

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

A Few Incidents in the Life of W. R. Treend

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I was born in London, England,  
In the year eighteen hundred sixty-five,  
My parents were both English,  
And were very much alive,  
When I was only five years old,  
They decided they would roam,  
So they crossed the broad Atlantic,  
In the search of a new home.

Arnprior, in Eastern Canada,  
Seemed to be a thriving town,  
And my father being a carpenter,  
It was there we settled down.  
There I got my only schooling,  
All before my twelfth birthday,  
When hard times hit that village,  
And my parents moved away.

That move it was one hundred miles,  
Dad and I walked it with a pack,  
Picked a homestead in the timbered lands,  
Cut the trees and built a shack.  
Then Dad left me choring for a neighbor,  
Saying "You be a good boy now,  
While I get your mother and the children,  
All the furniture and cow."

Van Dusen was the man he hired,  
To put all we had in one slish load,  
And Dad started out one day ahead,  
To lead the cow along the road.  
After four long days of travel  
Van Dusen landed everything all right,  
And though Dad started out one day ahead,  
He arrived the following night.

Day by day all through that winter,  
We kept chopping down the trees,  
Stately birch and beech and birdseye maple,  
With the snow above our knees.  
Towards spring we picked our sugar bush  
One hundred maple trees to tap,  
And the buckets that we caught the sap in  
We made entirely with the axe.

When the snow was gone we labored,  
Piling logs and brush into huge heaps,  
To burn them up and clear the land,  
To plant potatoes, corn and wheat.  
The stumps and roots were numerous,  
And besides we had no horse nor plow,  
But the blacksmith made us heavy hoes,  
And we chopped in the seeds somehow.

In that way we raised our living,  
Kept a pig and shot some deer,  
Plus some partridges and rabbits,  
And some fish we'd often spear.  
The hand sickle was our reaper,  
With a home-made flail we threshed our wheat,  
And the little water-powered grist mill  
Was to far away we often boiled it for to eat.

There was a noted lumber kind of Ottawa,  
Named J. R. Booth, I suppose you know,  
He had some lumber camps quite close to us  
And he gave me a chance to earn some dough.  
I was the only boy among a hundred men,  
But I worked just five months to a day,  
And proud was I of that fifty bucks,  
When I said "Mother, here's my pay."

In winter there were hordes of timber wolves,  
In summer the black bear grew bold and big,  
I remember the night we sat up to watch in the dark,  
When Bruin succeeded in stealing our pig.  
One day in early spring by the scent of the dog  
I shot an old she-bear in her den,  
When we pulled her out she had three little cubs,  
An Ottawa man bought them for ten.

One day I secured a Government job,  
Carrying mail from Purdy to Combermore,  
The big leather sack was the most of the load,  
But I got fifty-two bucks for the year.  
Time limit, three hours, round trip was twelve miles,  
I must go every Saturday morn,  
I did it on foot with that bag on my back  
No matter how hard it might storm.

That backwoods life made me healthy and strong,  
And taught me much about how to provide,  
We had home-made soap and candles, too,  
And for winter all kinds of wild fruit dried.  
We had sugar and syrup and vinegar, too,  
All from the sap of the maple tree,  
We kept three or four sheep and hand-carded the wool,  
So got some of our clothing free.

We plugged along on that old homestead,  
For five long dreary years,  
I was the eldest son, and I never played much,  
But I got thirty acres cleared.  
When father decided to roam again;  
Packed all his carpenter tools in a chest,  
He said to me, "Will you run this farm,"  
And I promised to do my best.

We had a one-horse team, and I bought another,  
Planted all the land into oats for to sell,  
The lumber camps were our markets, and paid us the cash,  
And that fall we did very well.  
Sold the cows and the sheep, and everything that was loose,  
But the land we just left behind,  
Hitched the team to the sleigh, that I made with the axe,  
And went to look for a railroad line.

We drove to Belleville, Ontario, one hundred and twenty miles,  
When I first saw that train I was green,  
I sold that home-made sleigh to a "city guy",  
And hired the railroad to ship my team.  
They gave me a slip of paper and called it a pass,  
That said I could ride in the train's caboose,  
But I was not in the woods, and afraid I'd get lost,  
So rode with the team for a good excuse.

Deckerville, Michigan, was the place,  
Dad had bought land, from the Moss and Mills Estate,  
It was low and flat, and whenever it rained,  
It looked more like a lake.  
Dad was a first-class carpenter,  
But he never knew how to farm,  
He would pick out some place that no human race,  
Could put anything in the barn.

