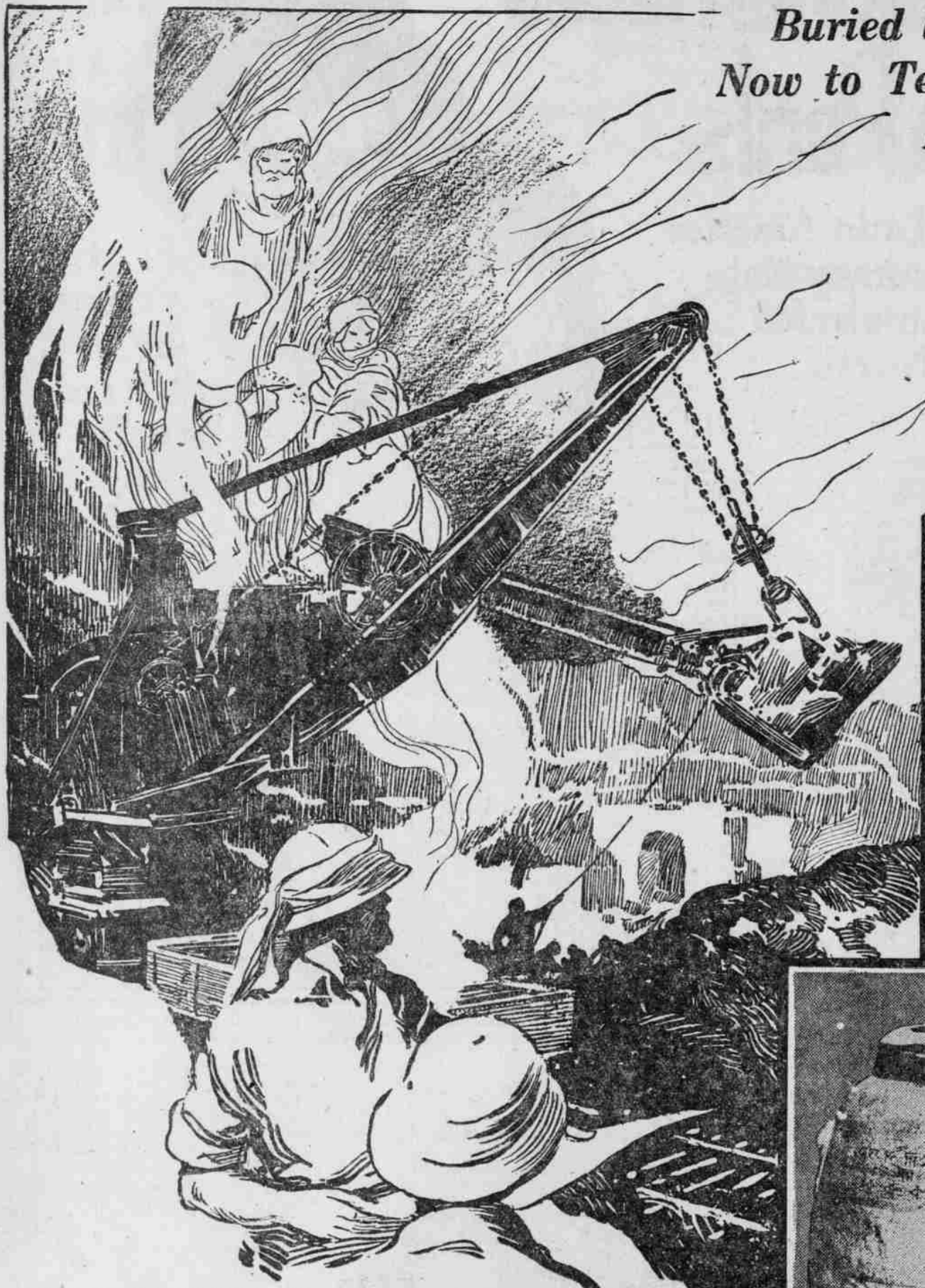


Live News from Abraham's old Home Town

Buried in Oblivion for 4000 Years, Ur of the Chaldees Is Now to Tell Philadelphia Explorers Secrets of the Real Beginning of the Christian Religion

By William A. McGarry



And Thare took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Aran, his son's son, and Sarai, his daughter-in-law, the wife of Abram, his son, and brought them out of Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Chanaan and they came as far as Haran and dwelt there.

