

A Night and a Day in a Snowdrift

By REV. HENNING GUSTAFSON

In the COVENANT COMPANION for January was a story and a picture from the snow covered regions of Lappland, Sweden. When I read that story it revived many memories of similar nature from Alaska several years ago. Thinking it will be of interest to the readers of the COMPANION, I will relate one of these experiences.

It was Jan. 4, 1916. The reindeer belonging to the mission should be separated from the main herd and transferred north. The herd was about ten miles from the village in the forest region. We were six men to do the work, the four herders, one Lapplander who had kindly promised to help, and myself. The first day was chiefly taken up by preparing the corral and getting things ready. The tent was pitched near the open field just at the edge of the forest.

After the day's work we had our supper in the little tent, which was warm and comfortable, as it was not very cold outside. Before going to bed I read a chapter from the Bible and we had evening prayer. It was Acts 27 chapter, telling of Paul's voyage to Rome, a story that will grip people that live by the sea more than others that have never seen an ocean. We read about the furious storm raging—but alas, how little did any one of us imagine that a fierce tempest of similar nature was soon upon us. We crept into our sleeping bags, which were placed on the ground, resting on soft twigs and branches from spruce and hemlocks. The boys gave me the best place in the tent farthest in and away from the door. Due to the rather strenuous exercise during the day and the fresh forest air, it did not take long before we were all sound asleep.

Between two and three o'clock in the morning I was awakened by the noise and commotion both inside and outside the tent. A roaring storm was raging and sent the snow against the tent with a force and noise that it sounded like ten thousand shots had been fired against a metal wall. The snow was fast filling the tent and piled up outside even to the top of it. The boys were all astir because one of them, Reuben Penepchok, had gone over to the corral to get a piece of canvass to cover up the door of the tent and had not returned. The corral was but a couple of hundred feet away, but due to the darkness and storm he was unable to find the tent. Seeing that it was useless to spend his strength walking around, he decided to find shelter elsewhere. He knew that by walking so that he had the wind on his left side he would reach the river, and could then follow it to a little village a few miles up. When he did not return, two of the men, Big Charley and Nicholas, started out searching for him. They suffered the same

fate, were lost in the storm and could find neither the man they sought nor the tent they were to return to. But they followed the same strategy in the battle against the elements as the former man had done—they took the same course and all of them reached the village some time in the forenoon.

The Lapplander, Peter Balls, had gone over to his camp for the night, and thus we were only two of us left, Sam Sigowak and myself. As for me I was helpless in my sleeping bag because all my clothes were covered with deep snow and scattered around; I could not find as much as a stocking to put on. Sam was dressed and in "running order." But I kept him in the tent till about nine o'clock when it began to dawn a little. Then I asked him if he would go up to the village and tell the people about my situation. Before he left I had him put up a pair of snow shoes in the shape of a triangle at my head. This was a safety measure, because the tent might fall down any minute due to the snow on the top. If it did crumble, it would then rest on the snow shoes and not come down on my head.

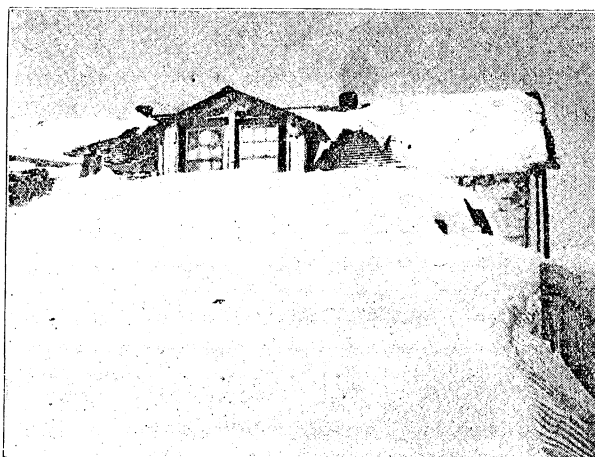
The following hours were without question the most solemn and the most serious in all my life. As yet it was not very cold and I felt fairly comfortable. However, my feet and legs were in a "pinch," because the tent had broken down and the snow rested heavily on them; they also began to feel cold. The upper part of the body was free so I could turn it a little. The snow was filling in more and more, so I had to thrust up my arm occasionally to make an air hole to breathe through. Thus the snow caved in all around me and started to melt so my underwear was soon soaking wet, but fortunately it was not very cold yet.

