The Palimpsest

JUNE 1926

CONTENTS

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THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

THE PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH
Superintendent

THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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FROM A LITHOGRAPH COPY OF THE PAINTING BY C. B. KING

RANTCHEWAIME

THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

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Rantchewaime

One evening in the spring or early summer of 1824, Mahaskah, or White Cloud, a chief of the Ioway Indians, made camp for the night near the mouth of the Des Moines River. Around him was the prairie with its grassy carpet figured with bright-colored flowers, but Mahaskah, hungry and tired from his journey, was intent upon some venison he had just finished cooking. Suddenly he felt a blow upon his shoulders and turned in astonishment and alarm to see standing there — not a hostile warrior, but one of his wives whom the Indians had named Rantchewaime, meaning Female Flying Pigeon.

"Am I your wife? Are you my husband?" she demanded of the surprised Mahaskah. "If so, I will go with you to the Mawhehunneche [American big house], and see and shake the hand of Incohonee [great father or president]."

Now Mahaskah had started out alone on a business trip to Washington and other eastern cities and was on his way to join the party of chiefs and warriors who had been invited to visit the President; but Rantchewaime was a beautiful woman and the favorite wife of the chief, so he replied: "Yes, you are my wife; I am your husband; I have been a long time from you; I am glad to see you; you are my pretty wife, and a brave man always loves to see a pretty woman."

Thus did Mahaskah prove himself gallant in love, as he had already proved himself brave in battle, and Rantchewaime, like many another pretty woman, succeeded in getting what she wanted. She was permitted to accompany her husband to Washington, while her three older sisters, also wives of Mahaskah, and his three other wives remained at home on the Des Moines River to plant and harvest the corn, beans, and pumpkins and to care for the children.

The party which Mahaskah and Rantchewaime joined for this trip included General William Clark, Lawrence Taliaferro, George H. Kennerly, Maurice Blondeau, B. Vasquez, Pashepaho, Keokuk and his wife, and Taimah and his wife and daughter. Altogether there were nineteen chiefs and warriors, six interpreters, and four Indian women. These Indians were strangers to life in the cities and the duties of the agents and interpreters who were acting as chaperones were not light.

One night, for example, while the party was stay-

ing in Washington, the agent heard a disturbance in the room assigned to Mahaskah and Rantchewaime. Upon investigation he found that Mahaskah, who had indulged too freely in the white man's fire water, was beating Rantchewaime. When the agent appeared, Mahaskah lifted the window sash and stepped out, forgetting that he was two stories from the ground. The result was a broken arm.

Further details of the trip, so far as Rantchewaime is concerned, apparently were not recorded. On August 4, 1824, Mahaskah and Mahnehahnah, another Ioway chief, signed a treaty with the United States government whereby the Ioway tribe was to relinquish their claim to certain lands in Missouri in return for five hundred dollars in cash and five hundred dollars a year for ten years. Provision was also made for farming utensils, blankets, and cattle.

Rantchewaime, of course, had no part in making this treaty, but it is probable that she saw the "Great Father", for President Monroe held a "talk" with the Indian party and Rantchewaime was not one to miss her cherished desire of meeting "Incohonee". We know also that the beautiful wife of Mahaskah attracted much attention. Her portrait was painted by C. B. King and copies of this painting justify the title, Beautiful Female Eagle That Flies in the Air, occasionally given to Rantchewaime by the Indians although her name signified Female Flying Pigeon.

Upon her return to the Des Moines Valley, Rantchewaime doubtless had much to tell her admiring

and envious friends concerning the wonders she had seen. She did not hesitate to express her disapproval of certain customs of the pale faces and warned the Indian women to avoid these evils.

Indeed, Rantchewaime seems to have been wise and good as well as beautiful. An agent for the Ioways is quoted as saying that she was chaste, mild, gentle, generous, and devoted to her husband. Mahaskah said of her that when the poor came her hand was like a strainer, full of holes, letting all she had pass through. She would give away her last blanket, all the honey in the lodge, the last bladder of bears' oil, or the last piece of dried meat. But even these virtues failed to satisfy the conscience of Rantchewaime, and she frequently blackened her face and retired to some solitary spot to fast and pray to the Great Spirit whom she feared to offend.

After his return to his home Mahaskah built a double log house and determined to follow the advice of the President and cultivate the land. His comfortable existence, however, was soon interrupted by a tragedy. One day, not long after their return from Washington, Mahaskah and Rantchewaime were making a journey across the prairie on horseback, Rantchewaime carrying with her on her horse a young child about four years old. Mahaskah, fearing the presence of hostile Indians, and perhaps also by habit, rode ahead, turning now and then to see whether the woman and child were following. As he crossed a high point at one place on the trail

Mahaskah was surprised to find that Rantchewaime was nowhere in sight. He rode back five or six miles and there found her horse grazing on the prairie. Near-by lay Rantchewaime with her child resting its head upon her body. Mahaskah hurriedly dismounted; but he saw at once that Rantchewaime was dead. Apparently the horse had accidentally thrown his rider at a small precipice and the fall had instantly killed the woman, though the child was unhurt.

When Mahaskah realized that his beautiful wife was really dead he expressed his horror and grief in words which have been translated into English somewhat as follows: "God Almighty! I am a bad man. You are angry with me. The horse has killed my squaw!" Just then the child lifted its head from the mother's dead body and said: "Father, my mother is asleep!"

