

Where Two of Us Went

[The following letter by "One of Us" describes the vicissitudes of winter travel in north central Iowa in pioneer days. It appeared in the Dubuque *Weekly Times* of February 24, 1859. THE EDITOR.]

Belmont, Wright Co., Iowa, Feb. 9, 1859
Messrs. Editors. — Early this morning two of us left the flourishing town of Webster City — which was the city so happily described by your "itinerant" [Jesse Clement], on a trip to some of the counties lying up near the Minnesota line. The mercury indicated 12° below zero when we started, and a stiff breeze was blowing from the North, full in our faces. Our outfit consisted of an old "pung," drawn by two nags in very tolerable condition, two buffalo robes, three large heavy "comfortables," two blankets, a basket of edibles, and a big hickory block, half charred by baking in a red-hot oven, for the purpose of keeping up the circulation in our pedal extremities. Being both of us utter temperance men, it is not presumable that anything like "Claret" or "Schoidam Schnapps" formed a part of our real or imaginary necessities. We ascended the valley of the White Fox, keeping on our route several beautiful prairies. After proceeding some seven miles we passed the shelter

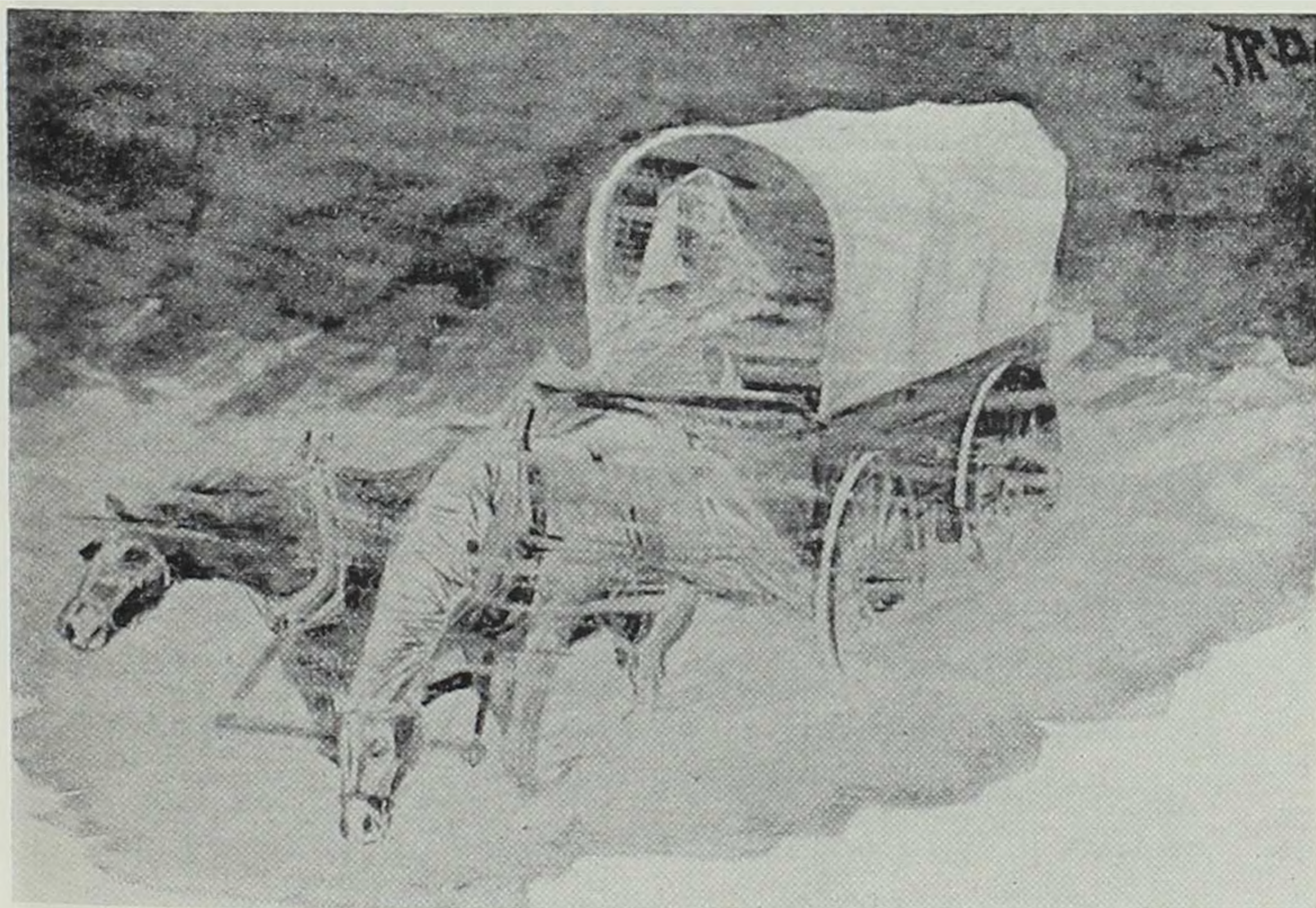
of the last grove, and struck out upon the open prairie. Here old Boreas greeted us with more ferocity than I have experienced at his hands for many a month past. We had proceeded but a short distance when my traveling chum informed me that my nose was freezing. I applied a cataplasm — always ready — of snow. We had proceeded but a short distance when he informed me that my left cheek was also “taking it.” Applied the usual prescription and passed on. Some dozen or more times during the forenoon ride, did my comrade impart to me similar gratifying information, sometimes laughing and sometimes commiserating my very evident predisposition to suffer from the twinges of Jack Frost.