And the Lord said to Abram: Go forth out of thy country, and from thy kindred and out of thy father's house, and come into the land which I shall shew thee.

And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and magnify thy name, and thou shalt be blessed.

And he took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all the substance which they had gathered, and the souls which they had gotten in Haran and they went out to go into the land of Chanaan.—Genesis.

WHEN the events narrated in the foregoing verses from Genesis had transpired and Abraham with his people and his flocks had gone out of Ur of the Chaldees, a great silence settled over that famous city and the province surrounding it and bearing the same name. So far as history is concerned it was a forgotten city. For nearly 3000 years its name was not heard on the tongues of men save in solemn recitation of that simple narrative from the first book of the Old Testament. Then from the ruined palace of Assurbanipal in Assyria and the buried archives of sacred Nippur came strange records carved in clay of its early greatness as the shrine of the moon god.

Now a modern legion outnumbering the throngs of Thare and Abraham is journeying back to Ur of the Chaldees to search for what records the patriarch and his people may have left and to recover the world's first and oldest library of original works on history, religion, art, law, the sciences and narratives of the every-day affairs of men 5000 and perhaps 10,000 years ago. It is the first really constructive invasion of Ur in nearly 4000 years. When its work is done it may yield a wholly new story of the inception of the religious movement that prepared the world for Christianity, or it may corroborate the story in Genesis and furnish contemporary details to explain why Thare and Abraham left to wander into a strange land.

Not even the valiant quests of the Crusaders toward the Holy Land in the middle ages held forth more promise than the expedition now started on its way by the University museum of Philadelphia and the British museum. At that time the cuneiform script that had been patiently evolved from the first rude pictographs of earliest man into a definite form of writing had no meaning to the greatest living scholars. Today there are eight or ten men in the world who can translate the oldest of those signs on the tablets of the Sumerians. If there is a record of Abraham and his people in the ruins of Ur they will find it. From the religious point of view alone the expedition is the most important ever launched in the name of archeology.

Ur is in southern Mesopotamia, about

160 miles from Bagdad. Today it looks like nothing more than a huge, sandy mound rising from a flat and desolate plain, its surface broken at varying intervals by other mounds and by ridges marking the courses of ancient canals. For 2000 or 2500 years, from the time Darius and his Persian hordes swept over the land, the place has been deserted except for occasional tent settlements of Arabs. When Alexander yearned for more worlds to conquer, three centuries before Christ, it is quite likely that Ur was unoccupied. Then the ruins of its great temple, its stage tower or zikkurat and its sacrificial altars rose gaunt against the sky.

A lot of dust can settle in two millenniums, and according to the accounts of archeologists who have been in Mesopotamia in recent years there has been enough of it completely to bury all signs of the vast city the streets of which were once trod by Abraham. That the ruins are there is definitely known. Tentative exploring shafts have been sunk here and there over the wide expanse of the mound top, and each of them has yielded precious relics of a lost people, the Sumerians. Although there has been no systematic excavation in the ruins, the hill is so rich in records that for twenty years it has been yielding a steady drizzle of clay tablets, seal cylinders, inscriptions on stone, jewels, small statuary and other relics.

It was the information obtained from

those contemporary records, and not the mere mention of the city's name in the Scriptures, that led the British Museum to arrange the joint expedition with the famous Philadelphia institution. Six or seven years ago, when Dr. Stephen H. Langdon was curator of the Babylonian section at the university museum, he predicted to the writer that Ur of Chaldees was in all probability the storehouse of the world's earliest library. That prediction was based on references to the great Moon God city in the psalms and liturgies of Nippur, the Calneh of the Bible, excavated by university museum savants thirty years ago. Nippur was the shrine of Enlil, the chief god of the Babylonian pantheon. Ur, the city of the Moon God, may have been a thousand years older than Nippur.

A vast library of information concerning the history of the peoples that inhabited North and South Babylonia in early days has been compiled within the last twenty years. Prior to that time little was known about it, the only histori-

cal references being in the works of the famous Greek, Herodotus. By far the most important part of that information has come from the Nippur tablets deciphered at the university museum. As yet, not more than a slight inkling of what is known has filtered into the histories and the encyclopedias.