Mentally and spiritually I underwent a searching examination. Any one will do that when the doors of eternity may be opened any time and one is commanded to enter it. I had been a Christian for quite a few years and had tried to serve my Lord and Master, and had also had the privilege of winning a few souls for him. But all those things vanished away. I realized more than ever that if I should be saved, it had to be by grace alone. Well, I was prepared and, shall I say, willing to go if it was the Lord's will, and yet how dear did not life seem! How little accomplished! And besides, down in the

village I had a dear wife and two small children. It was almost heart rending to think of them being left alone and unable to get away from the place for six months until the navigation opened in the summer.

While I was thus meditating during the long forenoon and beginning of the afternoon, I was startled to hear a dog bark. I knew what it meant. The danger was over! My rescuers were there! In a minute a voice asked my name and I answered: "I am alright."

"He is alive yet," I heard him yell to the men just behind him. It was Harry Soxy that had spoken, he was running ahead of the dog team. Some of the COMPANION readers may have met Harry when he was here in the States a few years ago. In a few minutes the whole crew was engaged in lifting the tent out of the snow and pulling my sleeping bag out of the drift while I was in it. They lodged me in the



"Snowed In."

sled and tucked reindeer skins and sled covers around so I was well protected. Originally they had started with two teams, but the wind was so strong that the dogs refused to go. Then they put them all in one team and thus enlivened them all. Besides, Wilson Gonongnan, who has now been the native missionary at Mountain Village for a number of years, was running ahead of his dogs, which were placed in the lead, and as they would follow their master anywhere they followed him and thus the trip was made.

The return trip went better as it was with the wind. It was a joyride to me! Most of the people in the little village were standing out on the river bank eagerly awaiting the news whether they brought me dead or alive in the sled. Upon information of the latter they joyously called out: "Koianna! Koianna!" (Thankful, thankful!)

They took me into the best cabin in the

village, which belonged to Mollak. Mrs. Mollak gave me a suit of her husband's underwear to use while my own dried, and I laid down in their bed. O, how good it felt! They did all they could to make me comfortable. After a good sleep and a good meal I felt fine in the evening. Then the cabin was well filled with all the inhabitants of the village, and we had a real prayer and thangsgiving meeting. The previous evening we had read the twenty-seventh chapter of the Acts. It was logical to go on to the twenty-eighth. I read the first two verses, and how well did they not fit the occasion and our mutual experience. Listen:

"And when they were escaped then they knew that the island was called Melita. And the barbarous people (Sw. translation is better) "infödingar," natives, of which I informed them) showed us no little kindness for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain (snow), and because of the cold."

That text was like it had been made to order for the occasion! It was a wonderful evening in the little cabin.

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At some times it is indeed true that "Ignorance is bliss." Through the long weary hours of the night and day I had comforted myself with the thought that the storm was from the east, thus the village would be in the lee and not feel much of it. Oh, if this wind would be from the west, I thought with a feeling of horror, what havoc it would work down there! And later I learned that the wind was actually from the west or northwest. It had raised the water to a high level and broken up the ice along the coast and even several miles up the river, so it was almost impossible to travel there afterwards. The storm had torn roofs from some houses and sent natives' skin boats (kyaks) through the air for considerable distance. Nobody dared go out. Mrs. Gustafson and Miss Anna Carlson, the assistant lady mis-

sionary, had had a hard time as they were home alone. They had a severe difficulty to keep the doors shut as the wind forced them open. And they did not dare to kindle any fire though it was intensely cold. They could see how the sparks were flying from the houses where they had fire going. During the whole time they thought of how still and calm and nice it must be up in the forest where I was! Indeed, some times ignorance is bliss!