Mahaskah was alone on the prairie with his child and the body of his dead wife. It was four days before he could reach his lodge and prepare for the funeral. His first duty was to collect the presents which had been given to Rantchewaime at Washington and all her other belongings and put them in the rude box with the body. Then the box was placed on a high scaffold, according to the Indian custom. This method of disposing of the dead had a twofold purpose: it elevated the body as near as possible to the Great Spirit who lived in the sky and also safeguarded it from the wolves. Mahaskah then killed a dog, made a feast, and called his braves to-

gether. A second dog and a horse were killed. The body of this dog was fastened to the scaffold, head upwards. On its head was placed a little tobacco. The body of the horse was placed with the tail near the part of the scaffold on which the head of the dead woman lay.

The Ioway Indians believed that the Great Spirit would approach the scaffold, seeking the spirit of the dead. Upon his appearance, the dog was supposed to address him, show him where the body lay, and invite him to smoke the tobacco. This offer, the Indians thought, would be accepted and the Great Spirit would then reanimate the bodies of the woman, the dog, and the horse. The horse was to bear the woman with her trinkets and other property to the happy hunting ground, where game was plentiful, while the dog was to hunt deer for her.

Thus passed from the world of the living to the land of the dead Rantchewaime, an Iowa matron who typified, without knowing it, the words of the Psalmist: "Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her."

Years afterwards, when the elder Mahaskah was dead, the younger Mahaskah, a son of Rantchewaime, was in Washington on an errand for the tribe. One day he was shown a group of Indian pictures including that of his father whom he at once recognized. In this collection was the picture of a beautiful Indian woman called the Eagle of Delight, wife of Shaumonekusse. The young chief at once

exclaimed, "That is my mother." Nor could he be persuaded otherwise, saying: "Did you ever know the child that loved its mother, and had seen her, that forgot the board on which he was strapped, and the back on which he had been carried, or the knee on which he had been nursed, or the breast that had given him life?" So convinced was young Mahaskah that the picture represented his mother that he refused to leave the room until the name of Rantchewaime was affixed to the picture. "If it had not been for Waucondamony" — Walking God, the name he gave the exhibitor of the pictures — "I would have kissed her", said the son of Rantchewaime, "but Waucondamony made me ashamed."

Later, however, young Mahaskah was taken to the King gallery containing Indian portraits, and there he saw pictures of both the Eagle of Delight and Rantchewaime. At once he realized his mistake. "*That* is my mother", he exclaimed, pointing to Rantchewaime's portrait, "that is her fan! I know her now. I am ashamed again." He asked for a copy of his mother's picture and also for a copy of the portrait of the Eagle of Delight, saying of this, "The Ottoe chief will be so glad to see his squaw, and he will give me one hundred horses for it."

Ruth A. Gallaher

The Pomeroy Cyclone

The hot sultry afternoon of Thursday, July 6, 1893, was lazily drawing to a close. A fitful breeze from the east had brought some relief from the oppressive heat of the day. At about five o'clock people living among the bluffs along the west side of the Little Sioux River in Cherokee County looked up and saw beyond the hills two angry clouds, one in the northwest and another in the southwest. Ominous with deep rumbling thunder and sharp flashes of lightning, they rolled up rapidly, growing ever blacker and more threatening. A sinister greenish gloom spread like a pall over the face of nature. On the crest of the hills to the west the two harbingers of violence met, and the whirling tornado swept eastward, carrying death and destruction over a path fifty-five miles long and a thousand feet wide.