When I was about twenty-one years old,  
I bought forty acres of land for my own,  
I made a logging bee and cleared off six acres,  
And told Dad he could take the crops home.  
And three years later, when I fell in love,  
And married a farmer's only daughter,  
Built a house and barn, on that little farm,  
And dug a well to get some water.  
Our first born son was healthy and strong,  
And had almost learned to run,  
When he caught a cold and the doctor said,  
Congestion of the lung.  
In a few more days he passed away,  
And that house was lonesome and stilled,  
Till a stork came along with a girl this time,  
And the vacancy seemed filled.

When this little girl was eleven months old,  
A serious episode entered my life,  
A typhoid epidemic went through those parts,  
And carried away my wife.  
That broke up my home, and I went out to work,  
Let Grandma take the child,  
But as soon as I could I got married again,  
For I was lonesome all the while.

That forty-acre farm we fully improved,  
And fenced it all around,  
Cleared off all the logs, picked up all the stones,  
And plowed up all the ground.  
There was a four hundred dollar mortgage,  
That we wanted to pay if the crops were fair,  
In three years time we had paid it off,  
And had a little cash to spare.

Our life was then uneventful,  
Until eighteen hundred ninety-eight,  
When the gold rush to Alaska,  
Just seemed to get into my pate,  
But I had a wife and three small children,  
And could not afford to be so rash,  
So I sold the farm and all the assets,  
For eleven hundred cash.

My neighbors called me crazy,  
But I said that I thought I knew best,  
I gathered up my family and bought a ticket,  
To the big Canadian Northwest,  
I bought a grain farm in Saskatchewan,  
Started in to raising wheat and oats,  
When one night in August a frost came along,  
Next day I learned that I was broke.

That day I swore off raising wheat,  
I said oats and cows will be my game,  
I commenced to pick up every calf I could,  
It was like starting all over again.  
After four more years of oats and cows,  
To sell the farm for cash I got a chance,  
I put the money into cattle, moved to Alberta,  
And I started quite a ranch.

Another event worth mentioning,  
While on that Saskatchewan farm,  
Mr. Stork he followed us out there,  
And another son was born.  
It brought to mind that I was broke,  
And this meant number four,  
Two boys and two girls are plenty,  
And I said to myself "There will not be any more."

Starting a ranch on the plains of Alberta  
Is not as easy as it sounds,  
I had only two little saddle horses,  
And my cattle strayed a hundred miles around.  
My nearest neighbor seven miles away,  
Had five thousand head of cows,  
When he open his gates and turned them loose,  
I simply lost mine in the crowd.

That meant I must join the round-up,  
And I was handicapped for mounts,  
If you ride with those boys on the prairies,  
It is the horseflesh under you that counts.  
So I vowed I would raise some horses,  
They each rode ten, and I had only four,  
I kept picking up mares, and before I quit,  
I branded a thousand colts or more.

With those cattle scattered through ten thousand hills,  
I had a job that was hard to quit,  
When the doctor on one of his visits said,  
"Mr. Treend, your wife is very sick"  
"With these leaky valves of the heart", he said,  
This altitude is far too high,  
You must get her down to sea level soon,  
Or I am afraid she is going to die."

So we talked it over very carefully,  
She decided she would like to go home,  
At Gleichen I placed her in the hands of a nurse,  
And went back to the ranch alone.  
The nurse stayed with her to England's shores,  
And she arrived home fairly well,  
About three months later I got the sad news,  
She had gone with her Saviour to dwell.

She was a loving wife and step-mother, too,  
And that step-daughter she left behind,  
Did her very best to return that love,  
And to the three was always kind.  
She was very young to have so much care,  
But she certainly did her best,  
At the age of twelve she was a mother to three,  
And ran that ranch-house in the West.

The cattle did well and they multiplied,  
I could count five hundred and fifty,  
The winter of nineteen hundred six and seven,  
Reduced them to about one hundred and sixty.  
It was then I got reckless and went to the bank,  
And made a six hundred dollar loan.  
Went back to Grenfell, Saskatchewan,  
And bought a nice bunch of calves to bring home.

I went back to the bank and explained what I'd done,  
They said I could have more cash,  
They felt quite safe with a lien on the brand,  
And thought I could pay them back.  
So I kept on borrowing and branding calves,  
Till I owed them a hundred thousand bucks,  
When they said one fall, "Money is getting tight,  
We think you had better pay us up."

That fall I sold a lot of nice beef steers,  
The banks advised me not to reinvest,  
So I payed them back all the money I owed,  
And had forty thousand left.  
I put it in the bank at interest, for a little over a year,  
That was as long as I could stand,  
Then I spent it all and a hundred thousand more,  
Buying horses and cattle for the brand.

I always made friends with the Indians,  
Think the Blackfeet are the most noble race,  
Whenever it came time to put up hay,  
Their village would spring up near our place.  
They would come winding along that crooked ranch trail,  
Be stretched out for two or three miles,  
All their ponies and hayracks and mowing machines,  
All their dogs, all their squaws and last child.

