

# MEMORIES OF MARY VERENA B.

## REDD

by Fern R. Laycock

Once when we were children, several of us went with her to the farm orchard to pick some early Royal Ann cherries. We climbed the trees and picked cherries and dropped them in the grass where they would not bruise and we could pick them up later. We heard voices and stopped to see who was coming, and what would happen. It proved to be some teen-age boys from the village, who had come to get cherries. They were pleased to find so many freshly picked cherries, and were just getting started picking them up when mother spoke. They were soon out of sight, and we saw no more of them.

I remember we used to have our hair combed with a braid on the top of our head. Mother used to pin our hats to the braid with a long hat pin. One time Aunt Sarah Prince was helping us with our hats. She was trying so hard not to stick the pin in our heads. I said, "Oh, mama pins it right to our heads."

When we were preparing to come to Canada, I was twelve and Jessie was ten years old. Aunt Sarah had helped mother make new clothes for us. Jessie and I had dresses alike, a checked one to wear on the train and some brown sateen ones, all trimmed with braid for Sunday wear, when we arrived in Canada. These sateen ones were all packed away in our trunks ready for the long journey. About the last night we were there, the kids in our crowd had a party for us, at Julia Taylor's as I remember it. When we got there in our plain travelling dresses and the other girls were all dressed up, we decided we couldn't stand it, and went back home and coaxed mother for the brown Sunday dresses. She didn't like unpacking, but we were so insistent that she relented and unpacked the trunk. We went back to the party, happy, in our brown sateen dresses.

Whenever anyone of us did not feel very well, there was a special treat, "egg and milk." She would warm a cup of milk and pour it over a beaten egg, add a little sugar and salt. It was delicious, and I am sure we sometimes played sick to get a cup of egg and milk. It seems strange now, we always had lots of milk and eggs, but this little treat was special and we got it only when we were sick.

We always remember, I'm sure, how we put the plates upside down on the table at meal times and the chairs with the backs to the table. This was so no one would start eating until we had knelt down around the table for family prayers.

I remember seeing mother stuffing dolls with cut up rags. She would have her apron turned up to cover the doll, so we could not see it, with just the opening exposed where she was stuffing the rags in. We asked her if she was making a little "piece sack"

and she said she was. (A "piece sack" was a bag in which she kept the odd pieces of fabric left over from her sewing.)

We remember the carpet rags. She always seemed to have something to cut or tear up into strips for a carpet. We girls helped with this, and also in sewing them together and winding them into balls. They were later taken somewhere and woven into strips of carpet. Mother sewed the strips together, and we had a new carpet, put down and tacked around the edges with plenty of fresh straw underneath. We liked rolling on the new carpet listening to the straw crackle.

Mother often made hot soda biscuits for breakfast. One morning she called me to get dressed quickly and come and roll out the dough, cut the biscuits and get them into the oven. I dawdled along until it was late, and the biscuits were not in the oven. She got out of patience with my slowness, and came in just as I got out of my night gown. She made me come in and roll out the biscuits without any clothes on. I was so disgraced and humiliated, I shall never forget it. It did teach me not to dawdle when she called me in a hurry.

When father died in Raymond, leaving her with a large family, and not much to do with, it must have been a great anxiety to her to face the years ahead. How helpless we all felt. Many nights, I remember hearing her crying after she was in bed, and many times I went to her, trying to comfort her. She often told me it helped her a lot.

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**The Philosophy of Life**, copied from Verena B. Redd's notebook

Did it ever occur to you that a man's life is full of crosses and temptations? He comes into the world without his consent, goes out against his will, and the trip is exceedingly rocky.

The rule of contraries is one of the features of this trip. When he is little, the big girls kiss him; when he is big, the little girls kiss him. If he is poor, he is a bad manager. If he is rich, he is dishonest. If he needs credit, he can't get it. If he is prosperous, everybody wants to do him a favor. If he is in politics, it is for graft; if he is out of politics, he is no good to the country. If he does not give to charity, he is a stingy cuss. If he does, it is for show. If he is actively religious, he is a hypocrite. If he takes no interest in religion, he is a hardened sinner. If he gives affection, he is a soft specimen; if he cares for no one, he is cold blooded. If he dies young, there was a great future for him. If he lives to an old age, he missed his calling. If he saves money, he's a grouch; if he spends it, he's a loafer. If he gets it, he's a grafter; if he doesn't get it, he's a bum. So what the hell's the use? Life is just one darn thing after another.