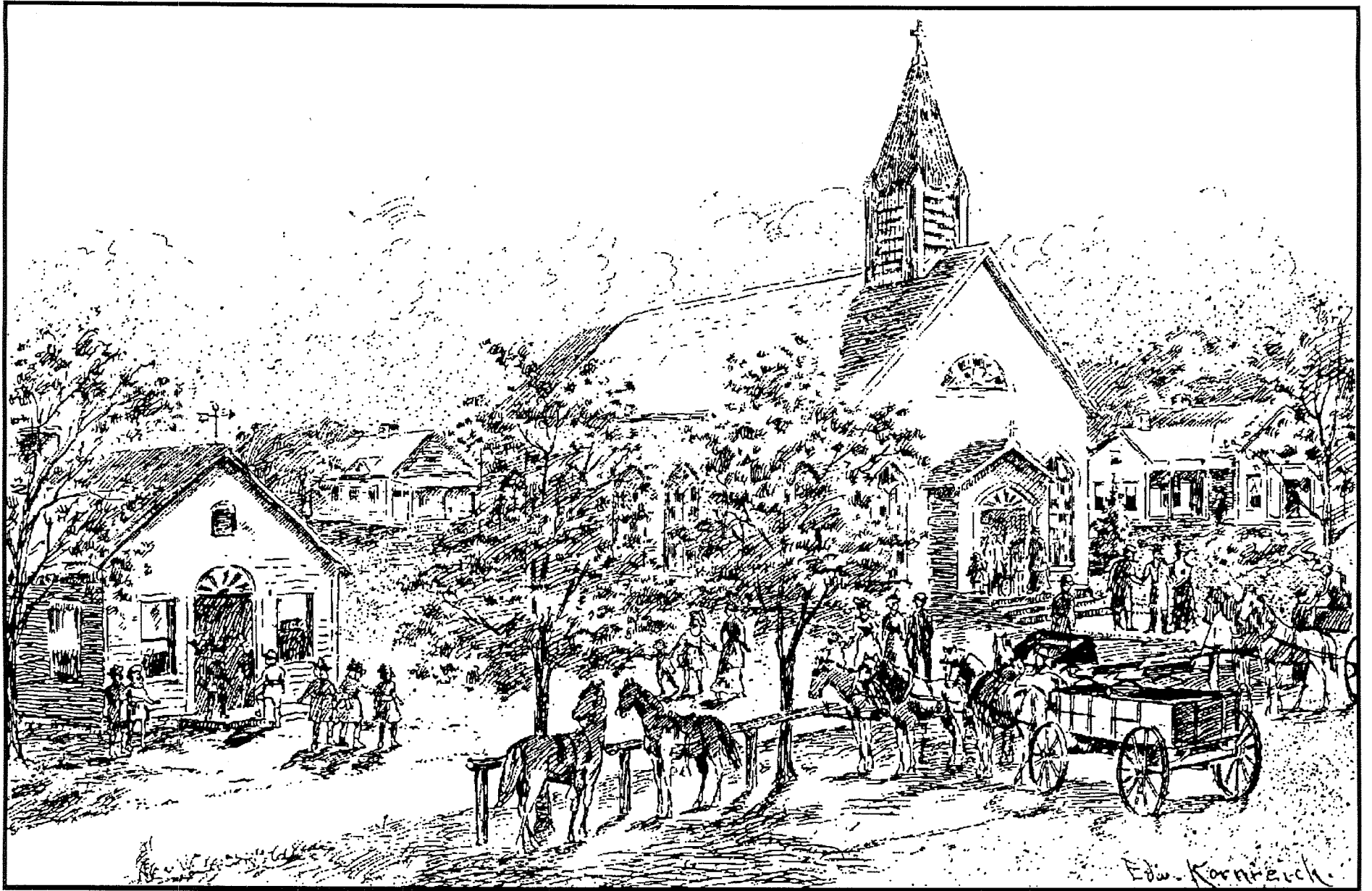
The locomotive whistle blows, the conductor yells, "All aboard!" and the train begins to roll through the prairie. Actually, there isn't much prairie left to see. It has become farm after farm. Attractive farmhouses are surrounded by trees which have already grown quite large. The call of the prairie-chickens can't be heard any more. Those friends of the first isolated settlers retreated because there are so many more people now.