They would have force enough for a thousand tons,  
But the women did the most of the work;  
The men rode the horserakes and mowing machines,  
If they got much ahead they would shirk.  
They would start buying before they had hay up,  
The ranch must be like the post of the Hudson Bay,  
But they were honest, I can say that for the Indian,  
I never knew one to buy and not pay.

Shortly after that the World War broke out,  
And the country was all unstrung,  
I had a lot of horses and cattle then,  
A good son-in-law and two grown up sons.  
A staff of wild and woolly cowboys,  
They flocked to the city as volunteers,  
And I was handicapped for the right kind of men,  
To gather up all those steers.

After the war had raged for about a year,  
And my oldest son doing two men's work,  
He came to me one day and said "Father,  
Some of the people think I shirk."  
He said "I think I had better go in to Calgary,  
And volunteer to do my part,  
So I said "Billy, I suppose you had,  
But it almost breaks my heart."

I drove him down to the barracks,  
Where the men were all going through in a line,  
And I waited for him at the exit,  
Though it seemed an awfully long time.  
They told him he was medically unfit,  
But he'd do to round up those steers,  
He got his honorable discharge - "they needed beef"  
And that dried up all our tears.

So we devoted all our time to ranching,  
When P. Burns called me in his office one day,  
Saying he had two thousand cows with calves at foot  
"I want to sell you and wait for my pay."  
So I bought that herd unsight and unseen,  
At eighty-five dollars per cow,  
And the profits I made were quite handsome,  
You cannot make any deals like that now.

Again the next year Mr. Burns he approached me,  
Saying he must clear off his circle ranch,  
"You did well with those Mackey cows last year,  
I want to give you another chance.  
There are two thousand cows with calves at foot  
But I shall have to charge you more this time,"  
He asked me one hundred and five dollars per cow,  
But I bought them for ninety-nine.

Those calves were sold off at forty dollars each,  
And the cows we ranged over till spring,  
When we added some lower priced ones,  
And sold them all back to Mr. Burns again.  
One hundred and five was the price this time,  
So you can see how the markets could climb,  
I had three thousand steers getting fat at the ranch,  
All ready to cross the brine.

Next spring I made a contract with Mr. Burns,  
At a price of ten cents per pound,  
He agreed to take every steer that I had,  
That was roaming that country around.  
I did not have to take them in to the Calgary market,  
Weigh them up at a shipping point instead,  
Three thousand steers weighing 1300 pounds each,  
Just figure that up in your head.

That fall the World War was over,  
And the Armistice was signed,  
I thought I had got rid of my livestock,  
At a very opportune time.  
So I paid up all the debts that I owed,  
And loaned two hundred grand to Burns,  
I spent the winter in California,  
On a holiday well earned.

When I came back the next spring and looked around,  
I could see a wonderful change,  
There were wire fences, and tractors and plows galore,  
But very few cattle were on that range.  
All through those four long years of war,  
The heads of the Governments had said,  
"Plow up those prairies, and plant more wheat,  
And see if you can raise more bread.

There is lots of difference between farming and ranching,  
Buy a tractor and in three years it looks funny,  
Buy a thousand dollars worth of good steer calves,  
In three years you'll have lots of money.  
But the big ranching days were all over,  
Will never be seen in Alberta again,  
We just had to turn our hands to something else,  
So we started in raising grain.

I'd been doing things in a fairly large way,  
So I bought large tracts of land,  
We raised wheat by the thousands,  
One year we had two hundred and fifty grand.  
I made three deals of four sections of land in each,  
And several smaller farms in between,  
Built 70 miles of fence, bought nine tractors to plow,  
And worked a good many eight-horse teams.

I was only the head of this outfit,  
I had two good sons and a good son-in-law,  
And without their help, "believe me",  
I could never have raised so much straw.  
I had six hundred horses still roaming around,  
That could never be sold for cash,  
So I traded them "part payment" on two sections of land,  
And gave the boys a few more acres to thresh.

One year we had five thousand acres of beautiful wheat,  
It was just nicely out in full head,  
When a big black cloud came up out of the west,  
In a few minutes we had only hailstones instead.  
I got thirty thousand dollars from the hail insurance,  
Just about one-third of what we had lost,  
And the next year we had just as nice a crop,  
When it was badly damaged by frost.

About then the world's markets were flooded with wheat,  
And the prices went down to bedrock,  
For three or four years we had drought after drought,  
And the fields did not raise half a crop.  
So I made up my mind to dispose of that land,  
All my interest I divided by four,  
Transferred the titles to two boys and two girls,  
I do not think I will farm any more.



All through my youth and middle life,  
"To make money" my ambitions were quite high,  
But the world's depression set me back so much,  
That I lost all desire to try.  
Now I have no desire to make any more,  
Just use what I have left for the best it will bring,  
We certainly cannot take anything out of this world,  
Neither did we bring anything in.

