

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

S. S. LANDT

The object in preparing this volume is from a duty I owe the family history that I have long neglected, to place upon record an account of some of the hardships and thrilling experiences endured by my people among the earliest settlers west of Lake Michigan, in Wisconsin. Some of them have been related to me but of many of them I have a vivid recollection.

I have written this all from memory within the last year, at the age of 84, for I fear that without a record this data would soon be lost and future generations could never know of the perils our forefathers encountered in helping to blaze the trail of civilization into the heart of this great country of ours.

As to my personal reminiscences, except one or two almost tragic events, whatever may be found that will attract attention must be in the tendency to dwell upon the little everyday affairs, which may seem too trivial and insignificant to mention, but without which the ordinary life story would be short.

DEDICATED TO MY CHILDREN

To whom I feel indebted as to our correspondence.
But through the elusive and over-burdened "tomorrow"
upon whom we often depend for our time and fail, I
find myself sadly in arrears, and offer this crude
effort to balance the account.

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Casselton, North Dakota

December, 1925

SOPHRONIUS STOCKING LANDT

SOPHRONIUS STOCKING LANDT FAMILY

Taken about 1885



Front row: Cora
Middle row: Maggie (Wilbur) Landt, Elma, Sophronis S. Landt,
Ernest (*twin of Elma*)
Back row: Homer, Bernie

CHAPTER ONE

It has been said that our life is but a dream. Yes, and more, it is a succession of dreams. Some of mine have turned to memories everlasting, others to the earth, dead and forgotten. And it is of those that became living realities, together with a few important events occurring along the way, that I shall relate in this brief message to you.

In telling the story of a lifetime, had I the memory to narrate all the happenings of a busy life, beginning at childhood on the frontier in Wisconsin and following the trend of civilization through to the western plains, in the several lines of business in which I have been engaged, among all classes of people, including the Indians, in civil war and in peace; prosperity and adversity, it would be too much to impose on your patience to read. But, as I have kept no diaries and there are but few records of any kind to which I can refer for assistance, I can only speak of those things that have appealed to me in such a manner, or have been so forcibly impressed upon my memory that I cannot forget.

My purpose in writing this short autobiography, or perhaps more properly called a reminiscence, of only the important things so vividly retained in memory is to add another chapter to the very meager history of the family which may become of some value to those who succeed us, and by noting the conditions existing at a time when the first white settlers began to occupy for home making that which seemed to be a limitless expanse of forest and plain west of Lake Michigan. An expanse over which had roamed for countless generations, the wild savage Indians, herds of buffalo and deer, bears, wolves and other wild animals undisturbed by the white man, except by an occasional exploring party and a few venturesome hunters and trappers who braved the dangers to get their share of the lucrative dividends from these fur-bearing animals. There had also been forts erected by the government at convenient points for the protection of the settlements until they became strong enough to protect themselves. At nearly every one of these was located a trading post for the exchanging with the Indians of merchandise, mostly beads and other ornaments that pleased the fancy of the savages, for their furs. And sorry to say, that despite the baneful results in its use by inciting their savage natures to acts of the most cruel barbarity, liquor was in the greatest demand. And because of the greed for gain which dominated the minds of most of the traders, beyond any consideration for the welfare of their victims, it was furnished without stint.

So much for an introduction. The modes and customs, dangers and trials of the early life in Wisconsin will be fully described as the narrative proceeds. But only by comparing those conditions with the conditions of today can we fully comprehend the wonderful changes that have taken place in the development of the country in a lifetime. And this was a further thought I had in mind which prompted me to write these lines.

As mentioned before, I know but little of our ancestry. Nothing authentic on the paternal side dating further back than to my great-grandfather and his brother who came to New York from some place not definitely known, but from either Germany, Holland or the Van Courtlandt Manor as has been lately suggested.

However after a short sojourn in the city the brothers became separated and neither of them ever learned the whereabouts of the other. No tidings ever came from the missing brother or of his descendants until some years ago I chanced on a member of the other family. I was shipping supplies to the early settlers of South Dakota after the Milwaukee Railroad had been built as far as Aberdeen. On registering at a hotel one afternoon I noticed that the last name written on the register was Isaac Landt. I had never seen the name before, except as belonging to some known relative of the family and so was curious to know who the gentleman was. The clerk informed me that he was a banker in Columbia, South Dakota, and after meeting him found he was from the other branch of the family and had been told the same story of the separation of the brothers in New York. Also there were several names in their family identical with some in ours, proving beyond a doubt that we were of the same ancestral stock. He said he had spent much time in tracing the family history, but could get no further than the brothers in New York and had about concluded the name might be an abbreviation of some titled name such as Van Courtlandt and explained that under the old customs the eldest son inherited all the wealth and title to the family estate, so it would not be unnatural for these brothers, after having left their homes to seek their fortunes in the new world, to drop the title and call it Landt.

It seems that D. A. Landt of Kilbourn, from what he has read and learned in other ways, holds the same idea and has named his place the "Van Courtlandt Stock Farm" and has gathered statistics for a history of the Van Courtlandt Manor and its distinguished owner which I give herewith: *"On the banks of the Croton River, and not far from where that stream joins the stately Hudson, stands a venerable relic of the grandest aristocracy of the early periods. It was in the year of 1683 that one Olofffe, first patroon or Lord of the Manor of Van Courtlandt laid the foundation of what was for that time a most stately mansion."*

"According to our present standards of society, Olofffe was not what might be called a very presentable personage. He was Dutch, spoke only his mother tongue of the "Low Countries" and was destitute of some of the refinements in speech and manner which are not regarded as indispensable. But this old pioneer had other qualities besides his great wealth which made him a citizen of great worth in the community and the worthies in office at New Amsterdam gave him a hearty welcome. They endowed him, his heirs and assigns in perpetuity with a vast tract of extremely fertile land lying along the Croton River. With this grand went other rights as was the custom in those days, rights beyond mere ownership, rights virtually akin to those once so rigorous and tyrannical in the days of "Feudal Tenure."

"At the date of its building, the Van Courtlandt Manor house was surrounded by forests almost primeval, with only here and there cultivated fields hewn out of the wilderness. Wild red men roamed through all the region, terror alike of the English and Dutch settlers. So the house was at first quite as much fort and stronghold as a dwelling place, as is to this day attested by loop holes for musketry in the thick stone walls."

"Unlike most of the other proprietors of the large estates in the colony of New York, the Van Courtlandts of the time were ardent patriots. The then head of the family, Perre Van Courtlandt, far from being a loyalist as his neighbors were, threw away prudence for patriotism and joined heart and soul in the struggle for American independence. While the war lasted and for many years thereafter at

this Manor house were entertained at one time or another, virtually every prominent man, every maker of opinion and of history, either in camp or in counsel. Washington and Franklin were frequent guests and those illustrious Frenchmen, here often entertained with lavish magnificence."

