

DROUTH LETTERS.

SHERMAN Co., June, '94.

Dear Mother:—I arrived out West all safe and sound last Saturday evening. John was at the station to meet me and took me out home at once. It was awfully dreary driving over the level prairies and I could hardly keep the tears back. It was so different from the groves and pretty roads of Illinois. The prairies stretch out as level as a threshing floor as far as the eye can reach, and there is not a tree to be seen. The fierce blue sky seems to be a vast globe that fits down over everything and shuts us in. Our house was a queer affair to me. It is built of sod and there are tall weeds growing up on the roof that gives it a very peculiar appearance. There is no floor in it but the earth is beaten down so hard that there is no dust. I have tacked newspapers all over the sods inside and it makes it very neat. John was glad to have me come, he has been very lonely all alone out here. Though he has not said much about it in his letters, I can see that he has felt the change a great deal. The crops are looking very good, but we have had no rain and need it badly.

July.

Dear Mother:—The weather has been extremely dry, we have had no rain, and everything begins to look yellow and sickly. John feels blue and says that we will not have half a crop of anything. Of course as that is all we have in the world to look for food and clothing this winter, it seems pretty hard. Every day the wind blows hot and dry, there is not a breath of moisture. The corn-leaves are all shriveled up and if we do not get rain pretty soon I do not what will become of us. The baby has been sick. She has suffered so much through the hot weather and we are so far from town that we can hardly afford to get a doctor. It costs \$10 every time he comes out and I am not always able to go and take her myself. A neighbor woman came over to see me today. She said that she wanted to come long before but that her work kept her close at home. She has lived here a long time and she told me some dreadful tales of the grasshopper times. I am glad that I did not live here then. John has been putting up some hay. We have a low wet spot of ground on our farm and the hay is good there and John says that hay will bring a good price this fall.

August.

My Dear Mother:—O my God! how can I tell you in a letter of the sorrow and trouble we have been in since I last wrote. As I take up the pen, misery seems to paralyze my hand. The weather kept getting dryer and dryer all the time. Every living thing dried up as though a fire had swept off the fields. John gave up his work and sat around the house speechless with misery. The baby was ailing all the time and I was busy with her or I should have gone crazy with misery. One day the sun came up fiercely in the morning as usual. There was nothing to denote that it was different from the other hot days. But about eleven o'clock the wind became as hot as a blast from an oven. We caught our breath with difficulty. The house was filled with an oppressive heat. The cattle stood panting and the waves of heat could be seen across the level prairie. The baby gasped for breath and I wildly snatched up an old fan and fanned her, but to no avail. She soon ceased her mad struggle for breath and I heaved a sigh of relief as I saw her close her eyes

forever. O mother, mother, you can never know what misery is such as we saw! John and I stood beside the little home-made coffin and tried to pray but we could not. We carried the little coffin out in the yard near a shrub and there we buried her. We walked back hand in hand, we gazed around and saw our blasted crops and both wept like little children. The hot days came and went and we now have nothing left but our little stacks of hay.

September.

Dear Mother:—We have had a little rain of late. The seed that did not come up in the spring on account of the lack of rain is now coming up and some of the fields look quite green. John has begun to do some fall plowing and I am pulling up the stunted corn stalks to burn this winter. There have been a number of prairie fires lately and John has plowed a strip around his hay stacks so they will not burn.

October.

Dear Mother:—We have absolutely nothing left but our sod house and its contents. The other night about midnight we were awakened by a strong light in our room. We got up and saw that a prairie fire was approaching. The first thing we thought of was our hay. We dressed and ran out with pails of water and old coats and got ready to fight the fire if it was needed. It was a pretty sight to see it come up. It came leaping and roaring and playing. Long tongues of flame would flash up and leap out and set the dry grass in a blaze on ahead and then as the main body of the fire caught up, another flame would shoot out and so on. It got very hot where we were standing and soon we saw that there was great danger that our hay would catch on fire. We began to fight with all our might. Whenever the flame would catch inside the plowed rang we would fight it with our wet coats. But it got hotter and hotter and at last the sparks began to fly and set fire to the stacks. John ran like mad and tore the fire out with his hands but still it would catch in another place. And we soon had to give up and come away. We dragged ourselves to the house. Our eye brows were all burned off and our hands were blistered and fearfully sore. We looked in each other's eyes and sighed. Out in the fields was a smoking heap, the last of our hopes for the winter. I want to come back home. If you can loan me the money I will come soon.

October 10, '94.

Dear Mother:—Money was received all right. Will ship Mary's body home today. Will go west tomorrow. Good bye.

yours—JOHN.

WILLIAM REED DUNROY.

VIOLETS.

Violets, violets everywhere!

Violets in her braided hair,

At her throat—and Oh surprise!

Violets in her velvet eyes!

WILLIAM REED DUNROY.

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