

But it was too late to go in search of another, and pleading urgent business and willingness to incur all risks, the formidable animal was put out—a powerful animal, black as a . . .

What can be more inspiring than a horse-back jaunt across a northwest prairie? So, despite the cold and rain, and now and then a prodigious leap by Black Hawk, the ride was exhilarating. It was two miles to the bridge. On arriving there, I found the freshet had swept it away. Just in sight, however, in the margin of a fine grove, was a snug little cabin, and riding briskly there, the barking of dogs and my shouts brought the proprietor to the door, a bevy of flaxen haired urchins at his heels, with eyes brimful of curiosity.

"Is there any way to cross the river?" asked I.

"Yes," on the bridge," he replied.

"The bridge is gone!"

"Well then, there isn't any way!" he replied.

"But is there no place on the stream shallow enough to be forded?"

The settler scratched his head, comically scanned me and my horse leisurely, and said:

"Take the road to the left, and you will come to the old ford; how it will be in this flood I can't say. You can try it though, if you like, nothing like trying."

There was no need of trying, I found, on reaching the spot. There rolled the river deep and wide with steep banks on each side. What was to be done? Go back and wait till the waters subsided? That was not Western. The genuine pioneer never thinks of giving up an enterprise. A short experience in the vicissitudes of frontier life wakes up a self-reliance and love of adventure, which makes danger and difficulty to be courted rather than shunned; indeed they are every-day occurrences, adding piquancy to privation and hardship. And, as I looked into the water of the river, there rose to view the image of the ragged, barefoot, coatless, moneyless, bridegroom; and memory recalled certain facts which I had learned about his borrowing articles of apparel for himself and bride, and materials for a wedding supper. Now to disappoint persons in their conditions was hardly to be thought of. So chipping to my good steed we made the plunge—and a deep plunge it was for the animal above, as well as the animal be-

neath, for the former went under nearly to the neck, however, the horse soon rose to the surface, permitting his rider, by a happy exercise of unwonted agility, to strike the saddle *a la Turk*, which position I prudently kept till the opposite bank was gained. Clambering up the steep bank, my borrowed steed went at a break-neck pace the remaining five miles to our destination. It was a small frame house, perched on a swell of land in the midst of a wide prairie, dotted with an occasional cabin. The dwelling was covered only with rough boards, between which the ever-restless winds came and went at will. Alighting at the gate, a gray-haired man, the bride's father, who was cutting wood in the front yard, laid down his axe and came forward to take my horse. He had, as I afterwards learned, served in the Mexican war, and had still a soldierly bearing. Taking the bridle, he said:

You are the Minister, I suppose? We had given you up, thinking you would not come in such a storm as this. But how did you cross the river? We heard the bridge was gone."

"Horseback," said I.

"Well," said the old soldier, his eye kindling, "a minister that can do that can preach, I know!"

I had fulfilled my engagement partly from sympathy and the pleasure of conquering obstacles; there was besides, a sort of presentment that urged me on; nor did I regret that I yielded to it.

The interior of the humble dwelling, and its occupant I shall not forget. What taste and neatness under the most discouraging circumstances! What method and fertility of arrangement where all was plain, and rough, and scant! It is on the frontier, where the appliances of elegant housewifery are impossible, that woman's fertile resources of tact and skill most strikingly appear—often making the rude log house and simple home made furniture wear an aspect of comfort and taste not unfrequently wanting in homes of luxury.

The household consisted of the father—already introduced—mother, three daughters, and the young man who had called for my services.

"Mother is not well and would like to see you a moment," remarked one of the young ladies, showing me into an adjoining room, where loving hands had spared no pains to fortify its pining inmate against exposure, and soothe the