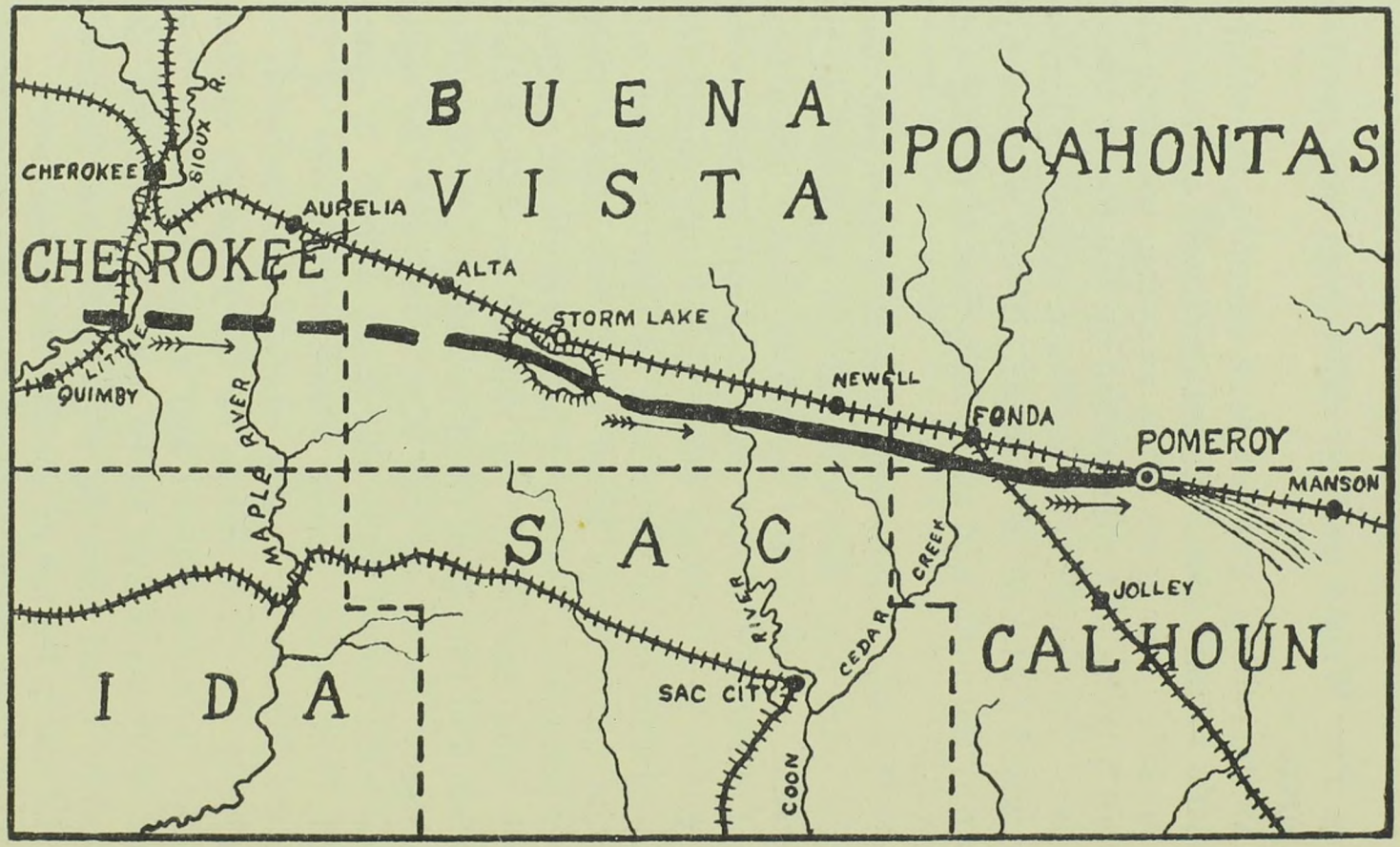
At the northwest corner of section thirty-five in Rock Township, Cherokee County, about three miles northwest of Quimby, lay the farm of Jerry Bugh and on the quarter-section to the north was the home of Elroy Cook. There the clouds joined, and there the destruction began. The buildings on both farms were wrecked, but members of the two families suffered only slight injuries. Just to the east, however, the buildings on the J. H. McClintock farm were demolished and there the first casualties occurred.

Mrs. Roy Wright and her child were very severely injured.

As the rolling, greenish bank swept on, the characteristic tornado cloud funnel appeared, particularly noticeable from afar. This swaying, bounding elephant's trunk of vapor picked up the Perry schoolhouse. The building burst like a skyrocket leaving no board fastened to another. From a drive well near-by the pump and about forty feet of tubing were torn out.

By this time people were seeking cellars and caves where with fear they awaited the approach of the tornado. Some heard the storm pass, "like a regiment of railway trains", carrying with it their worldly goods but leaving them practically uninjured. Others were not so fortunate. A short distance west of the Little Sioux River stood two houses which were completely destroyed and there the first human lives were sacrificed. In one of the homes three women and two small children huddled in the cellar. Suddenly the house was torn away and the cellar filled with ruined walls and flying debris. A spoke, torn from some wagon wheel, struck one of the women, Mrs. O. M. Lester, and she died instantly — probably the first victim of the Pomeroy cyclone. About the same instant and on an adjoining farm Mrs. Molyneaux was hit by some flying missile and instantly killed when the wind demolished the house as she was in the act of opening the cellar door.

When the tornado reached the Little Sioux River,



THE TRACK OF THE POMEROY CYCLONE

it ripped the heavy iron Pilot Rock bridge from its abutments and dropped the long span lengthwise into the river. On went the twisting cloud, climbing the bluffs on the east bank and continuing its destructive work. Houses, barns, and trees were blown down. Grain and farm machinery were scattered far and wide and live stock was killed. Yet at one farm where the barn was blown away, four horses in it were uninjured. A reaper wheel of solid iron was carried half a mile. Two men were caught in V. M. Grove's big barn when the storm struck. For an instant they were pinned down by the heavy timbers, but a second attack of the wind lifted the wreckage and they were left unhurt.

At another farm the man, his wife, and four children were killed when their home was destroyed. The bodies of the woman and two of the children were blown about sixty yards and were terribly mutilated. The little girl was found under a tree, her limbs swollen and purple and her body so surcharged with electricity, it is said, that it gave a distinct shock to the hand laid upon the flesh. John Peters and his family went to the cellar, but Mr. Peters, returning to close a door which had blown open, was carried away with the house. His arm was shattered and he was badly bruised and cut.

On the next farm east Marian Johnson was killed in his house while his three children escaped injury. At that point the storm rose and passed over the home of Ellis Whitehead with only slight damage to

the buildings but descended again to wage its fury upon the farm of William Slater. There Ida Johnson and Lulu Slater were killed. Miss Slater's body was dismembered, one leg being found two miles away. At the Horatio Pitcher place Frank Lord was killed. The storm then turned north for nearly a half mile destroying buildings and killing seventeen cattle.

