Chapter VII

LIGHTS AND SHADES

OF

MISSIONARY LIFE:

CONTAINING

TRAVELS, SKETCHES, INCIDENTS,

AND

MISSIONARY EFFORTS,

DURING

NINE YEARS SPENT IN THE REGION OF LAKE SUPERIOR.

BY

REV. JOHN H. PITEZEL,

ALIAS, WA-ZAH-WAH-WAH-BOONO, OR "THE YELLOW BEARD."

"Every matter in the universe is linked in such wise unto others,
That a deep, full treatise upon one thing might reach to the history of all things."

Tupper.

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CHAPTER VII.

PERILS ON THE DEEP.

Having for three years been deprived of the privilege of meeting in conference, the interview I had enjoyed with my ministerial brethren was one of interest and profit. I was reappointed to the Kewa-wenon mission, with a roving commission from Bishop Janes to explore the mining region, and do what I could to establish religious worship among the miners. Rev. J. W. Holt was appointed as my assistant to teach the school, and attend to the wants of the mission in my absence. Conference ended, I repaired to Adrian, where I was joined by my family. Mrs. P.'s father accompanied us. After a short stay at Detroit we soon arrived at the Saut, via Mackinaw. During the several days in which we were detained at the Saut, embracing one Sabbath, it was our privilege to enjoy the genial sunlight of missionary life with other missionaries.

On the morning of the 15th of October the ground was covered with snow; but as the sun arose it soon disappeared.

In the afternoon the wind was fair for going up Lake Superior. After dark we were called on board the schooner Fur Trader. A very rainy night en-
sued. We had soon weighed anchor, and were disputing our way with the rapid current of the St. Mary’s.

**Friday, 16th, two o’clock, A. M.** Strong wind driving us at the rate of ten knots per hour. All were cheerful at the thought of a quick trip. But how illusive are some of our most joyous hopes! Like the mirage, seen in the distance, hope is only begotten to add weight to disappointment. We had passed White Fish Point, fifty miles from the Saut, and all was well. We sat down in the morning to breakfast, on homely sailor fare. It was about eight o’clock. No one dreamed of being interrupted before breakfast was over. Just now one of the sailors cried out, “Captain, it looks rather squally!” No sooner said than Captain R. dropped his knife and fork, and was on deck. Order was given to reef the mainsail. It was promptly done. Captain R. cried again, “Reef the foresail.” “Ay, ay, sir.” And the foresail was reefed. All interpreted these signs to have an important meaning. At ten o’clock the storm had greatly increased; hard rain and cold withal. Wind had hauled round more to the north. At twelve the seas ran very high, raging as if some angry spirit had troubled the mighty deep. Our schooner rose upon the waves, and then plunged her bows into the foaming deep, groaning at every plunge.

She was heavily freighted. Forward she had on a quantity of hay, a horse, and other live stock. The hay soon became filled with water, from the seas
which swept over us. *Abaft*, her deck was stowed with barrels, two deep, even on the top with the railing. When a hard squall struck her, it would lay her over "on her beam ends;" and, much of the time, the upper tier of barrels on the *larboard deck* was under water. She consequently made bad weather. Meanwhile one of the *davits*, or tackle, to hold up the boat, gave way and dropped one end of the yawl. Order was given to cut the boat loose, which was done, and for some time it was towed with a large rope. But soon the rope broke, and now our yawl was seen floating, bottom up, with the hay which had just been thrown overboard. The pump was kept in operation most of the time. Captain R., who stood at the helm all the time, was in a most exposed condition; sometimes in water up to his knees, and then forced, with the violence of the waves, from side to side of the steerage deck. We were now in the vicinity of the Grand Sable, a little east of the Pictured Rocks, about thirty miles from Grand Island. We had hoped to reach the Island, where there is a harbor secure from all winds, but this was now found to be impossible. It only remained for us to be driven ashore, with all the peril to which this would expose us, or to make the *attempt* to get back under the lee of White Fish Point, about fifty* miles distant. The latter alternative the Captain chose. We *wore ship*, as the

*In mentioning distances perfect accuracy must not be expected. In the Repository this was set down at sixty miles. The last mentioned is probably nearer correct.*
sailors say, and succeeded in clearing the shore; and, sailing at a rapid rate, we rounded White Fish Point in safety, and, getting into comparatively smooth water, by ten o’clock at night we were very much rejoiced to hear the Captain give orders to let go the anchor.