"But of all the historic associations connected with the Van Courtlandt Manor house, none exceeds in interest that connected with Methodism. That cause was then in its infancy, nurtured and maintained by the indomitable Wesley, it was making substantial progress, gathering day by day adherents from every rank of society. Among the wealthiest and most influential to join in the great movement upward and onward, the Van Courtlandts were prominent. Here on the lawn surrounding the Manor, under the shadow of the old elms and maples, Whitefield, Asbury and Webb, burning with religious fervor and zeal in the Christian cause preached to vast throngs gathered from miles around. The audiences included not only descendants of Europeans but onetime savages of whom it is said many were converted to the gospel truth."

My grandfather, Frederick Landt, whom I never saw and have but little knowledge of his life except from conversations overheard when a boy at home and when they were talking over family matters I learned that at one time he was in good circumstances and was considered a well-to-do farmer. But through misplaced confidence lost about everything by signing security bonds which the principal failed to satisfy. There were no exemptions in those days, a creditor could take the last cow to satisfy a debt. He had three children, Frederick, Peter and their sister Polly. But that the sister was the subject of the old-time ballad "Polly put the kettle on, we'll all take tea" is somewhat doubtful, though she was noted for being a model housekeeper and I often heard it said that "You could always see your face in Aunt Polly's tea kettle" which at that time was either of copper or cast iron and by constant care the copper ones could be kept very bright in spite of the fact that all cooking had to be done by the open fire with wood for fuel.

My father, Frederick Landt, Jr. was born in New York and served in the war of 1812. Fortunately for him his services were rendered in and around the city and thus he escaped much of the hardship endured in the field. Sometime after the war he became acquainted with Miss Anna Edwards, of a prominent family in Jefferson County, New York, whom he finally married and settled on a piece of unimproved land near Watertown in the same county. Her people were descendants of the Mayflower Colony which landed at Plymouth Rock and helped to keep alive the Christian principles upon which our Government was established in later years. After marriage they erected and maintained the family altar all through their lives and never omitted the reading of a chapter in the Bible and offering up a prayer of thanks every morning after breakfast.

The rigorous climate of that northern section with the consequent late and early frosts, the not over productive soil and the strenuous labor in clearing away the heavy timber before preparing the ground for the poor crops to follow, made farming rather an unsuccessful occupation. And to my father, with his limited means, his failing health from over work in clearing the few acres he had in cultivation and with very little prospect of acquiring more land from which to produce the means of support to his family of ten, there being eight children at this time, the future looked very gloomy. But, he was not alone in his adversity. Others in the vicinity were similarly circumstanced and were ready to turn a

friendly ear to the dazzling stories from the "Golden West" where the land could be tilled by simply turning the sod and the climate much less severe. So the sparks of adventure were soon fanned into a flame of excitement and a colony from the surrounding neighborhoods was soon formed and in the spring of 1835 they embarked via the Erie Canal, then by sailing ships through the Great Lakes to the new El Dorado. After weeks of battling storms and adverse winds they finally landed on the western shore of Lake Michigan, at the trading post of Soloman Juneau, where Milwaukee now stands. Many times when a boy and we were having evening company as was the custom in those days, and we were all sitting around the hearth of the old-fashioned fireplace telling stories and talking of the recent events, I have heard Father and Mother tell of their perilous journey. They spoke of the weeks on the lakes with their eight children, all sick and some of them nearly dead. And of one storm in particular when they expected to go to the bottom any minute, even the Captain was alarmed - saying that in all his experience of many years on the lakes, he had never seen anything like it. And they attributed their escape to the fact that all of them were of the old Puritan faith.

Some of the settlers, including my Father were not satisfied with the land around Juneaus place, where they had landed. They had no thought that a city would ever be built in what to them was a very undesirable place - all swamp or heavy timber - just what they were trying to get away from. For their idea of valuable land was land valuable for agricultural purposes. So they spent some time in looking around before finding just what pleased them. Finally, about sixty miles west and on the west side of the Crawfish River, just above the confluence with the Rock River they found their ideal location.

There was just enough timber for farm purposes and plenty of good land that could be put under cultivation with very little labor. And here in this pretty little valley they selected their homes. Father built his first log cabin on the bank of the river. There were many evidences along this stream that the country had been inhabited at some previous time by a people far superior to the native Indians. This could be seen from the large mounds which are still intact, and about three miles up the river were the ruins of an ancient city which from erosion and decay through the ages had become in appearance like piles of earth and the walls that surrounded the onetime city were simply ridges of dirt over which vegetation was growing as elsewhere. But by digging down, bricks were found to be fairly well preserved, though they were quite unlike the bricks in use today. They were much larger, though of nearly the same proportions and full of small irregular holes as if straws had been mixed with the clay before it was dried or burned. Upon this spot was built one of the first villages in that part of Wisconsin territory and it was named Aztalan, in honor of the previous unknown inhabitants who were thought to have belonged to the Aztec tribe. Many traces of these sort of habitations have been found in many parts of the country, especially in Arizona and New Mexico. But what had caused the abandonment of a country so rich and beautiful? Were they overpowered and driven out by the roving bands of savages? Or were they destroyed by nature? Whatever the cause may have been, the great area of fertile soil was vacant and the "Call of the West" had been responded to and this little band of frontiersmen and their families had come forth to occupy it.

The settlers were not long in putting up their temporary cabins of logs and the neighborhood was quite comfortably housed sixty miles from where they had

landed. This was the only point where supplies could be gotten and as ox teams were the only conveyances it took a week or ten days to make the trip. They followed a blazed trail through deep forest and over hills, fording streams and wading through marshes until the settlements were numerous enough to build passable roads. As soon as the news could reach back to the mother state of New York, of the wonderful country they had found, the fertile soil so easy to cultivate, the salubrious climate with such beautiful autumns, permitting everything to ripen before frost appeared, many others prepared to join them and all of the eastern and southern part of the territory was soon settled. Then came the organizing of townships and counties. Our farm of 180 acres was located in the township of Aztalan, three miles from the village of that name in Jefferson County. But later, since the railroad has been built through, the village has been absorbed by Lake Mills which had been three miles west, and nothing remains but ruin upon ruin and only the pre-historic ruin will endure throughout the age.

CHAPTER TWO

NATURES KINDERGARTEN AND MY EARLIEST MEMORIES OF THE DANGERS AND TRIALS OF FRONTIER LIFE IN WISCONSIN.