At the Cherokee County line the lashing funnel again rose and for two miles no further damage resulted. The first place struck evidently did not feel the full force of the storm, but eighty rods east a house and barn were entirely demolished, while at the next farm the hired man, Barnard Johnson, was blown against a tree with such force that his body wrapped firmly around it. He died two days later.

As the cyclone crossed from Maple Valley Township into Hayes Township the destruction and casualties increased. At the Jacob Breecher place everything except a corn-crib was wrecked, Mr. Breecher and his daughter were killed, and the hired man, Joseph Slade, died from his injuries the following day. Mrs. Breecher found herself sitting on the floor several rods from where the house had stood.

The improvements on L. A. Clemons's place were wrecked, although the house was only unroofed. The escape of several women who were spending the afternoon with Mrs. Clemons seemed almost miraculous. A little farther east stood the home of W. R. Clemons. He had just returned from town and,

seeing the storm coming, hurried his wife to the cellar and followed her. Just as he reached the last step he threw up his left hand to steady himself and at that instant the house was torn away and with it the muscles of his arm. Although the bone had been laid bare Mr. Clemons helped his wife, who was also severely hurt, out of the cellar and over to his son's home.

The fury of the storm constantly increased. Unlike the usual balloon-shaped tornado cloud with its tail sweeping the earth, the Pomeroy cyclone developed four descending vortices which twisted, swayed, and bounded up and down as they swung along. Another schoolhouse was swept away completely. Barns were ground to splinters and mixed with horses, cattle, hogs, and poultry. As the Storm Lake *Pilot* expressed it, there was not enough left of several farm homes to build a pig pen and the ground for a mile around was stuck full of slivers and strewn with farm machinery. Chickens, completely stripped of feathers, walked about with an air of consternation and amazement.

Residents of the town of Storm Lake watched with fear and trembling the approach of the storm clouds. Never before had they witnessed such a display of electricity. The air was filled with dust and grass and it was too dark to read.

Then the hurricane struck. The spires on the German Methodist and Catholic churches were torn away. But the center of the storm crossed the lake,

whirling the water up into a tall column that moved swiftly forward in a most spectacular manner. A steamboat was the only victim of the typhoon's destructive mood. After the wind had passed, a high tidal wave rushed back across the lake. At the southeast corner of the lake the storm wrecked some barns, killed about seventy head of stock and scattered a hen house, much to the confusion of the chickens within. After passing the Albert Scharm home, however, no material harm was done until the tornado reached section twenty-six in Providence Township where a stable was destroyed. Almost directly eastward it took its course with little damage except to crops and buildings until almost to the Pocahontas County line where John Slayman's buildings were all blown away and every member of the family injured. Crossing into Pocahontas County, the storm took toll only on buildings until, about a mile and three-quarters west of Fonda, it claimed the lives of Mrs. Amos Gorton and her child.

There the storm again veered southward and the town of Fonda was saved from the fate which Pomeroy met a few minutes later. But the cyclone was not to be denied its sacrifice of human life. Almost every farm and home between Fonda and Pomeroy was visited by injury and death.

Like their neighbors to the west, the people of Pomeroy, with mingled curiosity and fear, watched the approach of those threatening clouds welling up in the west. Many remarked that it was "good cy-

FROM THE STORY OF A STORM

A VIEW OF POMEROY FROM THE NORTHWEST

clone weather'' but few made definite preparations to seek shelter in caves or cellars, for strangely enough no one thought of telegraphing ahead that a tornado was moving eastward. ''The sky was a fearful sight to behold,'' wrote the editor of the Pomeroy *Herald.* Clouds of inky blackness filled the entire west, ''rolling and surging in wild commotion'' and pierced by jagged lightning. As the storm approached, the clouds took on a greenish hue, the lightning became continuous, the thunder reverberated incessantly, and the rumbling roar of the wind could be heard above all.

And then, at about six forty-five, the storm struck the town! A heavy rain accompanied by a high wind lasted some ten or fifteen minutes after which there was a perceptible lull — a lull which brought from their caves with a false sense of security many of those who had sought shelter. A moment later the town was literally blown away.

One of the survivors told of remarking to a neighbor that a cyclone was coming. He replied, ''Well, let 'er roll'', and in telling of the incident the narrator added, ''After the promptitude with which his permission to 'roll' was acted upon on this occasion, Mr. M. will doubtless hesitate before again speaking flippantly of a tornado when it is likely to be within hearing distance.''

As the storm hit, it was travelling in a southeasterly direction parallel to the Illinois Central railroad track. After taking the full row of houses on

the west side of Seneca Street, south of the tracks, it veered southward a block then turned again sweeping clean a path about four blocks wide through the most populous residence district of the town.

In less than five minutes the devastation was complete. Eighty per cent of the houses were rendered unfit for human habitation and the tornado passed on leaving a track discernible for a distance of two miles east of Pomeroy before the clouds rose and the whirling vortices dissolved. Nearly an hour and three-quarters had elapsed while the storm travelled fifty-five miles. The whirling velocity of the wind must have been terrific, but the forward progress was scarcely thirty miles an hour. An eastbound express train could have easily outrun the cyclone as it moved along the route of the Illinois Central railroad.