A long whistle blast! The train pulls into Nobleville. Most of the homes one can see are small but inviting, and almost all of them have gardens. A number of carriages are waiting at the station to take the travelers to their destination. Most people walk, however, since they don't have much farther to go.

Where are they all going? A church steeple lies ahead. Listen! Aren't those the church bells? Many people are standing around near the church, and when they and the new arrivals all head inside, there is hardly enough room to fit them.

We stay behind for a moment and take in the lovely scene before us. The church isn't that first little building in which Paulsen first lived. A mighty, massive, glorious building has taken its place. To the right under the trees is the parsonage. To the left is the building which used to be the old church, but has since been enlarged. What is it used for now? We can tell right away, because the door has opened and children are marching out two-by-two into the church. It is the school. Farther to the left is the teacherage. How different everything looks after twenty-five years!

Yes, it had been twenty-five years since Paulsen began his work. Today is his



"How different everything looks after twenty-five years!"

anniversary. His congregation and the neighboring Lutheran pastors have planned a celebration. (Surrounding Nobleville are a number of congregations which Paulsen helped organize. There is even a church in W_____, which Paulsen founded shortly after Dr. Wind's death.)

It is time to go inside the church. All three bells in the steeple are ringing. At the same time a procession is coming out of the parsonage. In the lead is the president of the synod, who will preach the anniversary sermon. Next comes Paulsen and two other pastors. Behind them comes Marie (who still looks attractive) and their children. Following them are the congregation officers and the rest of the visiting pastors. Amid the ringing of the bells and a rousing organ processional they all walk up the aisle of the beautifully decorated church and take their seats in front of the altar.

Once the organist has finished his processional we have a chance to look over the pastor's family. Paulsen is a bigger, more distinguished looking man now. His hair is still dark, but grey hair at his temples shows the passing of time. A few lines appear on his forehead. His eyes still look friendly, and he seems deeply moved. This whole celebration is a complete surprise for him.

Marie, his faithful wife, looks older but also looks more elegant. The friendliness which once won everyone's heart seems to have grown, and her eyes are just as gentle. She is very proud of the honor being shown to her dear Martin.

The young man at her side is their oldest son Adolf. He and the school principal, who is at the organ bench, teach the school classes now. Adolf is a gifted, energetic teacher who is bound to get even better.

Next comes a young lady named Sophie, who has recently blossomed into womanhood. She is the picture of her mother and faithfully helps her mother around the house. But how long will that last?

The next boy is a charming teenager with gentle, almost feminine eyes. This is Paul,

who is a diligent student. He plans on following in his father's footsteps.

Then comes Carl, a impetuous boy who can't sit still. He is adept with his hands and promises to be a fine mechanic.

Last but not least is delicate little Josephine. She is everyone's darling, and she seems almost too dainty for this rugged world.

In looking over the family we almost didn't notice that the organist has begun the opening hymn. We join the whole assembly in loudly singing, "*Praise the Almighty, my soul, adore him! Yes, I will laud him until death.*" No one sings with more emotion than Pastor Paulsen, as the events of the past twenty-five years pass before him. The synod president's sermon also moves him deeply.

People's eyes are becoming misty as the preacher describes the congregation's past and present. The Lord has accomplished so much here through his servant! This is also obvious after the service as everyone shakes Pastor Paulsen's hand and wishes him well.

Later that afternoon the visiting pastors got together with the celebrant. That is how we learned the stories which we have related here. Evening came with a gorgeous red sunset, and the guests headed home. Everyone left with the wish, "May God bless 'the parsonage on the prairie' for a long, long time!"