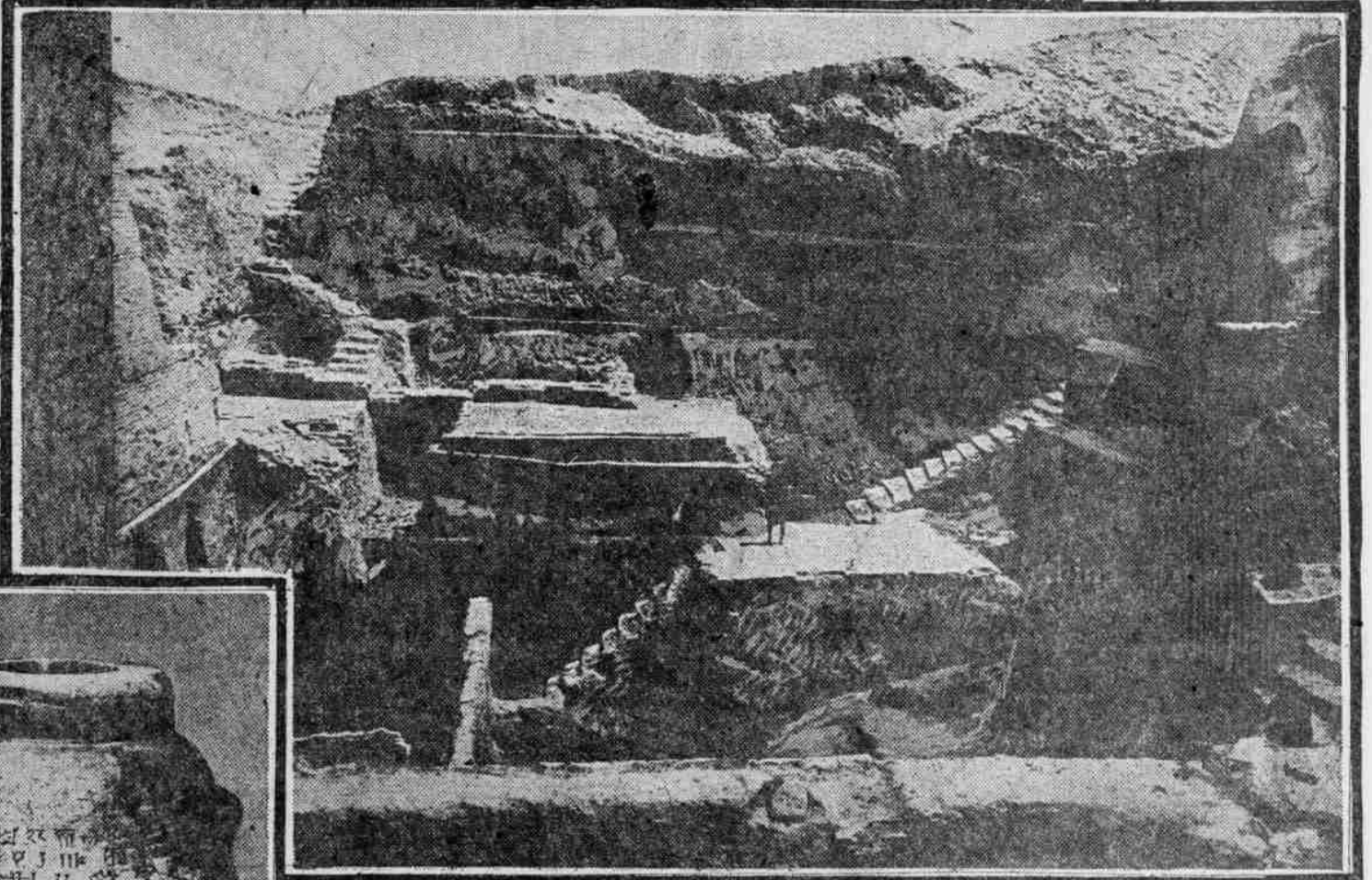
The romance of that time is just being retored to modern readers. It is known now that after Thare and Abraham left Ur there came a long period of difficulties. In fact, it is not hard to imagine that the impending collapse of the dynasty furnished the reason for the departure. Abraham's time is fixed roughly

pur was rebuilt twenty-one times, and each level of occupation left its records plainly discernible in the ruins. Since Ur was older, it may have known even a greater number of occupations.

It was the custom in those days after a city had been destroyed to level off the ruins with little regard for what lay beneath them. A pavement then was laid over the ruins of the principal buildings. It was made of sun-dried brick, on each of which was stamped the name of the warrior who happened at that time to be king of all the land. Those pavements furnish an indelible record in the hot, dry climate of Mesopotamia of the races in-

been the first place for such a compilation.