The tornado was spent, but there remained the suffering and anguish of the survivors and the work of relief — a dreary prospect. Out of a thousand people but twenty-one families were left with no dead or wounded of their own to care for. Rain was falling in torrents, accompanied by hail. Night came, covering the town in utter darkness. There were few lanterns and the cries of those imprisoned in the ruins was the principal guide for the rescuers.

Ed Masterson, a Pomeroy banker, secured a horse and started for Manson to secure help. Picking his way over a road almost blocked with debris, he found the bridge over Purgatory Creek washed a-

way and in attempting to cross on foot fell into the water. Swimming ashore, he had barely time enough to flag a west-bound train. Although Mr. Masterson must have looked like a maniac he convinced the vice president and division superintendent, whose special train he had stopped, that Pomeroy had been blown away and that surgeons and supplies must be obtained at once. The train was ordered back to Manson where all available help was taken on board. Another special train was dispatched from Fort Dodge and soon plenty of aid was started toward the stricken town.

Meanwhile J. W. McKeen had ridden on horseback to Jolley, seven miles southwest, making the trip in record time of about forty minutes. There he found Dr. J. R. Thompson who rode post-haste to the scene of the disaster, followed by fifteen or twenty fellow townsmen.

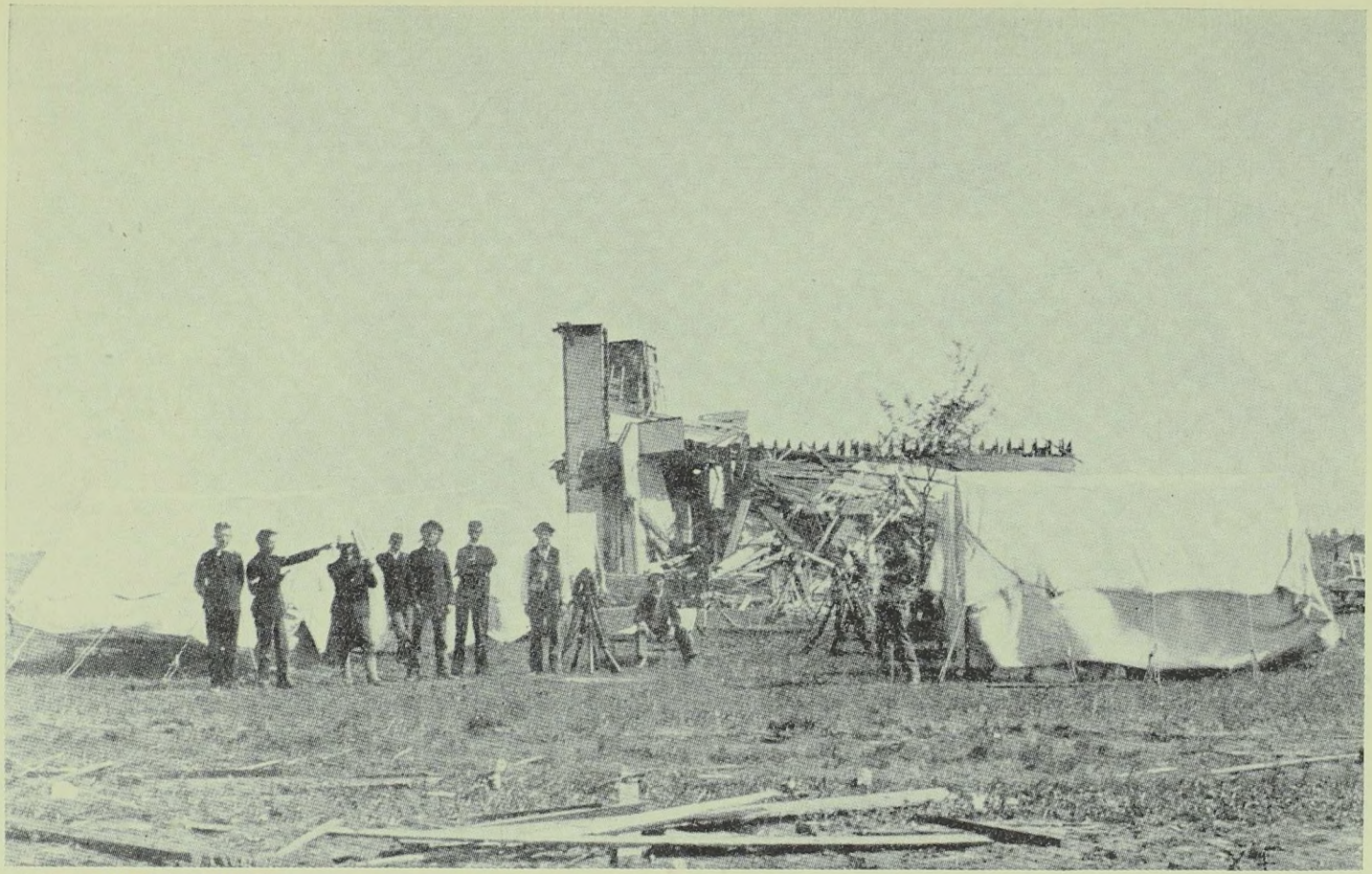
The greatest difficulty that first night was the scarcity of buildings in which to care for the injured, but by eleven o'clock all of the living were housed. Of necessity some of the dead had to remain where they fell until morning when a morgue was established. During the next two days thirty-one graves were filled in the Pomeroy cemeteries. In all, sixty people lost their lives in the cyclone.

