

From the Christian Witness.

LETTER FROM BISHOP CHASE.

Our readers will peruse with deep interest the following letter from the aged and venerable Bishop Chase, the pioneer bishop of the west.

Robin's Nest, April 10, 1837.

I write you by an amanuensis, my bodily frame is too weak to have it otherwise. I am on a couch before the fire in my Robin's Nest, musing on the past, and anxious for the future welfare of the Church. My present sickness commenced last Sunday night a week ago, about midnight; I was then at a friend's house at Monmouth, Warren county, about sixty miles from my present residence. I had preached twice, performing the full service morning and evening. After spending with my friend and his Christian neighbors several hours in pious conversation, I retired to rest, in seeming health. The air was chill, and the room cold; and I awoke in great agony. A physician being called in the morning, and another at noon, I obtained a partial relief. Tuesday was spent in great weakness, and on Wednesday I obtained a conveyance in an open wagon to Knoxville, twenty miles to the east. Here I was invited to preach, but found myself unable. It cheered me to see my son whom I had sent for; but I was sorry to find that, on account of the swollen state of Spoon River, he had left my covered wagon behind, and come on with the horses only. As I was too ill to ride on horseback, a friend readily sent me forward in his wagon. It both snowed and rained, but when we arrived at the river, we drove our horses through, and having first passed the baggage over the rapid stream, I had an opportunity of seeing the frailty of the vessel, the only one destined to take me across. This was a log of black walnut with the bark still on, hollowed out in the middle; the whole about twelve feet long, and just wide enough to admit myself with difficulty amidst a wisp of hay: as the man at the stern pushed off the little ark from the shore, she sunk with my weight to within an inch or two of the gunwales. "Can you swim?" said he—"Like a duck," said I. "All I fear is, if she turn over, I cannot extricate myself from my squeezed position in the log." It was now that I experienced the great benefit of being acquainted in my early years with canoe navigation. How often, when a child, on the banks of Connecticut river, a description of which Barlow gives us in these beautiful words,

"Nor drinks the sea,  
A lovelier wave than thine."

have I swam and sported with a canoe similar to that in which I was here placed; and how little did I then think that the hand of Providence was training me to surmount dangers at the advanced age of sixty-two! God, who ordereth all things in mercy, was as much the Author of the teaching in the former case, as he was of my preservation in the latter. With grateful hearts we reached the shore, and mounted the muddy bank. Few things could be more acceptable to my thirsty palate, (for I was indeed in a fever,) than the overflowings of the clean troughs, filled with the fast droppings of the delicious sugar water. Here my horses were attached to my covered wagon, and we rode to French Grove. I staid in a cabin which sheltered us from a storm accompanied by thunder and lightning, during most of the night. Knowing that I had to pass the waters of the Kickapoo before I should see my loved family, the acuteness of my anxiety was tempered only by an humble trust in that Providence that had sustained me through so many difficulties. When we arose in the morning, the whole surface was, as you imagine, after the flood, more aqueous than terrestrial. Every rivulet was a bold and rapid stream; and every slough was now a rivulet.

The day on which I set off from French Grove was most uncomfortable to me, though in a covered wagon. The snow blew horizontally nearly all the time a passing the prairie, which by reason of the deepness of the mud, (the frost just going out of the ground saturated by the last night's rain,) was done, at a slow walk. I became chilled, and suffered much in this condition, the two lone houses constituting all that is called the town of Charleston, were extremely welcome; that of Mr. Houghton's had a comfortable fire in it, which warmed my benumbed limbs till I felt courage to go on further, and reach the house of Mr. Powell. Here we learned by the return of a

traveller, that the Kickapoo Creek was overflowing its banks, and could not be crossed, either by swimming or with a canoe. "But is there no way of surmounting this difficulty," said I—"I must see my family, and be ministered to by the hand of skillful kindness, or I perish." "There is a skeleton of a bridge about a quarter of a mile above the fording place, raised since you left home, and the string pieces are on; but it is ten or twelve feet from the bent which supports the farther end of the string pieces to the opposite bank, and the water on each side of the bridge, I suppose, is in great depth." "But can I get upon the string pieces?" "You can ride with your wagon through the water and see what you can do," said Powell, "and I will send my brother on my pony to assist your son in taking care of you; but I fear it is too hazardous."

The distance between Mr. Powell's and the Kickapoo is nearly three miles. We passed it tardily, and not without feelings of terror at the sight of the wide-spreading waters as we looked off the high to the low lands and bottom of this now swollen stream. "Direct us, O Lord, in all our ways, and further us with thy continual help," was the petition graciously heard in this our great extremity.

We left the fording road when first we met with the deep waters, and kept round to the left on the highest meadow lands, having to cross but a few deep places, till we came in sight of the new skeleton bridge of which Mr. Powell spoke. It towered above the rapid stream below, and was supported by three bents or frames, across which lay two courses of string pieces, the one about twelve and the other twenty-five feet long, and the whole kept from giving way to the current by a large oak tree, against which, on the leeward side, one of the frames rested. As there was great depth of water before we could reach the bridge, we had to leave our horses and wagon and seek a way amid the high grass further up the stream—this we found; and we came down the bank that hung over the main stream till we could touch the timbers.—I felt relieved when this was achieved, and sprung upon them as if renewed in strength. My dear son Henry was by my side, and Mr. Powell's brother followed after me as far as the first tier of string pieces reached; but here he stopped, holding to the great oak tree, and saw my son walking on one of the long string pieces, holding a staff at one end, while I walked on another string piece having hold of the other.