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On the first day of November 1842, the Stork, in declaring his friendship for the whites to be equal to that of the red men, left a bundle of animate humanity, that he had gathered from the realms he did not disclose, at our home. And in courtesy to his kindness it was received and as it waxed stronger and grew into a more comely form, not caring apparently whether the world was round or flat as some still thought, so long as its wants were supplied, it was finally thought to be worthy of a name. So, as several others had done by their boys in that vicinity, named it after a Methodist minister of the Beloit Conference, Rev. Sophronius Stocking, and Sophronius Stocking Landt was for a time the center of attraction by the family and the youngest of ten children as follows:

	<i>Born</i>	
(Frederick Landt)	Aug.	6th, 1796
(Anna Edwards Landt).	May	8th, 1802
Maria Landt	Nov.	8th, 1821
Amy Ann.	May	10th, 1823
Hannah	Jan.	22nd, 1826
Henry	May	30th, 1828
Jeremiah	June	18th, 1830
Amos	Feb.	3rd, 1833
Mary	Feb.	13th, 1835
Julia	July	27th, 1837
Frederick E.	Dec.	16th, 1839
Sophronius S.	Nov.	1st, 1842

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S. S. LANDT FAMILY

(Sophronius S. Landt)	Nov.	1st, 1842
(Margaret Augusta Wilber)	May	18th, 1843
Arthur Burnett	Jan.	26th, 1870
Homer Adrian	Dec.	14th, 1875
Ernest Wilber	} (twins)	Dec. 11th, 1880
Elma Winnefred		
Cora Theo	Nov.	28th, 1885

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The personnel of the neighborhood was mainly of the New England type though as in all new countries it was not entirely free from delinquent and undesirable

people and with restraining laws of any kind to curb the actions of their selfish and sometimes wicked desires, they were as much to be feared as the wild beasts or the Indians who claimed the country as their rightful heritage. Among the most conspicuous of this class and one to whom public notice was frequently called in the event of making a history of the colony, was one Harry DeMerritt, though more frequently spoken of as "Old Harry" from the peculiar antics and almost superhuman acrobatic stunts he would perform for the pleasure of entertaining whoever might happen to be his audience. If I could accurately describe his appearance, one could readily see how appropriate was his name. He was a man about thirty years old and about five feet ten or eleven inches high, heavy muscularly built, piercing steel gray eyes and long black and bushy hair hanging to his shoulders, with a heavy beard of the same color to his waist. He would never shave or have his hair cut and it needed but his movement to complete the description, Lucifer, personified. He was considered harmless and was allowed perfect freedom to go about the country at will, and those who were not frightened by his presence enjoyed his pranks as much as he enjoyed their applause. He had been married but when his mind became affected, he and his little daughter of seven years were cared for by his parents who lived next neighbor to us, not more than a hundred rods distant. Many times we were frightened by his noisy demonstrations, in fighting with spirits or other imaginary beings but as there were not public institutions for the care of the insane or other dependents, every family had to take care of their own, which added another risk to frontier life. After a time as he grew more violent they built a room from heavy logs in which to confine him when in his raving orgies, and at first appearance of these spells they would send for his brother who lived a mile away who had great power and influence over him, to put him in the cell until he became quiet.

The country was not being settled very rapidly and public conveniences such as stores, mills, blacksmith shops etc. were rapidly being supplied. A saw mill was erected four miles up the river which furnished lumber for the new settlers to build their first dwellings and others who began calling themselves old settlers to replace their log cabins with a "new frame house." Of the latter class my father was one, and no doubt "Old Harry" furnished the stimulant for his hasty action in that direction, though he said the motive was to rid ourselves of the hoards of Indians who persisted in roaming up and down the river, sometimes filling the house to overflowing just to satisfy their curiosity. But whatever father's reasons were for building the new house further back from the river we gained much from it. The Indians were always friendly enough and when indoors never asked for food, for their good sense told them that we could not feed them all, but in placing the new house back from the river we were not only relieved from these visits of the Indians by day but also from the "tantrums" of "Old Harry" by night and by the measure of security we had gained by this move we could much better enjoy the prospective advantage of our new home in the West.

The mode of living at that time was of the most primitive sort, though everybody seemed happy. Their wants were few and because of the genial climate, the woods, the streams and fertile soil they could be easily supplied. Maple trees furnished our sugar, wild honey and game of all kinds were plentiful and to supply the table with these luxuries was a pleasant pastime for my older brothers. Father never hunted and when the boys were away at work the Indians were always very liberal with their venison or other game which they would exchange for "cookosh" (pork) or "Washcopara" (flour). About twice a year father

would take a trip with oxen to Milwaukee which now had become a village and in 1846 was incorporated as a city, nearly sixty miles distant. This was the only where he could exchange his produce for the necessary things which we could not raise, among which was leather. When a young man father had worked at the shoe-making trade and was now able to make the boots and shoes for the family besides a few other customers. Mother would card the wool into rolls which she spun into yarn and a neighbor woman would weave it into cloth from which mother made all our clothing, even to the linens for summer which she made from the flax we raised. The flax was first beaten with a swingle until all the woody particles were pulverized and separated from the long silvery fibers which were then combed through a heckle and made ready to be spun into thread for the loom. The long evenings of winter were generally used in this kind of work or pounding splints from ash saplings for use in making baskets to be used around the farm and in the house. Thus making the home as nearly independent as possible. Our lights other than that of the fireplace were from tallow candles generally made up in the fall to last through the year. Lucifer matches were being talked about but were not in general use. Candle lighters made of twisted paper were accorded a special place on the mantel which was always supposed to contain a supply. The first schools were taught in private houses until a district could be organized and a school-house built and as our house was considered the most suitable, a room was set apart for the purpose and the services of a young man named John Martin was secured for the first teacher. Some time later and after a school-house had been built my sister Hannah was employed until she married Mr. Martin, the former teacher.

The older boys found plenty of healthful exercise for their growing bodies in performing their part of the work around the home when not in school, which included their help in providing wood, which was no small amount, for the open fireplaces, and when the work was not too pressing the family would sit in a circle around the blazing fire to enjoy the evening. Father would peg a boot in his corner, Mother would knit and talk, the girls would do a little sewing or knitting and keep up their end of the conversation. The boys generally told stories of some great hunting or fishing exploit and were quite often assisted in their "true fact" stories by George Basse, an orphan boy living with his Uncle and Aunt a mile or so down the road. At times when the stories were too blood-curdling, or if, as occasionally happened, a catamount or panther had been seen in the neighborhood, George would prefer staying all night rather than risk being devoured on the way home. Yet the same boy incidentally became a hero later and the means of saving the lives of eight people including his own.

The time allowed for recreation especially to those who were not old enough for heavy work, was almost unlimited when not in school, and as innocence and ignorance go hand in hand, and without knowledge of the modern ways for disseminating vice, very little evil of any nature existed among the young people of that day. So the parents were relieved of much anxiety and fear of the contaminating influences that now sometimes exist when numbers of young people are assembled. So the "all out doors" was our playground with a few restrictions such as being careful not to get lost and the unnecessary caution not to invade "Old Harry's" district. By the death of my little brother next older than I, it left a space of ages between my two youngest sisters and myself and of course, after I became old enough to paddle around outside they became my logical guardians and with the aid of a little cart made by a carpenter

the trio were able to cover considerable territory. We played mostly around our own premises and enjoyed a childish happiness, the memory of which is ever pleasant to recall, even in our later years. On one of these almost daily rounds we always returned by way of a marshy place around which we could gather the beautiful wild flowers and also after heavy rains it afforded us a place to wade in the clear water to our knees. Then there were always pools of water and mud to occupy our time by moulding the mud into fantastic shapes or making the historical "mud pie". The only injunction to the full enjoyment of these sports was "be careful and not soil your clothes." But if a mishap did occur, the penalty was tempered with kindness by mother unless it was caused by wilful disobedience, father never interfered. And, I have often wondered when thinking back to those experiences in the early days, if they were not about as helpful in forming a basis for an education as are the kindergartens of today. For surely the things we learned from nature's laboratory of useful knowledge in those wanderings were far more indelibly fixed in our minds than if taken from books. For example, perhaps the most lingering of all my lessons was my first in natural philosophy. It was obtained around a waterhole when in the act of poking a mud wasp into the mud with my bare foot to find that most all living creatures have some means of defense. Now I could have been told about that fact, or when old enough have read about it many times and then perhaps have forgotten it. But when demonstrated in person by the possessor of that peculiar weapon of defense - Never. The information gained however, was sufficient for a lasting impression and the exercises around the water hole were closed for the day for in another moment the assemblage, cart and all were speeding for home with a howling youngster to see his mother.