No telephones existed in this community but the telegraph had broadcast the news of the disaster and by morning the town was filled with willing workers — to say nothing of hundreds of morbid

sightseers. A temporary organization of the workers was effected early in the morning after the storm. M. D. O'Connell of Fort Dodge was placed in charge and surgical and general supply headquarters were opened. By Friday night fifty tents and plenty of bedding, clothing, bandages, food, and medicines were available for immediate use.

At four o'clock on Friday afternoon Governor Horace Boies arrived and at once issued a proclamation calling upon the people of the State for aid and donations. Company G of the Fourth Regiment of the Iowa National Guard came from Fort Dodge Friday forenoon, and was placed on guard duty at once. These guardsmen, together with Company C of Webster City, virtually ruled the town for two weeks, aided during the first night by the firemen from Storm Lake.

A permanent relief committee was organized Friday evening. This committee was in session almost continuously for ten days after the storm. The money and provisions which poured in had to be receipted for and distributed, plans for aiding the survivors had to be outlined, and the July heat rendered immediate disposal of all dead animals imperative. County Attorney E. C. Stevenson took charge of this disagreeable task and burned the carcasses as fast as possible, using the debris of the wrecked buildings and coal oil as fuel. For several days a large crew of men under Thomas Miller continued to clean up the town, and the success of their efforts



FROM THE STORY OF A STORM

GUARD HEADQUARTERS AT THE SCHOOLHOUSE IN POMEROY

was apparent in the fact that no epidemic followed the disaster.

Fifty of the most dangerously wounded were placed on a special train, including two Pullman sleepers donated by the Pullman Company, and taken to Sioux City. Most of these patients were placed in the Samaritan Home and Saint Joseph's Hospital. Of the fifty, one man died en route and four others during the next ten days, but within two months the others were able to return home.

The storm was over, but the work of the committees went on. By October 12th cash contributions of $69,761.23, exclusive of a donation of $2000 by Webster County, had been received and acknowledged. Besides money, plentiful supplies of medicine, clothing, and food had been distributed. The people of Iowa and friends from Pennsylvania to Nebraska had done their share to alleviate the suffering and to make it possible for the new Pomeroy to spring up, characteristic of the indomitable energy of the prairie communities.

JAY J. SHERMAN

A Missionary Enterprise

In 1839 the Dubuque diocese of the Catholic Church reached from the southern boundary of Iowa northward to British America and westward from the Mississippi River to the Missouri River. It included what are now the States of Iowa and Minnesota and large portions of North and South Dakota. About thirty thousand Indians lived within this region — more than in any other diocese save one. Chiefly for the conversion of the native red men this outpost of Christendom had been established in 1837 and the Right Reverend Mathias Loras had come to Iowa as the first bishop of Dubuque.

Zealous for the conversion of the aborigines and desiring to view the northern parts of his far-flung province, the bishop determined early in the summer of 1839 to visit the vicinity of the government fort established twenty years previously where the Minnesota River empties into the Mississippi. "I left Du Buque", he wrote in a letter to relatives in France, "on the 23d of June, on board a large and magnificent steamer" — this one steamer was wont to make an annual trip to that distant military post — "and was accompanied by Rev. Father Pelamourgues and a young man who served as interpreter with the Sioux. After a successful voyage of some days along the superb Mississippi, we reached St.

Peter's. Our arrival was a cause of great joy to the Catholics who had never before seen a priest or bishop in those remote regions; they manifested a great desire to assist at divine worship, and to approach the sacraments of the church. The Catholics of St. Peter's amounted to 185, fifty-six of whom we baptized, administered confirmation to eight, communion to thirty-three adults, and gave the nuptial benediction to four couples."

Before Fort Snelling was commenced, the Minnesota River was known to the French voyageurs as the "St. Pierre", but when the Americans arrived they anglicized the name into "St. Peter's". The whole vicinity, including Fort Snelling itself, the trading post across the river, and the Indian agency were collectively termed St. Peter's by the early inhabitants. In the year 1852, however, Congress ordered that Minnesota, the Indian name of the stream, should be used in all public documents mentioning the river. In 1839 it was known of course only as St. Peter's.

Bishop Loras and the young Abbé Anthon Pelamourgues, who had come from France that very year at the request of the bishop, stopped on the fort side of the river. Who and what manner of people were the one hundred and eighty-five Catholics they found at that distant point? Probably some were traders who had settled around St. Peter's, others may have been farmers on the reservation or Catholic soldiers of the garrison, while a

few *coureurs des bois* from scattered points in the Northwest, even Manitoba, may have been present at that season. The names of a number of them are to be found in the records of the bishop written by his own pen after his return to Dubuque. These are the names of those baptized, of their parents, and of their godparents.