I have given only a faint description of the scene without. If all was storm without, all was far from being calm within. Most of the crew and passengers were irreligious, and the voice of God, which spoke amidst the warring elements, was not in soothing accents to such as were at enmity with him. It was a sober time to all on board. The most daring and profane seemed awe-struck. One man who was not in the habit of praying in a calm, said he “guessed there were none on board but that prayed.” Another said, “I think I shall not be found at the billiard-table very soon again.” The cook, a colored man, was frightened nearly out of his wits. A female was terribly alarmed. “We shall all go to the bottom,” said she, frequently. Bitterly did she lament having left a comfortable home, to suffer such hardships and dangers. “O, Mr. ———,” said she, “do pray for us.” Many silent prayers ascended to heaven, but it was rather inconvenient to hold a public prayer meeting, when each was so sick as scarcely to be able to hold up his head.

Our boat was long, narrow, and flat, setting at defiance the symmetry and proportion of the ship-builder’s art, but, withal, was an admirable sailor.
Her cabin, if such it may be called, was small—only four berths, and not any too neat. The table was without legs, and shoved up and down a center-post, supported by a wooden pin. When not needed it was shoved overhead. A small stove stood in the corner near the hatchway. Such was the boat into which we were crowded. Two Indian girls had gained admittance into one of the berths, the others were resigned to those who had women and children. The floor as well as the berths was stowed full. And those who could find no room here, found such accommodations as they could in the hold.

The storm came on so suddenly that there was not time to clear away the breakfast dishes; these were huddled down on the floor by the stove. Scarce had the storm struck us, before the stove tumbled, bottom upward, among the breakfast dishes. The violent tossings of the boat, the scent of bilge-water, which escaped through a hole in the floor, the strange sights and sounds all around us, gave every one a disposition to part with his breakfast; and a scene ensued so ludicrous as to excite our risibles in the midst of all our peril.

Our situation was extremely uncomfortable; we could have no fire, and could not keep dry. With an overcoat on I was wet throughout. Several large waves poured down upon us through the hatchway. The large seas dashing against the side of the boat, forced water through the berths, from one side to the other. We were literally drenched, and became much
chilled before we could have fire again—not till after ten o'clock at night. But praise to an overruling Providence for our rescue from the dangers to which we were exposed! Several causes conduced to this under the blessing of a good God. Our boat had recently been fitted up with new sails; about the time we began to wear ship, the wind hauled about two points to westward, which enabled us to clear the shore; but added to these were the self-possession and fidelity of Captain R. and his crew. They will ever have the gratitude of the passengers for their conduct during this severe storm.

We lay at anchor till the next morning after breakfast. Having lost our boat, it was agreed to run back to the Saut and get another. Wind being in our favor, we set sail and dropped anchor at the head of the Rapids just after dark. We now landed and walked through the mud to Fort Brady, a mile distant, and put up with the Chaplain. All were surprised at our speedy return. It will not be thought very strange that, after the perils and exposures on the deep, just named, the following day, which was the holy Sabbath, was to us one of the best Sabbaths of all our life.

While at the Saut, Captain R., of another boat, came aboard, either on business or from curiosity. He had the audacity to charge our mishaps to the preachers and the women. He might also have included the cats, for there was one aboard during the storm. He said that he “never knew it to fail—with
women and preachers aboard, sailors were sure to have storms." It seems that, since the sad affair of poor Jonah, preachers must be made the scape-goats, to bear off the sins of the Tars. Why the fair sex should influence the spirit of storms against our friends of the deep, it is hard to conceive, unless it be for the many long and painful neglects they have suffered from those who have followed the sea. Be this as it may, Mr. B. himself, who was a fearless sailor and a daring sinner, was not proof against storms. He was one of the unfortunate company who perished on the schooner Merchant, in the summer of 1847.