In the early spring of 1846, a few other families of the old neighborhood in New York came out and among them one by the name of Rogers and their four children. Mr. Rogers selected a piece of land about a mile from us and arranged with father that his family could occupy that part of the house which had formerly been used for school purposes until he could build a home of his own. In ten years that our people had lived in the west a number of changes had been made in the line of house furnishings by the people in the east. Among the most notable was a cook stove which the Rogers had brought with them. It was the first one we had ever seen and a discussion of its merits was quite general in the neighborhood. My mother objected to its use because "to burn up the good air without ventilation such as a fireplace would give could not be healthy." By this time our family had become somewhat smaller, my two oldest sisters were married and Henry came of age and had gone out for himself, so the Rogers family proved a welcome addition and the children were welcome playmates. The eldest a little girl of ten was very helpful in our Nature's Kindergarten and the summer passed by very pleasantly.

After the harvest was over father and mother planned a visit to my married sister, Amy Ann Kelsey, and planned to be absent for a week or two. I was to be left with Mrs. Rogers and sister Hannah, who was teaching in the neighborhood school and boarding at home. On one afternoon of a pleasant day in late August when the beautiful green of spring and summer had turned to a sear brown and the usual quiet hazy atmosphere foretold the approach of autumn and when the return of father and mother might be expected any day, Hannah who had just returned from school was heating some water in a kettle in preparation to do some washing. The children were playing in the shade of some trees near the road when George Basse came along and inquired of us where my older brothers

were. We told him that they were up with Mr. Rogers helping him with his house. George did not seem to be in any hurry and so stayed around with us for awhile. Suddenly we looked across the field towards Mr. De Merritts and saw "Old Harry" coming toward us swinging his fists in his usual manner when in his ravings but could not hear what he said at first. We thought nothing of it because it was not an unusual sight. But he soon came to the line fence and hopped over, something he had never done before when in these raving spells, and then we began to have suspicions of evil and it was not long before our fears were justified. We could distinguish the words mixed with all the profanity he was capable of using against the Landts - he "would have our heartstrings before he slept." We ran quickly to tell Hannah and Mrs. Rogers and all stood for a moment in wondering gaze trying to decide what to do. To run was useless, for he could overtake us, so we concluded to go into the house and bar all the doors, which were arranged with staples on either side in which to place a bar, and then find a hiding place. In the part of the house we occupied were two large rooms. The front one was used for a living room and faced the east in the direction from which he was coming, and the other of same size used for a parlor faced west and the two were connected by a double fireplace in the partition, with one chimney above the chamber. From the north side of the parlor a space had been taken for an alcove large enough for a bed, leaving room for a clothes room by utilizing the space beside the chimney of about four feet, and the door, opening into the front room was on the south side of these fireplaces through the little four foot hall. This closet was selected for our hiding place and we all squeezed in and as it had just been built, no latch had been put on the door, so Hannah held it shut by holding to the cleats inside with her fingers. There were eight of us - Mrs. Rogers and her four children, one a baby in her arms - George Besse - Hannah, and I. All packed in the little room so close we could hardly breathe and told not to cry or "Old Harry" would hear us.

But, we didnot have long to wait until we could hear "Old Harry" knocking around outside all the time keeping up his incessant cursing and threatening language. In another moment a terrible crashing sound greeted our ears at the front of the house. They had forgotten to bring in the axe from the wood pile, he had found it and was using it to chop down the front door. He then slashed around chopping up the furniture and soon we heard him strike the kettle that hung over the fire breaking it into a dozen pieces and the five pails of water it contained of course put out the fire. After destroying about everything in that room he came into the parlor into which the door from our room would open and continued the same work of destruction. He cut up everything in sight, chopped the clock off the mantel, cut up all the chairs and table, tore the pictures from the wall and every few minutes he would stop and listen, thinking to hear from some of us children, I presume. He knew exactly who was there with the exception of George Besse, for he knew all the men were gone. After these spells of listening he would begin work, swearing and cursing all the while, remarking at intervals "D... you, you think you are hid, but I'll find you." And had the latch been on the door I think he would have found us on his first visit to the room.

He then went back to the front and outdoors. He chopped out every window all around the house. When he came to the two parlor windows nearest us we could hear his heavy breathing from his violent exercise. Each time he would chop out a window, he would put his head inside to look around the room. He

then came back into the front room and finally said "I know where you are D... you are down cellar." Then he went to pounding a hole through the heavy hardwood floor so that he could look into the cellar. Just as he began this George Besse whispered "I am going out, I'll not stay here and be chopped to pieces" and all of the entreaties for him not to go, for it seemed sure death to enter into the room in which "Harry" was chopping, were in vain. He pushed the door out of Hannah's hands and cautiously jumped out the window. Harry kept on at his work of chopping the hole in the floor. Mrs. Rogers then handed her four children out the window to George and with his assistance climbed out herself. Hannah then handed me to Mrs. Rogers and George helped her out before the demon took another time to rest and listen. We were soon out of sight in the cornfield which happened to be near the house.

On reaching the farther side of the cornfield we felt that we were safe and it was then that Hannah fainted and fell prostrate to the ground. I supposed she was dead for I had never heard of anyone fainting away, but Mrs. Rogers told me not to cry for she thought Hannah would be all right in a little while. George was sent over to Mr. Seavers, about a mile away to give the alarm, while the rest of us remained with Hannah until she was able to move. George found Mr. Seaver and his son at their five o'clock supper. They hitched a horse to a buggy and drove over as quickly as possible. Mr. Rogers and my brothers had heard the pounding and wondering at the cause had come home to see. They arrived there just as Mr. Seavers drove up. Just at that time, "Old Harry" was at a small artificial pond near the well, which father had built for the geese and ducks. He was submerging all the bedding he could find, excluding only the straw beds which were too bulky, and weighing them down with stones. He kept possession of the axe which enabled him to defend himself until he reached home. We stayed with Hannah until she was able to walk over to Mr. Seavers, where we stayed until other arrangements for our comfort could be made.

