

THE PALIMPSEST

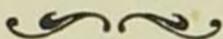
EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

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Glory Enough

When the Reverend Landon Taylor was sixty-eight years old, he resolved to write the memoirs of his life, dwelling particularly upon the labors of his long and faithful Methodist ministry in Iowa. The following stories of his experiences from 1856 to 1858 as presiding elder of the Sioux City district are adapted for THE PALIMPSEST from The Battlefield Reviewed which he published in 1881.—The Editor.

The first session of the Upper Iowa Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church was held this year (1856) at Maquoketa. Bishop E. S. Janes was with us, and the writer was elected secretary, with Rev. Elias Skinner for assistant. I had made my arrangements to continue in the work of the Sunday-school agency, as the experience of the year past enabled me to understand its wants, but a preacher was wanted for the Sioux City district, and no one could be found willing to go. As the last extremity, toward the close of the conference, the bishop informed me

that "they had come to a full stop, and could proceed no further in their conference business until they found a man for the Missouri Valley; that several of the brethren had been solicited to go, but refused, and now he wished to know whether I was willing."

I answered, "Bishop, if this is your only hope, put me down."

I was fully aware that it required a sacrifice to leave many friends, and well-organized society, and travel a distance of 350 miles, and then to find no society and but few of the comforts and conveniences of life. But then I knew also that forests could not be explored and new countries settled and cultivated without the courage of the hardy pioneer, and I was willing to accept my share and stand up boldly at the call of duty; and, should small rations or hardships intervene, no human being could meet them with greater fortitude or a better grace than a true minister of the gospel of Christ. Such were my convictions; and, inspired with the fortitude that Christ only imparts, I accepted the perils and awaited the honors.

In reading the appointments, when the bishop came to "Sioux City district, Landon Taylor; Sioux City station, Landon Taylor," he paused; then, with the emphasis which he only could im-

part, he exclaimed: "Glory enough for one man!" So far as territory was concerned, one-fourth of the State was under my supervision, and being presiding elder and stationed preacher also, I was endowed with double honor.

All things in readiness, I started for the "western slope", accompanied by Rev. D. J. Havens. About the third night out, having to sleep in our wagon, we passed through a hard experience. The mosquitoes were without number, and as this peril had not been anticipated, our netting was not on hand. Such a night's rest was not refreshing, and when daylight appeared, my colleague concluded that if this was a foretaste of the bishop's "glory", the consummation must be decidedly rich. But so far as mosquito experience was concerned, this was but the beginning, for they gathered strength in ratio to the distance, until near Webster City, when we put up for the Sabbath at a Yankee farmhouse where we found protection.

On Monday morning, as we were starting out on the prairie, Brother Havens was in advance with a hatchet in his hand when some prairie chickens flew up before him. He let fly his hatchet and took off one's head. Nothing occurred on our route so inspiring to him as this feat which seemed to break the monotonous spell and

placed him on a higher plane of enjoyment. When we reached Sac City and enjoyed the luxury of a good cup of coffee at Leonard Austin's, where we passed the night, we both felt like new men, for this was the first we had had on our way. At this point the weather turned cooler, and two successive frosts swept the crop of corn throughout the western part of the State and closed up our mosquito history for that fall.

At Smithland, thirty miles from Sioux City, I preached my first sermon in my district, and Brother Havens gave his opening discourse on his circuit. If ever there was a time in my ministry when I could appropriate the language of Cowper, I could do it now without scruple.

I am monarch of all I survey,
My right there is none to dispute;
From the center, all round to the sea,
I am lord of the fowl and the brute.

It was said of one of our brethren, when raised to the dignity of presiding elder, that he started off singing:

This is the way I long have sought,
And mourned because I found it not.

But no such jubilant lyric was I tempted to sing during all my ministry in the Sioux City district. Had I been so tempted at any time, a circuit of

nearly three hundred miles filled with creeks and sloughs and roving Indians and swarms of flies and mosquitoes would have changed the meter into this:

Better dwell in the midst of alarms
Than to reign in this horrible place.

Upon my arrival at Sergeant's Bluff, I remained for a while with Brother T. Elwood Clark. The fall of 1856 was very beautiful, and within a few days I went to work and put up an office twelve by sixteen feet. Before cold weather I had it finished, using it for a study, bedroom, and chapel.

Upon Council Bluffs, one hundred miles south, we depended for provisions, but the weather had been so pleasant during the month of November that a supply had not been obtained. On the first day of December, winter commenced with snow from the northwest, increasing in severity until the afternoon of the second day, when the climax was reached. About two P. M. I started from my office to dinner, about ten rods distant. When about one rod on my way I became lost, not being able to see my hand before me. I halted and queried: "Strange, if I should perish within a few feet of my door!" But, I thought, "as I am facing the storm northwest, if I return south-

east I will strike my office." This happy idea brought me into safe quarters, but dinner was dispensed with for that day. The storm continued for three days, and snow reached the depth of four feet on the level, accompanied with a crust so hard as to bear up a man. This was truly a snow blockade, for no one could travel for weeks, and many people, being short of provisions, had to subsist upon hominy and a few potatoes.

