

Lost in a Snow Storm

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ISSN 0003-4827

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Recommended Citation

Larrabee, William. "Lost in a Snow Storm." *The Annals of Iowa* 1 (1893), 106-111.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.2418>

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fire from their muskets had the appearance of one unbroken flame of fire, covering the whole field with an impenetrable cloud of smoke. It was more than human courage could withstand, the rebel columns wavered and recoiled, and then a retreat began, and when the 11th Missouri and 27th and 63d Ohio rushed forward with fixed bayonets, it became a rout. Many threw down their arms and surrendered rather than take the chances of a retreat, exposed to the fearful fire in passing over the open space back to the cover of the timber. Some of the officers, however, even after the first recoil from the blaze of musketry, were conspicuous in an attempt to rally their broken lines and renew the charge. In this last vain endeavor Colonel Rogers, of the 2d Texas Infantry, commanding a brigade, fell mortally wounded, after having absolutely reached the ditch in front of the battery. This was the final death struggle of the battle of Corinth.

The writer of this article disclaims any attempt to give a full account of the battle of Corinth. It was begun with the single purpose of relating some of the incidents connected with the charge on Battery Robinet. In order to do this it seemed necessary to describe some of the movements which led to this final supreme effort of the rebels, and incidentally to relate how the writer happened to be in position to have a full view of this heroic charge and no less heroic defense.

(Conclusion in next number.)

LOST IN A SNOW STORM.

BY EX-GOVERNOR WILLIAM LARRABEE.

The winter of 1856-7 was unusually severe in the north-west—in fact, none ever equalled it in the memory of the oldest settler. Snow fell to an enormous depth, and the mercury not infrequently ranged from 20° to 40° below zero for several days in succession. A series of great storms—now called “blizzards”—from the boreal regions—swept the prairies, whirling the dust of the powdery snow in a wild dance and piling up

large banks wherever natural or artificial obstacles interrupted their turbulent course. During that long and severe winter nearly all the deer in northern Iowa were destroyed, some freezing, others starving to death, still others getting fast in the deep, crust-covered snow, and being killed by the merciless settlers while in this helpless condition. Few of the frontier people were prepared for such a winter, and certainly none had anticipated it. Thousands suffered for want of sufficient clothing and fuel, and many a man, overtaken by a blinding storm, or tired out wading through the deep snow, froze to death on the prairie, perhaps only a stone's throw from home.

Such winters are fortunately a rare occurrence, even in the Northwest. Moreover, the people of this region have learned to provide for cold weather, and probably keep now as comfortable and get as much enjoyment out of the cold season as their countrymen east or south.

During the month of December, 1856, with my year's earnings in my pocket, I journeyed through the southeastern part of Minnesota with a view to select a good quarter section of government land. I finally made my choice, and then, to enter the land, set out for Winona, where the land office was located.

On the morning of the 23d of December, I left Mantorville and walked to Rochester, a distance of about seventeen miles, where I arrived about 4 o'clock in the afternoon. It had commenced snowing before I reached that town, but anxious to make a few more miles before dark, and hoping to find an inn on the road, I took lunch at Rochester and again pursued my journey.

As night approached a fierce wind arose and inwrapped me in blinding eddies of snow. The road followed a ridge between the Zumbro and Root rivers. There was no house, no fence or other landmark in sight. At first a well-beaten track served as my guide, but this was soon obliterated by the drifting snow. I found that I had lost the road and was forced to rely upon the wind to indicate my course. The snow was from one and a half to two feet deep and was covered with an icy

crust. Having already walked more than twenty miles, I plodded wearily through the sea of snow.

The wind increased in severity as the night wore along, and every new gust seemed to be ushered in by a more furious howl. The high, treeless prairie presented no obstacles to the icy wave. As the blasts swept by me they seemed to penetrate every pore of my body. I was but thinly clad. Like other new comers, I had not yet learned to properly protect myself against the severity of the western winter. I wore neither overcoat nor overshoes, a pair of stockings and cowhide boots forming my sole foot-gear. For a few steps the snow would bear my weight and then give suddenly way below me; and as I fell headlong upon the snow or broke through its crust, the fine crystals worked into my boots and gradually melting there, chilled my feet till their numbness reminded me that they were beginning to freeze. My body, however, was perspiring freely from the severe physical exercise, and perhaps also in consequence of the fear occasioned by the thought of freezing to death.

I had probably traveled eight or nine hours and was from ten to twelve miles out from Rochester before I fully realized the desperateness of my situation. I had no means of knowing how far I had strayed from the high road; I had walked mile after mile without discovering the least trace of a settlement, and the chances of finding a human habitation during the remainder of the night were small indeed. The whole landscape seemed to be wrapped in a cloud of white dust, and unless the glimmer of a light happened to penetrate the snow-filled air, I was almost as likely to step upon a mile stone below the snow as to find a human residence while groping my way through the blinding storm.

It could not be far from midnight, and as I was well aware that farmers are wont to retire early, the hope of being rescued by a guiding light appeared to me extremely slight.