Our home was truly a sorry looking place. Every bit of furniture was destroyed, even Mrs. Rogers new cook stove was in a hundred pieces. The siding all around the house was chopped away or hanging in pieces as high as he could reach and some of the walls inside were badly scarred. The clothes room in which we had hid was nearly cut away. One could walk into it without going through the door. Of the people who visited the scene afterwards many said that they never would have believed it possible for any one man to do so much damage in the time he was there. Father and mother came home in a few days, uninformed of the catastrophe until they reached the neighborhood, and you can imagine their thoughts on arriving at the house to see the comfortable home they had left a short time before now a desolate ruin. And it was only from the fact that our lives had been saved that they could accept the loss with any degree of resignation. For they had labored so long for that which they supposed would be their home in their declining years and had enjoyed it so much. They also felt that they could not begin its reconstruction with any enthusiasm or feeling of security under such conditions, and that the repairs must be only temporary for as soon as the place could be disposed of they would make one more trial for a home with different surroundings.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ANOTHER HOME ON THE INDIAN LANDS, SEVENTY MILES NORTH

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The southern half of Wisconsin was almost entirely destitute of pine timber, and the demand for a better building material than could be made from the oak and maple, which was very common in that section, increased with the adding numbers of the settlements. The first manufacturing of any note was that of the white pine lumber of the dense forests of the north. In order to supply this to the customers, a road or highway was constructed leading north-west over the most feasible route. It touched the Wisconsin River at different points at which the lumber could be floated down and there loaded. The highway crossed the portage where Portage City now stands and where the Wisconsin and Fox Rivers meet within a very short distance. The Wisconsin flowing south to the Mississippi and the Gulf of Mexico and the Fox running north to Green Bay. The highway terminated at Grand Rapids and was called the "Old Pinery Road". Along this highway were many lodging places called Taverns that did a thriving business for a number of years until the rail-roads were built and teaming became unprofitable.

My brother Henry, in one of his trips to the logging camps was so pleased with the country around the Walsworth Tavern that he stopped over for awhile to make a further inspection than what he could see from the traveled road. The result was that he took a claim for himself in the Big Spring Valley nearby. The land in this part of the state had not been surveyed, so filings or contracts with the Government could not be made. Possession was the only title and that had to be continuous or the claims were liable to be jumped by other parties. So to make it easier for him, Henry sent for my brothers Jerry and Amos who went to his assistance and who also took claims for themselves. They also took one for father. They erected cabins on each as evidences of good faith and as Henry was on good terms with Mr. Walsworth, the innkeeper and family, it was easy to gain the good will of the Indians, which became of advantage later on. Mrs. Walsworth, claimed to be French and Indian, one-fourth the latter and her influence with the Indians of that section was next to that of their chief. She practically moulded their sentiments and conduct towards the whites and in expressing her kindness and good will to the boys, she recommended an Indian named Prettyman, an under chief of much influence as a special and confidential friend in whom they could trust at all times. At this time there came many new people into this section looking for homes, and the best locations were sought eagerly and the three boys could hardly be expected to hold four claims even though there were cabins on each. So to make father's claim more secure from the invading claim jumpers, they arranged with this Mr. Prettyman to move on to the claim with his family and live there until father could come and attend to it himself, should he be suited with the location.

In the spring of 1849, after selling the place at Aztalan, we moved up to the place the boys had selected and began making another home in what was then called the Indian Lands. Father chose to take his chances with the Indians

rather than with crazy people, for he always said he believed that if the Indians were treated fairly and well they would return the favor in kind. And in all our dealings with them this was proven true. I will always remember the queer sensations that possessed me the evening we arrived at the place with our whole family and all our belongings, including cattle, sheep, hogs and poultry. I always remember the many expressions of friendship from the Indians and how with signs and broken English they tried to explain how they had saved the claim. "Me tello amokoman he heap bad man. go way." I had seen Indians all my life but never like this. We were their guests and being only a boy of seven I could hardly understand the whys and wherefores of all the proceedings and at first was inclined to be afraid. But I thought if father and mother were not afraid why should I be. The Indians had children about my age but they were as shy as myself. They had erected wigwams just outside the cabin, so we soon had things arranged for the night and in our tired condition after so long a journey, seventy miles with that slow moving train of animals, it was not long before the whole camp, regardless of race or color was fast asleep. To describe the details of home making here would be almost a repetition of that at Aztalan. There was this main difference however and that was in the characteristics of those with whom we were to associate with as neighbors. At Aztalan, they were friends to begin with, coming together from New York state, and all differences were easily adjusted. But here the land had not been surveyed except that a few preliminary lines had been run through to aid the settlers in locating their claims as near as possible in conformity with the government survey to be made later without which it would be difficult to tell just where to begin to build improvements. Because of this state of things some people whose avarice exceeded their desire to be fair and just, found much trouble in establishing their lines. Father selected a piece of land as near the center of the claim as he could and began his improvements by setting out an orchard with trees he had brought with him for he planned to have the orchard near the cabin.

One morning while at breakfast we looked out the window and saw a neighbor, Mr. Winchell, who lived a half mile from us with his son walking around the premises and taking a general view of the surroundings. We went out to meet him and were surprised by his "generous" offer of the privilege of removing any of those trees in the orchard which we valued to another piece of ground, and he pointed to another piece of ground on the other side of a little spring brook nearby. For he said he expected to begin work the next morning to clear and breakup a piece of land there and the trees would be in his way. Without appearance of anger or emotion father replied that while he thought very much of the trees, having brought them so far and that many of them were scions out from trees he had brought from New York nevertheless he would have to leave them where they were and take his chances. For he said Mr. Bullock, who lived on the other side of us claimed the land to the brook. So he told Mr. Winchell that if the trees were destroyed he would hold him responsible. But in his dreams that night father no doubt had visions of the rewards for the just and the penalties for the unjust. For next morning when they came with their breaking teams, Mr. Winchell said to father that he had concluded not to disturb the trees for the present and they began the work of clearing and breaking four acres within ten rods of the house. This substantial improvement however, though not so intended by the promoters proved to be a very acceptable addition to our claim for when the survey was made by the government in the next year the

line was established more than one hundred rods north from where Mr. Winchell had hoped, leaving all the breaking on our land. And, now, in this case as in many others, where the line had been permanently fixed by the Government the oppressor became the supplicant for mercy from the one whom he had oppressed. For the line was run so close to Mr. Winchell's saw-mill without trespassing on father's land. Mr. Bullock, on the other side of us, was pushed back just half a mile with the consolation however that he had expended no labor on the contested land other than a little hot air in discussing where the line should go. The effect of this great surprise to Mr. Winchell was wonderful indeed as a means of softening his arrogance and making him a more reasonable citizen and neighbor. Father let him have land enough for a mill yard and other necessary purposes for an equal amount of land on the east side of ours. So all matters pertaining to claims and locations of lines were settled harmoniously and we were once more in the lawful possession of a home and began to build permanent improvements.

