

Adventures on the American Frontier

Pioneering on the Plains

Part One

Hamlin Garland, Boy of the Prairie



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**The other book in this series:
Howard Ruede, Kansas Sodbuster**



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To young Hamlin Garland, home had always been a little frame house in a lovely green valley in western Wisconsin. His world reached a short way into the woods behind the house, but not far, for in the dark woods lived bobcats and wolves and sometimes even bears.



At the bottom of the valley below the house ran a brown road, dusty in summer and frozen into sharp ruts in winter. Hamlin's world went as far up this road as the curve where it left the valley and as far down as the village where his grandfather lived. But his world never went as far as the city of La Crosse, twelve miles away, where the Mississippi River steamboats whistled of their comings and goings.

Then, one fall day when Hamlin was eight years old, his father said, "I've sold



the farm. We're moving west."

It didn't seem real that the Garland family could be leaving the valley, until the cold day in February, 1869, when his mother took the old wooden clock down from the kitchen shelf where it had ticked away every day of Hamlin's life. He watched as she wrapped it and laid it in a box. Outside, Mr. Garland pulled the draft horses, Doll and Queen, to a stop. The old farm wagon, made into a sleigh for the winter, stood just outside the door.

Hamlin peered out the window as his father unhitched the team and took the horses back to the barn to be in out of the cold while the sleigh was being loaded. He was back in a few minutes.

“Is everything ready to go, Belle?” he asked, his eyes bright and eager.

Mrs. Garland was taking down the picture of General Grant from the place where it had hung since Mr. Garland had come home from the Civil War three years earlier. Hamlin saw the bare place left on



the wall where the picture had hung. In that moment, he felt suddenly homeless.

His mother handed the picture to him. "Wrap it in that quilt, Hamlin," she said. Then she turned to her husband. "The chairs and chests are ready, Richard," she told him. "Come, Harriet and Frank. Help me pack the dishes."

Ten-year-old Harriet and six-year-old Frank helped take dishes from the shelves and pack them into a box of clothes and bedding.