After a detention of another week at the Saut, trudging back and forth over the muddy Portage, now called aboard by the captain, with a prospect of fair wind, and then debarking in disappointment, really fearing that we must winter at the Saut, we left port once more, and till we landed at Grand Island encountered another storm but little inferior to the one above described. Nearly all the passengers became desperately seasick. The greatest sufferers were, perhaps, my wife and daughter.

GRAND ISLAND.

This is a large island, as its name imports, situated near the southern shore of Lake Superior, nearly midway from the Saut to Kewawenon. The soil is generally good. It is well timbered, principally with birch, maple, and beech.
Mr. W. came here in an early day and took up his residence. He had a numerous family growing around him. One of his daughters had married and settled by him. In the fall of 1845 she came, accompanied by her lover, in a small boat to Kewawenon, a hundred and twenty miles, to be sacrificed on the hymeneal altar. The writer felt himself not a little honored by this visit from his neighbors of the Island, especially as he was called upon to perform the solemn rite.

At this island is one of the most beautiful and commodious harbors to be found any where.

Wednesday, 28th, was a beautiful morning, enlivened by a bland south breeze. After a good rest on shore, where we shared the generous hospitality of Mr. W.’s family, at twelve o’clock, M., we were again called on board. At four, P. M., we were nearly becalmed. At sunset the wind was slightly ahead. During the night we beat with some success. Thursday morning Presque Isle was south, in sight, and Granite Island several miles ahead. We could now lay our course for Kewawenon. We had a rough sea all day. But by the blessing of a gracious Providence, the same evening we dropped anchor in the Bay, near the Methodist mission. We were now soon surrounding our own cheerful fire, to recount, with gratitude, the goodness of God to us during a long and perilous voyage. Never before did home seem so sweet.

November 1st, the Sabbath after our return, was
a memorable day to us. The Indians came out in the morning, and brother H. preached them a good practical sermon. In the afternoon I preached to the few white residents, from Hebrews xiii, 12-14, dwelling particularly on the latter part, "Here we have no continuing city." I was blessed with great freedom, and considerable enlargement in speaking. The congregation were melted into tears. The subject, applicable as it is to men at all times, was especially so at this time. Death had, during our absence, invaded our ranks among the Indians. He had dealt a terrible blow upon our small white settlement in the very sudden death of Mr. J., the carpenter, who was cut down in the prime and vigor of life. He died, we trust, not without hope in Christ. The text did not tend more to impress us with the past than to admonish us of the future. In the congregation was a Mr. B., a respectable and worthy member of a sister Church. He was the agent of a mine at Silver Mountain, as it was called, about fifteen miles off. His leisure time he spent at our place. He seemed to enjoy much the privilege of worshiping with us. The following Sabbath he spoke in our class meeting of his strong confidence in God, and of his determination to stand, at all times, as a witness for the Savior. That week was not half gone before I saw the dead body of Mr. B. taken out of Sturgeon river, where he had been drowned. He had loaded a small bark canoe with vegetables. Accompanied by two men he attempted to reach Silver
Mountain by water. He had crossed the Bay, entered Portage river, passed thence into Sturgeon river, where he had gone only a short distance before, running upon a large snag, he broke a hole through the canoe, and, in attempting to escape, was drowned. The two men made their escape, got out the canoe, and came down the river in one end, after having cut it in two. Such was the sad fate of Mr. B. Nor was the fate of the Company any less disastrous than that of their worthy agent. The succeeding season they rallied afresh to prosecute the work at Silver Mountain. They sent on a new agent, and new recruits of men and means. They all reached the Saut de Ste. Marie in safety. They left the Saut, bound for the mine, on the schooner Merchant, and have never since been heard of. A small fragment of the wreck is all that has been discovered of this sad catastrophe. Mining has not since been prosecuted at Silver Mountain. Indeed it has never been a mine, only in prospect. The location was a bone of contention when first made, and has ended in disappointment to all, and in irreparable loss to some. Thus does wealth often elude the grasp of those that would be rich, and the glory of the world passes away.