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It is needless to say that it was a reunion happier than words can tell when I reached home safe and sound. It had been a rare experience and of priceless value. It was rather agonizing while it lasted, but after it was over I would not have missed it for silver or gold. It is good for us, even though we are Christians, to be brought face to face with eternity some time. That was my experience during the night and the day that I spent in the snow drift.

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How Paul Received His Message

By G. H. ERICKSON

In the salutation of the Epistle to the Galatians, Paul says that he was "an apostle not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father." In another passage he speaks of himself as set apart by God "from his mother's womb" that the Son of God should in due time be revealed in him, and that by him the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles. He also says, "For I make known to you, brethren, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ." These passages bring out the fact that the gospel which Paul preached was a revelation to him directly from God. One can hardly believe that this revelation came in a mechanical way; that is, that God poured this message into Paul as one would pour water into a pipe. It must have come to him by a natural process. The environment in which he lived must have played a great part in shaping his life. The providential course of Paul's life seems to confirm this statement.

Since the average Jewish boy began his study of the law at the age of twelve or thirteen, it may be concluded with a strong degree of probability that Paul was sent to Jerusalem between the ages of ten and thirteen. Had it been later he could hardly have said that he was "brought up in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel." "This man's learning was so eminent and his character so revered, that he is one of the seven who

bon Gamaliel died, the Glory of the Law has ceased." He was a pharisee, but one who might be classed with Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, pharisees who had risen above the prejudices of their own party. That this man had a profound influence in the shaping of Paul's life is certain, and it may also be inferred that since he was so closely affiliated with him, he was privileged to enter into the presence of the secret circles, political and religious, which were held in Jerusalem at this time. To be sure it brought him into close contact with the Sanhedrin of which Gamaliel was probably a member. That he grew up to be a pharisee of the type of Gamaliel is certain. He himself tells us that he was "taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God." At the feet of this revered teacher he was taught the great spiritual realities about God and man which remained with him the same throughout life. He did not have to surrender them when he became a Christian. Paul was a theologian and when he became a true follower of Jesus he brought with him into the Christian realm his analytical mind and his love of order which he had acquired at the feet of his teacher.

While he was passing through the busy years of his student life in Jerusalem, there was growing up in a poor carpenter's home at Nazareth one whose teachings were to make a profound impression upon Paul's heart and mind. We are not sure when these two, Paul and his Lord, first

one of the doctors with whom Jesus was found conversing in the temple, and it might be possible that Paul in company with him had been very near to Jesus in the temple at some festival when he together with Mary and Joseph came up from Galilee.

What might have occupied Paul's time after his student days in Jerusalem is not known. Some think that he returned to Tarsus. Whether this is true or not we must assume that he at any rate would be found at Jerusalem during the festival days of the last Easter in the life of Jesus. There he would come in contact with Jesus. He must have attained an age of twenty-five or thirty when Jesus began his public ministry, and at that age a man of his type and training would be sure to have a cosmopolitan mind, and the rumors of Jesus would not pass him by, but be disturbing to his mind and material for reflection. He undoubtedly looked upon Jesus with his pharisaical conception of the Messiah, as a coming King who would be the deliverer for the Jews from the Roman yoke and the one who would restore the kingdom to Israel. At any rate, he is not to be looked upon as an enemy to Jesus at this early period.

That Paul was present in Jerusalem during the week of the Crucifixion, and that he saw Jesus at this time is very probable. If for no other reason than mere curiosity, this alone would be sure to bring Paul in close proximity to Jesus. He says, in 1 Cor. 9:1, "Have I not seen Jesus the Lord?"