At noon we arrived at the celebrated “Wall Lake,” of which you and your readers have heard so much. This wall is formed by the up heaved ice along the shores, carrying with it masses of dirt and gravel. This process is now going on, and large slabs of ice are in a standing position all along the shores.

Fed our good nags, solaced the “inner man” with sundry joints of cold fowls, &c., &c., and *thawed out* by the fire of the hospitable settler who made his “claim” at the lake a year or two since.

About 2 p.m. we bundled up and traveled over the frozen bosom of the lake and struck out due north on the open prairie for this place. Got be-

wildered after a short time and stopped to "take an observation." Found our pocket compass needle unshipped, and for some time feared that we should lose our course; but picking it open with a pocket-knife, we soon put it "to rights," found the course and passed along.



Caught in a Blizzard.

During this p. m., had the laugh upon my comrade. His nose and feet were frozen at least twenty times, frequently in patches as large as a

twenty-five cent piece, while I, luckily enough, passed unscathed.

We passed the little Wall Lake and Plum Grove, and arrived here just as the sun dipped below the Western horizon. We have partaken of a substantial supper, spread by mine host, M. O. O. Kent, cared for the team, and am now "as comfortable as can be expected."

We have attended the flourishing village lyceum this evening, and listened to a thorough ventilation of the social relations of the sexes.

This is a flourishing little village on the Iowa river, and is destined to become quite an important point when times revive, and the resources of the surrounding country are developed. It has a steam saw mill, cabinet shop, blacksmith shop, a store, and the finest school house in this section of the State. A doctor and a lawyer — my friends Cutler and Kent — dispense pills and pettifogging, as family ailments and the belligerent spirit of the community demand. A fine flouring mill is in process of erection. The town needs a merchant, and another lawyer would find it a very good location.

To-morrow morning we pass on over the wastes of snow at the north, destined for Winnebago, Worth, and Cerro Gordo counties. Whether I shall write you again depends very much upon whether I do or not. If I do, you shall hear from me.

Yours,

ONE OF US.

P.S. I have a little bone to pick with "Itinerant." In speaking of the freezing to death of several inhabitants in this section during the last three years, he left it to be inferred that it was a fault of the country, whereas, the cases he mentioned could nearly all be traced to the utmost carelessness. We have some "cold snaps" out here, but not colder than in New York or New England. Let no one who desires a pleasant home be scared out by the cold weather, and the next time "Itinerant" sets these things out, let him be more explanatory and less terrific.