I have nearly reached my allotted time  
Of three score years and ten,  
I am fully convinced there are other things,  
Worth far more than the yen.  
For instance, my own four children,  
Or the excellent state of my health,  
Or the friends we make as we pass along,  
That is what I call wealth.

W. R. T.

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Biography (in part) of Henry Albert Treend, for his  
32nd Birthday. (By Dad).

Oftentimes now, when my memory carries me back,  
To the time and the place where Hank was born,  
And that old farm house,- it was only a shack,  
In Saskatchewan, and that country of storm.

It was Saturday, the fifteen day of December,  
We had so much grief, I can easy remember.  
I drove to Grenfell for grub, but I got a late start,  
And before I got back it was stormy and dark.

I had got almost home when I lost my way.  
It was snowing and blowing, so I stood up in the sleigh.  
When all of a sudden I spied a fresh track,  
So I followed it round, and it brought me right back.

That track was my own, so I bade it good-bye,  
And started straight across the prairie in another try.  
After about three hours more of prairie and stubble,  
I arrived safely home and found plenty of trouble.

When I got into the house, that was so nice and warm,  
I soon found out that I had some further to roam.  
My wife came to me and said, I think it is best  
That you go get Mrs. Perry,- she lives three miles West.

So I hitched Prince and Donald to the same old sleigh,  
Tied a lantern to the sleigh tongue and hurried away,  
And got Mr. and Mrs. Berry to come out in the cold,  
But by the time we got home, Hank was ten minutes old.

The next morning at dawn, altho it was fifty below,  
To Grenfell for Dr. Argue I decided to go.  
He proclaimed everything had been properly done,  
And informed me that Hank was a wonderful son.

About that time I decided to take the first chance  
To move to Alberta, and put the boys on a ranch.  
The stock were not many, and the start it was slow,  
But the horses and cattle continued to grow.

So when Hank was only a year and a half old,  
The Saskatchewan farm and machinery was sold.  
I had money enough to buy two hundred head,  
When we moved to Alberta and took a homestead.

We moved to Alberta in Nineteen Hundred and Two,  
Settled forty miles from Gleichen, where the country was new.  
It was out there that Hank and his Brother Billy,  
First learned to ride ponies called Flora and Jenny.

One night I came home late, found my wife all alarmed,  
Hank had fallen from his high chair and broken his arm.  
I fixed it with shingle splints from the roof of the barn,  
And he played while it knit, and it did him no harm.

Before Hank had reached his fourth birthday,  
I had some news for him that was hard to say.  
For his Mother's health would not allow her to stay,  
And on the shores of England, she had passed away.

One day we were out riding, when Hank's cayuse it shied,  
and dumped him quite roughly upln the hillside.  
He cried, but when I laughed it sure did get his goat,  
But he climbed back in the saddle, saying "I ride till you're broke."

Hank got no early start with his books nor his pen,  
But spent most of his time in the bunkhouse with men.  
When he did go to school, he enjoyed every chance  
to spin yarns to the teacher of cowboys and ranch.

That was only the beginning of their riding career,  
And they were not very big when they began to appear  
For the general roundup that took place each year,  
To gather up all the cattle and give each man his steer.

When the world war broke out, hired cowboys were few.  
It was then Hank and his Brother Billy found plenty to do.  
The cattle had grown over seven thousand strong.  
And they many times rode the whole night long.

A rider finds plenty of work on a ranch in the West  
Rounding up the wild horses, breaking only the best.  
Where each rider takes ten all for his own string,  
and they're all tired out when the roundup comes in.

To drive a thousand steers to market calls for riders of sense.  
For they are not easy to handle, where the roadways are fenced.  
From the ranch into Calgary, took a seven day drive,  
And if not properly handled, you's have only the hide.

But I had three I could always rely on with safety.  
That was Hank and Billy and the Foreman Treacy.  
Just like three cards of a kind,- makes a good poker hand.  
So were these three, at their work, in the cattle land.

At last Hank got married, and I heaved a great sigh,  
For all the teachers and nurses had Hank in their eye.  
I saw him meet Bessie Stewart, and I knew from the start,  
That Bessie had lassoed Hank Treend by the heart.

Looking back now, those were the good old days,  
When, wherever you rode, it was bunch grass and sage.  
And we feared not the drought, nor the hail, nor the frost,  
When every steer that we sold brought far more than it cost.

Times have changed now, and I feel sorry for Hank,  
With his four sections of land, and the low price of wheat,  
When he goes out in the morning, his three tractors to crank,  
And he knows that his profits won't buy even grease.

Even farm produce is low, Hank. There's no use feeling glum,  
Just think what you had in Nineteen Hundred and One.  
When you sit down to add up your assets each fall,  
Be thankful for Bessie, - She is worth more than them all.

DAD.

The above is more truth than poetry.