

A Letter From Hope, to the Herald, Omro, Wisconsin by a Dakotan.

Hope, N. D., Jan. 29, 1897.

Dear Editor: On visiting a neighbor's home this evening, I was both surprised and pleased to find among other papers, a copy of the Omro Herald, and you can imagine with what eagerness I scanned its pages, containing as it did news of friends and home. I believe it was said of Campbell's poems by a brother bard, upon finding a thumb-worn volume of them at a way side inn far removed from the noise and strife of this busy old world of ours, "This indeed is true fame," and I at once thought of those words on discovering a copy of the Herald in one of these far off western homes. It served to remind me of a promise made you in Wisconsin before leaving for North Dakota viz: That I would write something for publication regarding my impressions formed and experiences while serving in the humble capacity of instructor in the common schools of North Dakota.

Now, friend Slocum, I am not gifted by nature with those qualifications necessary to the profitable and successful wooing of the gentle muse; however, asking your patience and that of your readers, I will briefly chronicle some of the said impressions and experiences. You will remember that it was my plan on leaving Wisconsin to surprise my cousin, L. N. Wood, who is located at Valley City by appearing in that city on Thanksgiving day, to enjoy a week's visit with him before assuming my duties here. My plans fell through, for the first person whom I met on entering the lobby of the Nicollet hotel, Minneapolis, was Lynn Wood and John Paris, a former Waukau boy, now located at Prairie DuChien, Wisconsin. We went on to Valley City the next day arriving there on the 25th of November the day of the great blizzard.

The English language is far too frail to express my feelings, as, looking out of my window the following morning, I took a mental survey of the scene before me. Imagine a howling wind blowing at the rate of—miles (I refrain from making an attempt at estimating the speed) an hour, the air filled with whirling, blinding snow, and the mercury 35 degrees below. All day long and the next night it raged, and on the day following, when we were able to look out again from our retreat, the sight which met my gaze was not calculated to inspire one with the most enthusiastic ideas regarding North Dakota.

The streets of the city were blockaded; struggling inhabitants were wallowing through drifts piled mountain high in vain efforts to perform in a measure the duties of daily life. The buildings looked indeed like "tall and shanted ghosts" as Whitter described it, covered with fine snow driven into every nook and crevice of them. We managed to get down town and learn some of the late reports regarding the damage done by the storm.

A train filled with passengers was reported snowed in at a cut about two miles from the city, and accompanying a relief crew, carrying food and fuel, we went out to the scene of their imprisonment. The caboose and part of the passenger coaches were alone visible, the larger portion of the train being completely covered in the immense drift. The passengers after being well supplied with food and fuel, concluded to make the best of it, evidently, and seemed to rather enjoy their novel predicament. Several of the male passengers walked in to the city with us on our return preferring a room in the hotel to the cramped quarters of the imprisoned coaches.

Whole car loads of stock were reported frozen to death in belated freight cars along the route of the N. P. Telegraph wires were down, and direct communication with the outer world cut off completely. The immense rotary snow plow used in the west were brought into service and crews of men were busy shoveling for nearly a week before we were again connected with the outer world.

This was my first experience in North Dakota and you will not wonder when I wrote that my thoughts assumed a somber and gloomy hue somewhat, when I thought of the dear old state of Wisconsin, with its mild winter, its genial firesides, its lakes, beautiful groves and meadows. Throughout all I was cheered by the consoling information suggested by my friends that "it is beautiful here in the summer-time." How very gratifying to one nursing a frost-bitten ear, and gazing on the scene I have pictured.

But to assume a more pleasant and cheerful thread of my narrative, let me say that in many respects North Dakota is the peer of our eastern states, and that this storm I have just described is far from an everyday occurrence; in fact, the most severe and damaging of any the state has ever experienced. The class of people occupying the larger farms are many of them eastern people, full of energy and vim and prospering as are few who are engaged in similar pursuits east.

The wheat crop has been excellent and prices very good. It is estimated the largest track of land will be cultivated this coming spring that has ever been cultivated in the history of the Dakotas. I look around me for the want and suffering so often described in our home papers and I find none. I notice every farmer comfortably housed, fuel and food in abundance, comfortable buildings for his stock and a general air of thrift and prosperity pervading the country wholly unexpected by me. I will venture to say that in no place in this or any country will one meet with more genial hospitality, more comfort and happiness than in these western homes. The towns surrounding are also busy hustling burghs, void of that plethoric lethargy so characteristic of many places.

Hope, a village of some 500 inhabitants supports a bank, several churches, opera house, skating rink, and restaurants and stores in abundance. In one store seven clerks are employed and kept busy, and the assortments of goods are equal in variety to those of establishments gracing cities of several thousand people in the east. There are four large elevators in the place, and their records is frequently six and seven thousand bushels of wheat handled by each in one day, especially in the fall of the year. The politics of the state are as you know, republican, the most important offices being elected from that ticket in the last election.

In conclusion, let me say that I am happily disappointed in North Dakota, and while loyal to my own state, am confident that the day is coming when this country will rank among the first in wealth and opulence of those comprising this grand old Union of ours. I enclose you the subscription price to the Herald for '97. It comes as a ray of sunshine to one removed from home ties, and its pages are read with interest. Wishing you the compliments of the season, I am,

Sincerely yours,

F. T. LINCOLN.