Practically all are French names, two or three like Quin and Graham are Gaelic, and several are names of half-breeds. Stately patronymics of old France stand out in the bishop's peculiar writing on the time-colored pages: Jean Baptiste Latourelle, Olivier Rossico, Louis Brunelle, Amable Morin. And the names of some of the women are redolent of the fleur-de-lis and cathedral incense: Julie Ducharme, Geneviéve Cardinal, Josephine Beaulieu, Isabel Madelaine. Interesting is the record of Marguerite Leclaire, daughter of Michel Leclaire and of a Sioux woman, his wife; of Marguerite Metivier, daughter of M. Metivier and a Sioux woman; of Francoise Marie Boucher, twenty-three years of age, daughter of N. Boucher and "a Chippeway from the Lake Superior"; and of Angelique Martin, daughter of Louis Martin and Ouanino, a Sioux woman.

Twenty-four persons were baptized by Bishop Loras on June 28th; on the following day Father Pelamourgues gave the rites to eleven more; one week later, on July 5th, Bishop Loras baptized eleven, and on July 8th, six. These baptisms oc-

cured at St. Peter's. But the next day at St. Croix, the bishop christened four half-breed children and a Sioux boy, apparently the only full-blooded Indian upon whom he poured the baptismal waters. This makes a total of fifty-seven, although in the letter above quoted, he stated fifty-six — the number which subsequent accounts have always mentioned.

What a picturesque tableau must have struck the eyes of the "Bishop of Du Buque" on these occasions. There in that open cathedral whose pillars were the tall trees of the forest primeval, whose vaulted ceiling was the azure sky peeping through the interlacings of the fragrant branches, stood Mathias Loras, in whose veins flowed the blood of the old French aristocracy. His father, two uncles, one of them Mayor of St. Cyr, and two aunts had gone to the guillotine in Lyons in 1793 during the French Revolution. Round about him he saw trappers from the far Missouri and "bois brulés" from the Red River dressed in deer skins trimmed with fur; traders from Prairie du Chien and soldiers from the army post; women clothed in animal skins and homespun. From a distance in the checkered shadow and sunlight of the forest, peered the Indians — Sioux and Chippewas who had met there for a peace parley. With curiosity they gazed at the "China-sapas", the black gowns — at the middle-aged bishop and the youthful abbé in surplice and stole, the one with crucifix and ritual in his hands, the other with the water and oils of baptism. And

perhaps from afar came the barely distinguishable musical rumble of Minnehaha's waters.

One of the most interested spectators of the entire group, however, was a remarkable half-breed by the name of Scott Campbell. His wife and seven children were among those baptized. "Scott Campbell, the interpreter at Fort Snelling, was the intermediary between the Indians and their lords", writes Marcus Hansen in his history of Old Fort Snelling. "He was a half-breed whom Meriwether Lewis had met on his expedition up the Missouri River. He took the boy with him back to St. Louis; and when Lewis died, Campbell returned to his Sioux relatives and finally drifted to the agency at Fort Snelling. Having a knowledge of four languages, and possessing the confidence of all the tribes within four hundred miles of the post, he was indispensable. From August, 1825, to April, 1826, he was engaged in the fur trade, but was lured back into service by a salary of thirty-four dollars per month and one ration per day. By 1843, however, he had become such a drunkard that he had to be dismissed.

"The veteran missionary, S. W. Pond, in recalling early days wrote that 'Scott Campbell no longer sits smoking his long pipe, and conversing in low tones with the listless loungers around the old Agency House; but who that resided in this country thirty or forty years ago can pass by the old stone houses near Fort Snelling and not think of Major Taliaferro and of his interpreter?' "

In all probability the bishop met Major Lawrence Taliaferro, possibly a number of times during his visit. From 1820 to 1840 that gentleman was the government Indian agent for St. Peter's, one of the best and most widely known agents in the Northwest. He was from an old Virginia family whose ancestors had come from Genoa, Italy. A colored female slave of his, Harriet, had married Dred Scott, when that subsequently famous personage, the hero — or the victim — of the Dred Scott decision, had come to Fort Snelling with his master in the thirties.

Scott Campbell, the major's interpreter, was the son of Colin Campbell, an influential Scotch trader and interpreter. For at least three generations, members of this family served as interpreters in the Northwest. Scott was born at Prairie du Chien in 1790. It was with him that Bishop Loras stayed during his visit to St. Peter's, for he mentioned in one of his letters "the house in which Mr. Scott [the bishop insisted upon calling the interpreter "Scott" instead of "Campbell"] had afforded me and Mr. Pelamourgues the most generous hospitality." And in another letter he stated: "The wife of our host, who had already received some religious instruction, was baptized and confirmed; she subsequently received the sacrament of matrimony and made her first communion."

Campbell's wife was one of the three married women who were baptized. That a warm friendship must have sprung up between the gentle bishop and

the hardy Scotch-Sioux interpreter can be gleaned from a letter written by Father Galtier, a missionary whom Bishop Loras sent to St. Peter's the following April. "I introduced myself to Mr. Campbell, a Scotch gentleman, the Indian interpreter, to whom I was recommended by the Bishop. At his house, I received a kind welcome from his good Christian wife, a charitable Catholic woman. For about a month I remained there as one of the family."