But when so many different nationalities, from every social environment were colonized together as they were here, it could not be expected that they would all observe the Golden Rule. There were so many complaints of Government stakes being moved and of other offences being committed that it became necessary for some method of restriction to be adopted. For this purpose an unidentified, self-appointed vigilance committee took matters in hand and after a horse whipping or two and one tar and feather episode, the petty criminal atmosphere was clarified. But with the coming of the railroad which was built from Milwaukee to LaCrosse a more desperate class of men were imported and hold-ups, robberies and murders became more frequent. About this time Town and County organizations were completed and Courts of Law were established. But in many cases the law failed to bring the culprits to justice, especially so when cases were brought against a certain gang of crooks who were always defended by a certain lawyer. This particular lawyer was gifted in devising means, by either fair methods or foul, of bringing a verdict of "Not Guilty" from a jury when everybody was reasonably certain that the defendants were guilty of the crimes charged. He was so confident of his ability aided by his friends and henchmen, to defend himself in court that he did not hesitate to satisfy his vengeance on his adversaries without recourse to law. One time in Portage, he got into an altercation with the butcher over some matter and getting the worst of a physical encounter, went home for his revolver and shot him on the street. This, of course, caused much excitement but nothing was done about it, though the injustice of allowing such crimes to go unpunished rankled most keenly in the breasts of all who loved justice and order. But as time went on and other crimes committed by this bank of outlaws, who had become well organized and were always defended by this dapper lawyer, it became well seated in the minds of the people that they must have as much interest in their cases as an honest lawyer who would have for his client and it needed but one more crowning event to cause the "worm to turn" and set things right. They did not have long to wait.

In the community there lived a Mr. Gates who was the head of one of the earliest and most prominent families of that section. Mr. Gates was the man who built the first bridge that ever spanned the Wisconsin River. This bridge was located at the famous "Dells of Wisconsin." This was a feat of no small accomplishment, considering the time of building and the facilities for use

at his command. Perhaps no other bridge was ever built across a river of that size having only four timbers, without splicing for stringers or beams. on which to lay planks for teams to cross. After measuring the span from rock to rock on either shore, high above the water, in the narrows of the Dells, he believed he could find timber standing close to the bank along the upper river tall enough to make this bridge. This he did, and after hewing them out, floated them down and made the bridge. For several years it was used for a toll bridge until a combination railroad and wagon bridge was built a mile or two below. This new bridge created the boom which resulted in the building of Kilbourn City and as all travel was directed that way the use of the old bridge at the Dells was discontinued. It stood for many years but was finally washed away by a flood.

Mr. Gates, after a while concluded to sell all his property and move to St. Louis and river navigation appealed to him as being the most enjoyable as well as much more economical than travel by rail or wagon. So he constructed a boat large enough to hold all their belongings and proceeded to float down the river. The children were all married so it was just himself and wife that were to enjoy this novel way of moving. They had selected a pleasant time of the year and with a full moon and a medium stage of water they started on their journey over the placid waters of the lower Wisconsin, with anticipation of a pleasant journey. The first night out they camped on an island in the river, thinking it to be more secure from outside disturbances than on the main shore. It developed however that other people with evil designs had watched every move the old couple had made after selling their land and were well informed of the amount of maney they had in their possession as the old couple themselves. Consequently, their first nights peaceful slumbers on that island were disturbed by robbers who succeeded in getting every penny they had. They made their way back to Kilbourn penniless - all the savings of a lifetime were gone. But, unfortunately, for the robbers, one of them had lost his mask in the scramble of the money and by the light of the moon, Mr. Gates had recognized him as the one known to be the leader of the "gang". He was arrested immediately and placed in the Portage jail, without bail awaiting trial. The evidence in this case was so positive that even tho the dapper lawyer was retained as counsel for the defendant, people thought a conviction of the criminal was certain. Mr. Gates was known by everyone to be a very reliable man and his testimony would have great weight with any jury selected. But their faith in a conviction did not prove well founded for they had not yet conceived to what extent criminally minded men will go, especially when they are abetted by an unscrupulous lawyer.

One morning as Mr. Gates was going across the river to see some land he had once owned, and perhaps still had an interest in, he was shot and killed. His body was discovered later in the day by some one passing by, but no trace of the assassin could be found. When the news of this crime filtered throughout the community, the righteous indignation of the people was aroused to the highest pitch. They had borne the lesser crimes with smothered patience hoping for a better administration of the law to protect them against the murderous fiends that infested the land. But this incident demanded some action or who might be the next victim to fall into their hands. One night just before the robber was to appear in court for a dismissal of his case for lack of evidence, a large body of men appeared very quietly at the Portage jail and demanded the prisoner. The keeper of course, refused to

give him up, which they had anticipated. So with a heavy battering ram which they had brought they proceeded to break their way in. The prisoner, being a very stout, athletic man, thought that by divesting himself of all clothing he could wrench himself out of their clutches and escape, but they had a rope and noose ready which they threw over his head, and dragging him to the place of execution, they swung him high in the air. Then this "court", the final adjuster of all differences when the law fails to act, proposed while still in session to clear the calendar of one more case of long standing and accordingly got the lawyer and hung him beside his client. No one seemed to know or care who the members of this "court" were and the balance of the gang either reformed or migrated to other fields of labor and the necessity of convening this "special court" again never occurred.

Mr. Gates, after a while concluded to sell his property and row to St. Louis and river navigation appeared to him as being the most enjoyable way to make some economical travel by rail or wagon. So he constructed a boat large enough to hold all their belongings and proceeded to float down the river. The children were all married so it was just himself and wife that were to enjoy this coast of moving. They had selected a pleasant time of the year and with a full moon and a beautiful stage of water they started on their journey over the placid waters of the lower Wisconsin, with a full bottom of a pleasant journey. The first night out they camped on an island in the river, thinking it to be some secure from outside disturbances than on the main shore. It appeared however that other people with evil designs had watched every move the old couple had made after selling their land and were well informed of the amount of money they had in their possession as the old couple themselves. Consequently their first night passed in a state of that island was disturbed by robbers who succeeded in getting every penny they had. They made their way back to St. Louis, but alas! all the money of a lifetime was gone. But unfortunately for the old couple, they had lost his mark in the suburbs of the city and the light of the moon had been obscured by a dense fog as the one who had the key to the door was arrested immediately and placed in the jail, without trial. The evidence in this case was so positive that even the lawyer was convinced of the guilt of the defendant, people thought a conviction of the criminal was certain. Mr. Gates was known by everyone to be a very reliable man and his testimony would have great weight with any jury selected. But their faith in a conviction did not prove well founded for they had not yet conceived to what extent criminals would go, especially when they are aided by an extraordinary lawyer.

One morning as Mr. Gates was going across the river to see some land he had owned, and perhaps still had an interest in, he was shot and killed. His body was discovered later in the day by some one passing by, but no trace of the assassin could be found. When the case of this crime listened through the community the highest indignation of the people was aroused to see a man guilty. They had done the heavy work with somewhat assistance from a better administration of the law to protect them against the murderer's hands that interested the land. But this incident demanded some action on the night of the next victim to fall into their hands. One night just before the robber was to appear in court for a dismissal of his case for lack of evidence, a large mob of men appeared very suddenly at the bridge fall and demanded the prisoner. The judge of course, refused to

CHAPTER FOUR

BOYHOOD DAYS AND UNRESTRICTED RANGE WITH ROVER FOR A COMPANION, HERDING CATTLE AND SHEEP AS A SIDE LINE TO OUR OTHER AND MORE IMPORTANT PLEASURES

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As in all new countries that are sparsely settled, the people only fenced in their cultivated fields and stock of all kinds ran at large. This necessitated there being some one to keep track of them and round them up every evening, especially was this true of the milking cows. Now a boy and dog could take the place of a man at this and as I had acquainted myself with the surrounding country, it naturally fell on Rover and me to do this work which just suited our tastes. One of our greatest troubles was to keep the cattle from miry places in the spring of the year. For in these places the first spears of grass came forth far ahead of the higher land and it frequently occurred that we would find old "Spot", "Lineback" or "Old Briar" fast in the mire. Then after running home with the information, would come a midnight bee to pull the animal out of the mud. Always after school my first thoughts were on the cows and would listen for the bell which was worn by the leading cow of the herd and as every family in the country had bells for their stock, my ears had to be attuned to the particular sound or tone of ours, lest we might be tracing out some other herd of cattle. A great amount of the broad acres furnished pasturage for the public and the villager, if he chose, could keep as many cattle as the farmer.