Somewhat discouraged, I paused to consider the advisability of turning around to find my way back to Rochester, but a moment's reflection convinced me of the utter impracticability

of such an undertaking. I had but little chance to successfully retrace my steps. Besides this, it would have been an all night's journey, and I was too much exhausted for such a task. The growing numbness of my feet and the drowsiness which was gradually stealing upon me, made me realize more and more the extreme danger into which I had placed myself. Feeling that possibly I had but a very few hours, at the farthest, during which I could hope to use my lower extremities, I determined to make the best of my time and pushed on.

The rage of the storm seemed to increase from minute to minute. Toward midnight, with a temperature of from 20° to 40° below zero, the wind blew at a rate of from thirty to fifty miles an hour. Overpowered by the conviction that I could not hold out much longer, I occasionally halloed as loud as my strength would permit, in the hope of making myself heard by some one. But the maddened winds only seemed to mock my efforts.

With death staring me in the face, I could not help speculating upon the probable fate of my body. It flashed through my mind that the wolves would be likely to pick my bones, and that when my skeleton would be found in the spring and my identity discovered or surmised, the newspapers would contain an item to the effect that I had been found dead on the prairie between Rochester and Winona, that presumably I had partaken too freely of strong liquor, and straying from the road, had frozen to death. As I had never even tasted of liquor, this thought worried me greatly and seemed to revive my flagging energies. From that day to this I have been careful not to ascribe any serious accident to intoxication, unless indications clearly justified such a charge.

While these and similar thoughts were still engaging my mind, I came to a partially constructed pioneer cabin. The structure consisted only of four walls of roughly joined logs. It had neither roof nor door, nor window, and the logs were not even chinked. Some one had probably commenced building this cabin on his claim late in the fall but had been compelled by the approach of winter to abandon it.

The discovery of this symbol of pioneer civilization in the snowy desert greatly encouraged me and I at once resolved to make it my headquarters for further explorations. A short survey of this airy resort fully convinced me that to rest here was to surrender to grim death without a struggle. Remembering that there is a well marked disposition among pioneers to settle in clusters, I determined to walk in a wide circle around this embryo cabin in the hope of finding some human habitation near it.

Taking a radius of about sixty or eighty rods, I proceeded to carry out my plan. I had passed not much more than half around the circle, when, after surmounting a long swell in the prairie, I discovered a small grove in the distance. I at once abandoned my former base and quickened my steps, fully assured that if there was a house anywhere upon that wide prairie, it would be found in the shelter of the grove before me. I had not advanced very far when I espied a faint glimmer of light proceeding, as it seemed to me, from a snow bank across a small ravine. Flying in the direction of this light as fast as my benumbed feet would carry me, I presently found myself before a small log cabin, which was half buried in a snow drift. It had but one little window, of which the lower portion was hidden by the snow, while its upper panes were so thickly covered with frost that they scarcely permitted the light to pass through them.

The joy which I experienced at the sight of this lowly cabin may be imagined, but cannot be described. I rapped loudly on the door and, when it was opened, did not even wait for an invitation to enter, but boldly stepped in. The house was occupied by a Mrs. Foot, with her three sons. After they had listened to the brief story of my cold adventure, the young men pulled off my boots and then brought in a pail of water to thaw out my frozen feet. They gave me a warm supper and a bed on the floor of the small attic. I slept close to the stovepipe and had a good night's rest. Never shall I forget the hospitality which I received at the hands of these kind-hearted people. From them I learned that theirs was the only

house within one mile of the main road for a distance of twenty miles, and that several persons had frozen to death on that road the previous winter.

The next morning, with the mercury hovering about the point of congelation, I walked fifteen miles to St. Charles, and on Christmas morning I proceeded from there to Winona. The wind had given away to a complete calm, and as I came in sight of that city a most beautiful spectacle, only to be seen in such a climate, presented itself to my eyes. The smoke from hundreds of chimneys rose in almost perpendicular columns until it seemed to vanish in the azure sky. Beyond the city lay the crystallized level of the majestic Mississippi, bordered by the snow-covered bluffs of the Wisconsin shore.

I went to the land office and, after paying a premium of five per cent for exchange of my wild-cat money for gold, entered my quarter section of land, and then turned my face toward my Iowa home, which I reached a day or two before the close of the old year, after having walked more than 600 miles in the midst of the severe weather of that extraordinary winter.

THE TWENTY-FOURTH IOWA VOLUNTEERS.

FROM MUSCATINE TO WINCHESTER.

BY THAD. L. SMITH.

(Continued from April number.)

BATTLE OF CHAMPION HILL.

The column, Hovey's division in advance, reached Bolton Station about 4 P. M. on the 15th. Here our advance guard encountered the enemy's pickets, and a sharp skirmish ensued. Having driven the pickets about a mile, the skirmishers were withdrawn, a position chosen, the line of battle formed, our own pickets put out, arms stacked, and the men ordered to remain close to their guns.

A few, however, paid a hurried visit to Bolton Station, cap-

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