On June 29th Abbé Pelamourgues baptized three of the Campbell children: Baptiste, John, and Marguerite. Baptiste was the first and perhaps the youngest of the children of the Campbell family to be baptized. For him Antoine Papin, Major Taliaferro's old blacksmith of the Indian agency and later one of the first settlers of St. Paul, stood as godfather. One week later, on July 5th, the bishop himself baptized the other four children: Hypolite, Joseph, Henriette, and Mathias. This last lad was referred to later as Scott Campbell, Jr., but here it is clear that he was named after the bishop, whose Christian name was Mathias. Last of all Margaret Menager Campbell, Scott's wife, then thirty-two years of age, was baptized. Historians have alleged that she was a Menominee half-breed, although that seems strange since the wives of nearly all the voyageurs in that vicinity were Chippewas or Sioux. Half-breed she was, but Bishop Loras recorded that she was "in the tribe of the Sioux".

Twenty-three years later, in December, 1862, thirty-eight Sioux Indians were waiting in prison at Mankato to be hanged for their part in the Minnesota massacres that year. Of the thirty-eight who were to be executed, three were half-breeds, and one of them was Baptiste Campbell, the youngest son of the interpreter at old St. Peter's. Guilty of many crimes, including the murder of a man and a woman, he appealed to a Catholic priest for spiritual absolution. "About six o'clock on Christmas morning, I gave Holy Communion to the three metizos" (half-breeds), wrote Father Ravoux in his *Memoirs*. "It was the first and last time they received the Bread of Angels." Apparently Father Ravoux, who had come to Dubuque as a Catholic missionary in 1839 and had been ordained by Bishop Loras, knew nothing of Baptiste Campbell's previous religious contact with the bishop.

Thirty of the condemned Indians were baptized. Baptiste acted as interpreter. As his father had served the Dubuque bishop and abbé twenty-three years before, so Baptiste, with the same linguistic talent that his father had shown, served Father Ravoux on this occasion. An Iowa bishop and abbé had presided over his auspicious Christian initiation on the banks of the Mississippi beneath the walls of Fort Snelling; and a former Iowa missionary gave him absolution on the eve of his execution in the prison yard at Mankato.

But the tragic sequel of that early visit of Bishop

Loras among his converts at St. Peter's is not finished. John Campbell, who "was a man of more than usual physical beauty — had long, curly, black hair, dark expressive eyes, and a finely proportioned figure," was hanged at Mankato also, on May 3, 1865, for the murder of the Jewett family. And Hypolite, another brother, baptized by Bishop Loras himself, had also engaged in the Minnesota massacres but escaped to Manitoba.

M. M. Hoffman

Comment by the Editor

MATERIALS OF LITERATURE

A new type of biography has come into vogue. Gamaliel Bradford began it with his psychographies; Lytton Strachey revived the times of Queen Victoria in illuminating anecdotes; and André Maurois made biographical portraiture a work of art in *Ariel.* Now Claude G. Bowers, Mary Newton Stanard, Cameron Rogers, Carl Sandburg, and a host of others are converting biography into literature. By applying the technique of the novelist they turn a man's life into a story. The failures and successes, attitudes and whims of the hero are presented in a series of vivid incidents which proceed and merge with all the skill of a motion picture until out of the vital facts of life comes the cumulative impression of flesh and blood reality. From a wealth of truthful episodes arrayed in proper perspective and touched with creative imagination emerges the actual human personality that once had being. The story biographer essays to portray the essence of his subject.

Enduring literature, whether it be fiction, biography, poetry, essay, or drama, is founded upon the verities of human life. Style, diction, and form are important, but truthful interpretation is abso-

lutely essential. Pure fancy, unrelated to experience, produces a shallow, empty vessel, pretty and sounding perhaps, but devoid of purpose or value. The materials of literature are the facts of history. Literature consists of glimpses of reality — significant yet typical characters figuring in probable events and displaying the natural traits of their kind — transformed and embellished by the hand of the artist.

With the facts of canine nature which Jack London gleaned from Egerton R. Young's *My Dogs in the Northland*, he wove on the background of his own arctic experience the story of Buck in *The Call of the Wild*. The Bushyagers in Herbert Quick's Iowa trilogy are the Rainsbargers of reality; and *The Invisible Woman* begins appropriately with the Pomeroy cyclone. Aside from the fact that wind is characteristic of the prairies and might be expected to blow through the literature of this country, perhaps the graphic description of that tornado was intended to be symbolical also of the whirl and confusion and desolation of State politics — a sort of topic chapter of the book. Local history, in all its omnifarious detail, is the soil from which the literature of a nation springs.

SAD ENDINGS

Realism is not necessarily tedious or morbid or futile, because life itself is not entirely dull or unwholesome or useless. The evils of the world are

seldom unmitigated; success and failure are not mutually exclusive; and everything does come out all right as often as wrong. Joy is as prevalent as sorrow. Sad endings are sometimes inevitable, but the triumph of sin or misfortune is not an object to be sought for itself alone.

The death of Rantchewaime was a tragedy, but the memory of her beauty and goodness survived. Through the gruesome afflictions of the Pomeroy cyclone shine the charity and generosity of the people who hastened to aid the stricken town. And though three of the Campbell family departed from the way of righteousness, the conversion of the others may not have been in vain. The literary biographers are true realists, for they accept a man and his life as they find them; and out of his achievements and shortcomings, his idiosyncrasies and emotions they reconstruct his personality.

J. E. B.

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