The first time I ever entered into a contract requiring energy and perseverance for its fulfilment was about this time. Father had given me a pair of steer calves and after tying them together with ropes and teaching them to "gee" and "haw" and to draw a handsled, I thought if I only had a little yoke, what a fine team I would have. So having often heard older people say "nothing ventured, nothing gained", I went over to the saw mill to see if I could persuade Mr. Winchell to make the yoke.

Mr. Winchell's mill was one of the oldest type. It was equipped with an upright saw propelled by a shot flutter wheel and in describing its speed, the neighbors used to say the saw went up one day and came down the next. But granting their statements to be greatly exaggerated, there was much time for convenient bench work or any handicraft the operator might choose, while the saw was chewing its way through the big oak logs that were so plentiful in those days. But the operator could not safely go to sleep as was demonstrated one time by the son, Hudson. He was sleeping one time while the saw was working and the saw worked its way through the tailblock, "cut a dog in two" which held the log in position and finally broke the saw in several pieces which awoke the sleeper and caused a wakeful period in his mind while his father repaired the damages. But there was a good deal of idle time and when Mr. Winchell was operating the mill himself he utilized this time profitably in making ox yokes to sell. I mentioned my errand to him and asked him what I could do for him as payment for a little yoke for my steers. After thinking for a moment, he said, "I'll tell you what I'll do. The red winged blackbirds are taking my

corn along the creek every year and if you will gather twelve dozen of their eggs for me, I'll make a nice little yoke for your steers." This was quite an unexpected proposition, but I knew the birds did destroy his corn, though I had never considered them as pests and on the list of birds marked for destruction. But if they destroyed Mr. Winchell's corn, certainly it would be proper to destroy their nests and prevent them from hatching more. I also knew their habits and every swale, marsh and pond around which they would be liable to build their nests, within five miles. Then I computed the number of nests it would take to yield that many eggs as fifty to seventy five. Could it be done? See how long it takes to find one nest! But the desire for the coveted yoke for Star and Dandy, outweighed in my mind the possibility of any failure. I was ready to sacrifice any amount of time and labor to win the prize and the only way to determine the possibility of success was by trial, and if I failed, the loss would only be a little pent up energy. So I made the contract and through persistent effort to succeed in my first real business venture and with my paints rolled to the limit I raced through swales and marshes in search of the nests. For these are the favorite places for the Red Winged Blackbird to hide his nest, there in the tall grass just above the water. I soon became known to every one of them as their arch enemy for without heeding their protests I applied myself to the task early and late, before and after school and all day Saturday until I secured the required number of eggs. When I presented them to Mr. Winchell, he seemed greatly surprised and said he hadn't expected I would ever be able to find them. But he willingly made the yoke, put a staple and ring in it which was not stated in our agreement and painted it red. I was the happiest boy in the country and from that time on those steers and I were constant companions until finally they outgrew their yoke and emerged into a fine pair of oxen.

I also was growing and grew into a green, awkward boy, mostly feet and legs, with no place for my hands except my pockets and made no further effort as to my appearance than to pass muster with Mother before going to school. My sisters were much older than I and to join them and their girl friends in their amusements was no pleasure for me. Girls didn't amount to much anyway, in my mind. At least none that I had seen, with the exception of my sisters who through family ties and their steadfast concern for my welfare during the years of my helplessness had become very dear. The trouble with girls was that their thoughts were always on rag dolls or some other frivolous things and I wanted something more worthwhile. Swimming was a favorite sport and I had plenty of time and opportunity for that. Fishing and hunting were other favorite sports of mine. Then the hunting of wild bees, in their season, furnished an unlimited chance for spending days of idle time with great pleasure and sometimes profit. So my life from the time I was a pupil in Nature's Kindergarten at Aztalan to the age of about fourteen was of the care-free out-of-door kind. I was much like the Indians, except in color and I think sometimes through sunburn and tan that distinction was obscured and features were the only test. Even though we lived in this new country when society had not become crystallized into any particular standards, the religious duties were never neglected in our home. Father read a chapter in the Bible every morning and offered prayer after breakfast and we all went to church in the log school house on Sunday.

CHAPTER FIVE

A SUDDEN AWAKENING TO THE IMPORTANCE OF HIGHER STANDARDS OF LIVING, WITH CUPID IN THE BACKGROUND

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In the spring of 1855, events began shaping themselves for a lasting influence upon the destinies of my life. A small general store was opened at Big Spring by Mr. Henry Wilber, a young man of twenty four, from near Albany, New York. After getting things arranged he returned to the east and brought back his wife. But the "Wild West" did not suit her tastes and after a couple of years, Henry Wilber sold the store to his father and younger brother Benjamin and prepared to move back onto the old farm near Albany. One Sunday morning I had taken a seat in the school house for church and as the people filed in I was surprised to see Henry Wilber with two young ladies whom I concluded must be his sisters. They took a side seat nearly facing me. The younger one, apparently about my age - 14, looked in my direction and as she looked a mirthful smile came over her face. I knew by the merry twinkle in her soft brown eyes that the smile could mean nothing else than the natural impulse to laugh at what she had unexpectedly seen without going to a circus - the counterpart of the "Wild Man of Borneo." And my deductions of her mind were amply verified when I stood before a glass after getting home. But, unconsciously on her part, cupid was lurking about those wonderful eyes and his arrows went straight to the mark. I was wounded beyond recovery and not even first aid was possible. There seemed to be such a gulf between us. Could it ever be spanned? And under my breath, I said to myself, "Young Miss, I'll see you later."

My readings at home were selected by my parents and were of the educational sort, such as biographies of great men and true stories by authentic writers. I was not allowed to read novels or books of fiction. But I remembered reading in "Advice to Boys" that when a boy sets his ambition at whatever mark and consecrates his life to a noble endeavor to reach this mark he will succeed, provided he concentrates every faculty of mind and body to attain his coveted point and is aided by courage, industry and patience. So my mark was set and with God my only witness and counselor. And with a code of principles in mind, I began my career in life inspired by different thoughts and motives then had heretofore been seriously considered. I determined to possess a sterling character and form such habits of value that I would have something to offer in return for any position or prize I might seek. Now these awakenings to the importance of higher ideals, have no doubt occurred to every young person before living a life full of experiences to learn how impossible it is to realize their full accomplishment. So in whatever manner I have failed to reach my high mark may be charged to a lack of knowledge in setting the mark too high. Yet, the fact remains, they have been of great advantage in shaping my life.

