THE VOICE OF DESTINY

A new year had begun. January had been very cold and February worse, in fact, so bad that no work could be done out of doors. The morning milk, placed on the table, froze to ice within a few minutes, and the stove was fired day and night to keep the cabin tolerably warm. But the beginning of March saw the large drifts of snow slowly melting, and already on the eighth of the month new prairie fires had started to the north of Pine lake in districts spared in last year's devastation. After the seventh of April the frost left the ground, and they could begin to work the soil.

Polman had now left the party to find success in a vocation for which his studies had prepared him. Assuming the title of M.D., he located in a more populated district some miles away and entered upon the practice of medicine in which he had and did prove himself skillful.

They had very little social intercourse with their neighbors. Unionius relates:

Mrs. Pearmain and two other 'ladies' from Delasfield made a call on a Sunday afternoon, decked up in silk and satin and decorated with cheap jewelry. They arrived in the oxcart, made more comfortable by the installation of two chairs on its floor. Their costumes were rather in striking contrast to the vehicle used, as well as to the house they now entered. In this lowly cabin, with its mud-spattered walls, they sat like peacocks in an outhouse, but such was the taste of these women for cheap adornment and gaudy trinkets. They did not more harmonize with their surroundings than they did with the equipment of their husbands. The men with their many-colored patches on their clothes, their
elbows protruding, with dilapidated strawhats on their heads, stood at the side of their women like broken stable lanterns beside gilded candelabras.

Sometime later, while sleighing was still good, we determined to return en famille the visit to the Pearmins, and in order not to waste any time, two logs were taken along to the mill recently established at Delafeld. On the logs sat Lotten and Christine on parade in their now seldom used holiday finery. This was the first time we all had been away from the cabin together. We arrived without having met anyone on the way and were, consequently, unprepared and greatly shocked in being informed that Pearmain that very morning had committed suicide. Our grief increased when we were told that he had used one of my revolvers, which he had borrowed from me just a few days previously, and which I had begged of him to accept as a gift and a memento with no suspicion of its intended use. Under the circumstances nothing remained but to return. With all his faults, however, Pearmain was the only neighbor I had any confidence in, and I am truly grateful to him for the advice and assistance he rendered when we were sorely in need thereof. After a few days I returned alone to Delafeld to express to Mrs. Pearmain my sympathy and found her distracted in her grief, and she expressed her feelings in the most tragic pathos. Within two weeks the belongings of Pearmain were sold at auction, and on the same day Mrs. Pearmain was married to some adventurer and was never seen or heard of again.

Another event quite interesting to later day students of history occurred shortly after the Indian had massacred his four deer, which incident will be spoken of later. These animals had appeared in great numbers during the winter, and when Carl and Unonius were carting home a load of hay one day, they saw a large herd of them heading right for the cabin, and more particularly for a large box fastened to the outer wall of the cabin, in which was kept a supply of corn. Mrs. Unonius took the first gun she saw, which unfortunately was loaded only with birdshot, and blazed away at the nearest one without causing much damage. It was the first gun she had ever fired, and the result must be condoned by her good intentions.

Unonius now relates an occurrence which he considers as the primary cause for the changes that later took place in his life and which altered his entire future:
On the steamer from New York to Albany we had made the acquaintance of a Mr. N., an Englishman and his wife, they also being on their way to the West. Although perfect strangers and unfamiliar with each other’s language, both my wife and I seemed to be attracted to them, and we all exchanged confidences. They seemed to have a home already established in Wisconsin, and this was the first intimation I had of ever thinking of locating in that territory. They had taken another boat out of Buffalo, but we met again for a few minutes during our stop at Detroit and later in Milwaukee, yet prior to the time when we determined on our location. He had now, after several months, made inquiry about us and the now well-known Swedish settlement, had set out to find us, and was welcomed to our home. They told us that they lived in Prairieville, since called Waukesha, and only twelve miles distant from us. Here also lived three young missionaries of the Protestant Episcopal church, who were their friends and who served the community in their capacity of ministers, even going to the far outlying districts to preach. Their circuit included Summit, and we were now invited to come on some one of the following Sundays and attend services there, which we did. However, we were prepared to first expect an early visit from one of the ministers, the leader of the trio, and after a few days Rev. J. Lloyd Breck presented himself at our home. His very first appearance made an impression upon me which I never can forget. A true Christian and energetic minister of the Gospel revealed himself in his personality. It was impossible to see him without being attracted to him by respect and love. He had recently been ordained deacon, and had chosen Wisconsin for his field and located at Waukesha. He was associated with two others, likewise deacons and classmates in their Alma Mater.

On this his first visit to us, he broached the subject of religion, and in an intimate and lengthy discussion I found that our Lutheran church of Sweden was not much different in dogma and belief than the Episcopal. In fact, they had a great deal in common. It was a refreshing experience to make this man’s acquaintance and exchange views with him on subjects close to my heart, and I did not then surmise that later a lasting friendship and comradeship in religious work would bind us together. He sowed in my mind the seed that later developed into decided opinions and ultimately in real convictions on church matters.

We had our evening meal and later listened to his kindly yet eloquent talk on Christian dogma and the faith of our fathers, and the day closed by bowing our heads in unison in prayer.

The little schoolhouse at Summit was the meeting place for religious service. It was an ordinary log house, about twenty-two by twenty-four feet, with uneven ending of the logs at the corners and the bark still remaining inside and outside. The windows were located high in the walls so as to prevent distraction of the children to what might be going on outside, and with its poor roof and rickety door it had the appearance rather of a dilapidated stable than an institution of learning. In the
middle of the room was a large stove, which when in full force changed
the interior into a veritable turkish bathhouse. Fortunately, there were
plenty of cracks in the roof, walls, and floor to permit the air to circulate.
Two large homemade tables and several benches constituted the furnish-
ings. A small table at the end of the room served as a pulpit, and a
bucket of water with a tin cup was at the door. Anything less inspiring
for a religious service can hardly be imagined. Many settlers came with
their families, some walking, some on oxcarts, and others driving horses,
and soon not only the benches but the tables were full of people. Before
the service began, there was no evidence of solemnity. The absence of
church surroundings and appointments may serve as an excuse, and the
people seemed to have come together more for amusement or worldly
entertainment than to hear the word of God. Some chattered and laughed
with unbound hilarity, and some of the men amused themselves by using
their jackknives to carve their names in the benches, or with blades half
closed twisting the knives in the air and letting them drop with the
points sticking in the floor. Personally, it distracted my attention from
the solemnity due the occasion. Some men and women, however, ob-
served proper manners and demeanor, and still others in genuflection were
perusing their prayerbooks. Finally, Mr. Breck arrived, the conversation
ceased, and the jackknives were put away. The service began, and the
congregation listened to the sermon in silent reverence.

After the service I had the opportunity for a few moments of con-
versation with Mr. Breck, who gave me the joyful news that he and the
other missionaries planned to build a home in our vicinity to serve as
a center for their religious activities. They had already purchased a
quarter section of land for this purpose only three miles distant from us,
unsurpassed in natural beauty, and intended to erect a chapel there and
later a school for religious instruction, for which a substantial subscrip-
tion had already been collected in the eastern states. This was the be-
ginning of the Nashotah Episcopal seminary.

LABOR AND ITS REWARD

Although the spring is not considered the proper time for
plowing, they had no other choice and, consequently, set
out to plow, till, and cultivate several acres for the seeding
of corn, potatoes, and other vegetables for winter food. No
other grain would have been worth while on soil plowed for
the first time in the spring. Their resources were not suffi-
cient to purchase a large plow such as is used in breaking
virgin soil, and even if they could they would not have had