The time soon came when our larder was exhausted and something had to be done. Though the snow was four feet deep, the storm still raging, and the roads almost impassable, there was no alternative but to go to Council Bluffs after provisions or we might perish. And so Brother Clark and myself, each with a team, started out upon this perilous journey of one hundred miles. When we met a team loaded, we gave the whole road. In that event we shoveled a side track sufficiently large to admit our team until the other went by, then returned to the beaten road. And thus we continued until we reached our place of destination. Having obtained our supplies we faced the storm, which at times was so furious that we could scarcely see our teams, the drifts filling up the road as soon as it was broken. But the peril was passed, the goal was reached. On

the eighth day we reached home, having incurred the greatest dangers and endured the most severe experience in my life.

Such was the depth of snow during this winter that in some instances it was dangerous to venture far from home, in view of the hungry wolves. Mr. Little, where we put up for a night on our trip, had been out to his grove, about one mile from home, after a load of wood, when his large dog was attacked by several wolves. Within five minutes nothing was left but his bones; and the owner had to flee for life, leaving his wood behind. In another instance, a negro had been out a little distance from home, chopping, when on his return he was driven by a pack of wolves into a fence corner, where his remains and his ax were found, with six dead wolves lying by his side.

During this severe winter I missed only one appointment, and that was on the Sabbath during my trip to Council Bluffs for provisions. Safely housed again after this trip of two hundred miles, it was a comfort to think that we had food enough to meet our wants. But what of our neighbors? Many were reduced to the last extremity, subsisting for weeks on parched corn, and nearly perishing for want of wood. But this was not all. The severe frost in September had injured the corn crop, so that little was saved and even

that was very poor. I paid two dollars per bushel for inferior corn in order to keep my team through the winter.

But in the midst of this dreary weather, hedged in on every side by snowdrifts, cut off as it were from the blessings of good society for months, I could realize all that is meant in this stanza:

From every stormy wind that blows,
From every swelling tide of woes,
There is a calm, a sure retreat;
'Tis found beneath the mercy-seat.

Through the varied experiences of my ministry I have treasured up this lesson — that friendships formed through the history of perils and hardships in a new country are very sacred and of an enduring character. This idea is embraced by our Savior when he said to his disciples: "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations." Take old soldiers, for example, who have shared the hardships and faced the dangers on many battlefields. Let them meet after a separation of many years; the outgushing emotions from the memory of past experiences are beyond control. The rush of past events turns toward each other the currents of affection, and for a time the old hero becomes a child. The same is true in the maturity of Christian friend-

ships created in distant lands, and through the trials of a new country.

There were two or three oases, however, in this wintry desert, that served to break the dreary solitude and awaken new interests and pursuits. During the beautiful fall, two or three enterprising men came in from other States and sojourned with us during the winter season, and their presence and cheerful spirits were like sunshine in the glade. I have long since learned that it requires less grace to be cheerful and jovial sitting by a warm fire than in facing a driving snow-storm from the northwest.

Brother Havens had charge of Smithland circuit. As soon as the weather would permit, I made him a visit, and continued our meeting nearly one week. Quite a number were converted and added to the church. Among them was the lady of the house where Brother Havens was making his home. Her husband a few months previous, owning a sawmill in the town, was caught by his circular saw and killed instantly. She was a talented and amiable woman, and during that year her name was changed to Havens.

During the summer of 1857 quite a number of ministers from the East visited Sioux City with a view of investing a little in land for future use. Our city was then a small town of but a few

hundred inhabitants, but it was well situated to become a place of commercial importance, being distant one hundred miles from any competing city and with such an immense valley and fertile country to sustain it. The early settlers were intelligent and enterprising. Of one hundred persons attending church in that early period, nearly all classes of professional men were present, and a fair proportion were graduated from some institution of learning. To me it was a great pleasure to preach the gospel to such a class of men and women, for I felt assured that if I presented anything deserving commendation it would be appreciated. Though cultivating new soil and enduring hardships and privations, we had some bright spots along the way.

One of these was my home with Brother and Sister Yeomans in Sioux City, where I always found a "light in the window" for me. Dr. S. P. Yeomans had been a practicing physician, but was then register of the land office and a local preacher in the Methodist Church. He and his wife had been the first to welcome me and their generous hospitality during my whole sojourn as presiding elder in that district greatly contributed to relieve my hard experiences, and make me feel at home among strangers in a strange land. Upon the return of summer, our table supplies became

more plentiful, and once more we enjoyed the luxury of milk and butter — the latter at fifty cents a pound, and we were thankful to secure it at that price.

LONDON TAYLOR