After that notable day at the old log school house the whole machinery of my thoughts and mind received a jolt which set them into a complete reverse. It was fortunate for me that the person responsible for this change, whose name I found later to be Miss Margaret A. Wilber, was absent for the

next few months for thus I got a chance to gradually change my ways and begin habits of personal tidiness that would qualify for better appearance and manner when in the company of other people. Miss Wilber had gone to live with a married sister while attending a term of school and subsequently attended a college known as The Bronson Institute at Point Bluff, Wisconsin. I applied myself studiously to my books and the frequent compliments I received from my teachers for my high standings assured me that I was making progress. So at the age of seventeen I finished the studies then taught in the common school and entered onto a new epoch of life. I wanted more education and had a great desire to get out in the world and learn its ways. For I believe that even among the roughest of men I could find some qualities and manners worthy of imitation. Furthermore I needed better clothing than the home-spun I had worn up to that time and knew that father had no means to supply them. So I concluded to ask him for permission to go into the lumber woods and earn the money for their purchase. But No! He was decidedly against this plan. After a few days I learned of some other boys about my own age who were going and again asked for the privilege and received the same answer. "Why not" I asked, "I am able to do a man's work and I think you can spare me as well as not!" "Yes, I know", he replied, "but that is not the reason, those woodsmen are a very rough class of people and you are too young a boy to go into such company and I don't like to have you go." "Well," I said, "I thought that was the reason, but I need the clothes and this is the only way I know of to get them. Just try me this once and if I don't come back as good as I leave, I'll never ask again." After some hesitation he said to me, "I believe you mean what you say, and I will take you at your word, you may go." So when the day agreed upon arrived, in company with two other boys, and with packs on our backs, our Mothers had made, we started on our journey to the great lumber camps of northern Wisconsin.

On reaching the first lumbering camp at Conents Rapids, on the Wisconsin River, I accepted the first offer I received, which was fifteen dollars a month and board, for I was eager to begin work rather than spend what little money I had in trying to do better. But the other two boys went on farther and I never saw them again until I returned the following June. But I was not sorry to be alone among strangers for without them I could be free to choose my ways of living for I felt the obligations to my father. I was set to work chopping and sawing logs in the big white pine lumber having for a partner a young man a little older than myself and who proved to be a very congenial fellow. We got along nicely together. And, though he was older than I and had had some previous experience in the woods, I had no trouble keeping up my end of the work, for endurance has always been one of my greatest assets. Towards spring the camp was re-organized. The mill was started up which took some of the men, others were set at different kinds of work to make ready for rafting down the lumber as soon as the ice was cleared out of the river. I went into the mill as tail sawyer on a shift from midnight until noon the next day. I worked there until we were ready to go down the river with our fleet of lumber. We were all paid off and a better price was offered for river work which was more dangerous and exciting.

The river work was especially exciting when the water was high as it then was. Our rafts were made into cribs 16/12 - 16/14 or 16 feet square.

When seven of them were coupled together it made what was known as a rapids piece, sixteen feet wide and seven cribs long. There was an oar at each end, the stem of which was about twenty five or thirty feet long and the blade of which was sawed for the purpose, three inches thick at one end and one inch at the other and about twelve feet long and two feet wide. Each rapids piece was manned by two persons, one to each oar, except when running the rapids when two or more were needed. There was also what was called a "sucker rope" running the whole length of the raft and fastened firmly to each end of the crib to aid the men in clinging to the raft when it dove or was broken to pieces in dangerous places. After all was in readiness, we started on our eventful trip with a big crew of men. We had a big fleet of lumber and with every one in high spirits began floating down to the southern market. We ran the Conents Rapids without incident of particular note but when we came to the Neves dam, just above the main part of the Grand Rapids, the ardor of some of the crew, of which I was one of the victims, was temporarily cooled by the icy waters of the Wisconsin. As we approached the dam, in spite of the fact that the crew on our piece had been doubled, we could see ourselves gradually settling away from the point we were trying to make. It was no doubt due to some miscalculation on the part of the pilot, but the water was high and the current which was very strong was pulling us away from the chute where we could go over in safety, and in spite of all our desperate efforts to heed the orders of the pilot to "pull, boys, pull", we could make no headway. We were now in the draw moving rapidly, and when the pilot saw that it was inevitable that we were going to miss the chute, he reversed the order and ordered us to pull the other way in order to straighten out the raft. But it was too late, the rushing waters hurled us sideways over the falls into the seething and foaming mass below. I never knew just how many fathoms deep I went but the minute under water seemed an hour. Although I soon felt myself pulled from under the terrific force of the falling water of the cataract. I had caught hold of the rope and by working hand over hand I soon pulled myself to the surface beside the crib to which it was fastened. The others had done the same and we floated around in the eddy until rescuers from the shore pulled us out. The "sucker" rope for once at least, had filled its mission and saved the lives of all that were on the raft, for no one could have survived long in that turbulent water below the falls without some assistance. The rapids piece we were on broke into as many pieces as there were cribs and it took us some little time to assemble them all together again and proceed on our journey. But as this happened to be the pilot's raft, the loss was greater than if it had been any of the other pieces for it carried the cook with all his supplies for the crew. All the utensils and other metal implements went to the bottom of the river to remain for history to repeat in some far remote and unknown period a time when by the tilting of the earth, the torrid zone shall have replaced the frigid, the hills smoothed into valleys by the receding icebergs, and when dry land shall appear where lakes and rivers now are. Then the man of that day may unearth these relics of some pre-historic race of human beings, superior or inferior to the men of his time, in accordance with the standards of his civilization.

We accomplished the balance of the trip without further mishaps although at times it was exciting and dangerous. We were not the only ones running the rapids, the river was full of lumber and the jogging trail of

two or three miles around the rapids was filled with men jogging back to take another piece over the rapids. I might also add that the saloons along this trail were also filled and it gave me a chance to note the different characters of the men. Some of them were peaceable and honest working men who guarded their conduct and tried to save their money but others were typical lumber-jacks, the dyed-in-the-wool river men, who could be depended on to give service when sober but when given the opportunity were generally drinking and gambling which often ended in a fight to the finish. The next perilous place was the Dells, where we manoeuvred in the same manner and got across in safety. On reaching the Mississippi, all the rafts were coupled into one, covering about an acre of water and the work from then on was comparatively easy. The lumber was sold and we were paid for our river service, one dollar a day, and given transportation to the nearest railroad point on board the Northern Belle passenger boat. I arrived home in the first days of June, 1859, having made good my promise to my father of a few months before and in addition had a nice little bank account left after I had purchased the necessary clothes.

The experiences I had had in meeting with the most incongruous mass of people ever assembled in one occupation, ranging from the most vicious and vulgar to the most refined of all nationalities, afforded me as a young man, the opportunity to choose his ideal standard of deportment among those in the common walk of life. It also visualized to me the causes which lead men down to ruin, in a way I never forgot. Strong drink, cards and gambling were the principal attractions to lure the unsuspecting into the ways of vice and degradation unless they were fortified with some moral obligation.