Blessed be God, my head did not swim, nor was my strength abated till I reached the farther bent or frame, still ten or twelve feet from the opposite shore. Here I found the cap-plate of the frame had not a level but an inclined surface like the roof of a house—this being narrow, also, I feared it would suffer my foot to slip, and if it did so, all would be in vain to save me from plunging into the rapid stream below. I was on the middle string piece equally distant from either corner of the frame. While standing here I turned round, and though in great danger myself, could not but smile at the sight of my friend Mr. Powell, still clinging to the great oak tree. Filial tenderness banished fear from the bosom of my son, from whom now I received the most essential assistance. He sprang from one timber to another as on wings to obey my orders. From the up stream corner of the frame on which I stood, there was a small pole extended to the bank or shore, and underneath it another from the brace to the shore; these poles were about three feet apart, perpendicularly, and what added the security of my getting to shore by this means, was the fortunate circumstance of the upper pole being pinned to the end of the long string piece on which it lay. In view of this unexpected facility, I made out to summon courage to walk on the narrow and slicing cap frame to the corner; when there, alas! how was I puzzled to put my knees in the exact place which my feet occupied! Had I been young, light and supple, this might have been done easily. But with me it was far otherwise. Besides my age and corpulency, there were the paralyzing effects of broken limbs and ribs, occasioned by my being so often thrown from my horse on frozen grounds, and up-turned in coaches in Cumberland. How did I feel when now my body refused to bend, when not to bend and yet attempt to throw myself from my feet to my knees would have plunged me headlong

into the chilling stream, which, in my present sickly state, might prove my death, even if I should by swimming, save myself from drowning. Never had I more reason for the blessing of a clear head and a firm faith in God's supporting hand than at this moment. "Go!"—said I to my son who was on the small poles above described—"Go and get a firm rail, which resting transversely on the string pieces, may catch my body as I throw my feet from the place on which I stand." He did so, and I found myself by these means with my feet on the lower and my hands holding the upper pole, and thus praising God, I got safe to land. I was then two miles from my dear family.

How I got home—and how happy my dear wife and family were in receiving me safe from so many dangers of five weeks absence, may be easily imagined.

April 12.—I am a little better to day: and, by the additional strength of a few grains of quinine, think I can give you under my own hand a short account of the whole of my Episcopal tour; also answer your kind letter of the 10th of February.

I set off from the Robin's Nest the last of February; and the next day proceeded down the Illinois river in a steam boat. The first field of duty was at Alton—where is placed the worthy and Rev. Mr. De Pui. By the blessing of God upon his pious and unremitting endeavors, I found here a great door opened, for a bishop's usefulness. Would that one more able and worthy than myself had been present to improve this favorable opportunity of doing good to the perishing souls of men. I preached three times and confirmed, and administered the Holy Communion. The Episcopalians are laying the foundation of a large church in a conveniently conspicuous place in this fast rising city. I should have gone over land to Collinsville and Edwardsville, where is the Rev. Mr. Darrow, but it rained almost incessantly; and even when at St. Louis, which city I visited in hope of seeing good Bishop Kemper, I found it impossible to cross over what is called the "American Bottoms" without great hazard of my life.—I repassed the Illinois river, as far as opposite to Rushville, and with much difficulty through the worst of roads, reached that interesting village. Here I consecrated their sweet little church—and listened to their sighs for a clergyman, confirmed, baptized, administered the holy communion, and preached morning and evening—all alone! Alas, how unlike an Episcopal visitation in primitive days!

On Friday, I went as far as Quincy, one of the most beautifully situated as well as fast improving and healthy cities of the far west.

For an opportunity of paying this lovely place an Episcopal visit at this time, I shall always be grateful to divine goodness. It was here I found 13 communicants of our Apostolic Church, who, with their families and others, friendly to our means of grace, were formed into a parish called henceforth the parish of St. John's Church, Quincy, Adams county, Illinois. I baptized adults and infants, and administered confirmation, and the holy communion, and preached twice on Sunday, besides solemnizing a marriage after all was over—and this also all alone. By-the-by, this speaking, more than four hours, without the least intermission, does not look like longevity in an old man of 62 years!—A few more such tours as this will bring down what strength I have left in my journey, and shorten my days. With a heart full of gratitude to God, and love for his dear people in Quincy, I proceeded on Monday up the "Father of Rivers" in a steamboat with Captain Holcomb, of the Olive Branch. I love to write this man's name and that of his boat in full, because of his christian character and gentle manners. In passing up the Rapids, he was the means of saving a poor boy, aged 13 years, who fell overboard, and of bringing him to his fond parents, who saw him sinking far astern of the steam-boat as they thought for the last time. But Captain H. was at that moment alone in the yawl by his side, and caught him!—when the little fellow was leaving the boat to go into the country at the "Yellow Bank," the Christian hearted Holcomb gave him a Bible, and bade him learn in that book through whose mercy he had been saved from a watery grave. All who witnessed this modest but true acknowledgment of our holy faith wept tears of sacred joy.

P. Chase, Bp. of Illinois.