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Sod and Stubble: The Unabridged and Annotated Edition

John Ise

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"A few years ago, as I listened one night to my mother telling incidents of her life pioneering in the semi-arid region of Western Kansas, it occurred to me that the picture of that early time was worth drawing and preserving for the future, and that, if this were ever to be done, it must be done soon, before all of the old settlers were gone. This book is the result—an effort to picture that life truly and realistically. It is the story of an energetic and capable girl, the child of German immigrant parents, who at the age of seventeen married a young German farmer, and moved to a homestead on the wind-swept plains of Kansas, where she reared eleven of her twelve children, and remembering regretfully her own half-day in school, sent nine of them through college. It is a story of grim and tenacious devotion in the face of hardships and disappointments, devotion that never flagged until the long, hard task of near a lifetime was done."—John Ise (from the preface)

Deeply moved by his mother's memories of a waning era and rapidly disappearing lifestyle, John Ise painstakingly recorded the adventures and adversities of his family and boyhood neighbors—the early homesteaders of Osborne County, Kansas. First published in 1936, his "nonfiction novel" Sod and Stubble has since become a widely read and much loved classic. In the original, Ise changed some identities and time sequences but accurately retained the uplifting and disheartening realities of prairie life. Von Rothenberger brings us a new annotated and expanded edition that greatly enhances Ise's timeless tale. He includes the entire first edition-replete with Ise's charm, wit, and veracity, restores four of Ise's original chapters that have never been published, and adds photographs of many of the key characters. In his notes, Rothenberger reveals the true identity of Ise's family and neighbors, provides background on their lives, and places events within a wider historical and geographical context.

Ushering us through a dynamic period of pioneering history, from the 1870s to the turn of the century, *Sod and Stubble* abounds with the events and issues—fires and droughts, parties and picnics, insect infestations and bumper crops, prosperity and poverty, divisiveness and generosity, births and deaths—that shaped the lives and destinies of Henry and Rosa Ise, their family, and their community.

One hundred and twenty-five years after Osborne County was organized and Henry Ise homesteaded his claim, a corner of nineteenth-century Kansas social history remains safeguarded thanks to the tenacity of John Ise and the insight of Von Rotheberger, who enlivens Ise's story with revealing detail.

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