At present the earliest known story of Creation, Paradise, the flood and the fall of man comes from the Nippur collection, and is based on Sumerian legend. There are many indications that it came from



A section of the excavations showing the ancient towns being uncovered by the scientists.



A jar on which records of historical events have been inscribed.

habiting the cities in the earliest times. The tablets buried in the archives beneath each new pavement tell the intimate stories of the daily lives not only of the kings and leaders, but of the merchants and farmers, the property owners and slaves.

Legal transactions, ranging from marriage contracts to the sale or rental of dwellings, were recorded in the archives at Nippur, and many of the clay tablets contain the names of a half dozen witnesses. Tablets found at or near the surface or picked up in the few experimental shafts sunk at Ur show that that city used the same system. The possibilities of new information are limitless. If Thare and Abraham owned property it is quite likely that they sold it before leaving Ur. The sale, under the law, was recorded. It is only a question of whether the particular chamber in which it was filed was destroyed or not.

Lawyers are interested in the expedition because of the light it may throw on the beginning of all laws. Parallel paragraphs from the Mosaic code and the much earlier code of Hammurabi show unquestionably that the compilation made by Hammurabi, who ruled at Babylon about the time of Abraham, was used as a basis for the work done by Moses, or both came from a common source. A code still earlier than that of Hammurabi has been discovered in the Nippur collection, but it is only fragmentary. Archeologists find evidences that each city had its own ordinances, just as municipalities have today, and that eventually all were brought together in a code. Ur may have

still earlier versions, copies of which, it is hoped, will be found at Ur. Ethnologists are particularly interested in the expedition because of the light it may throw on the origin of the Sumerians. The records obtained so far show that those people were nearly extinct by the time of Abraham. They were a non-Semitic race, and virtually all the great body of religious literature, some of which is reflected in present-day religions, came from Sumer.

The entire country is now familiarly referred to as Babylonia. In the days of its early civilization, however, it was divided nominally into two parts, Sumer in the south and Akkad in the north. The first settlements are said to have been in the south. Ur is situated near the junction of the rivers Tigris and Euphrates. For many years scientists had difficulty locating it because all the tablet references place it on the coast of the Persian gulf. It was finally discovered that during the centuries that have elapsed the rivers had pushed the shore line far out by carrying down tons of mud and sand.

Records from the Nippur collection and all other information obtained about the Sumerians indicate that they were decidedly non-Semitic. It is believed that they were a fair-haired race, probably of northern extraction. How they came into the valleys and plains that were to become the most fertile and productive of the world has ever known is a mystery to which so far no key has been found. One of the hopes of the expedition is that it will yield legends by which may be traced the course of migration that led to Mesopotamia.

The work, of course, will not be done in a single year. The University museum explorers spent 12 years at Nippur. Work is possible in that climate for not more than six months of the year. It will start October 15. Plans have been made to continue it, however, and the intention is to excavate to the first record of occupancy at Ur. Nippur never was completely revealed for all of its races, primarily because of the difficulties under which the explorers worked and which have been eliminated for the present expedition. Chief of those is the matter of mechanical equipment. When Dr. Clarence C. Fisher, curator of the museum's Egyptian section, started work at Beth Shean, in the shadow of Mount Gilboa, where Saul and his sons were slain, he obtained a large quantity of railroad equipment. The Mesopotamia expedition will have a complete military railway, furnished by the British forces that have been operating in the country. They will have also a fleet of motor trucks from the same source, with which to maintain communications with the headquarters that will be established at Bagdad, 160 miles away.

When the Ur excavations are started the University museum will be the most active institution of its kind in any country with six expeditions at work. One is in Alaska studying the customs of the Indians and making collections of their primitive arts for the museum. Dr. William C. Farabee is making a study of ancient civilizations and the customs and languages of little-known living tribes in Central America. Another expedition is excavating ruins of extinct races in Peru. Dr. Fisher is directing operations at Beth Shean in Palestine, and also at two sites in Egypt, Memphis and Thebes.

"Well, we're here," said the leader of the traveling thespians, "and ready for business."

"I see you're here," said the manager of the opera house, gloomily, "but the jig's up."

"What's the matter?" exclaimed the owner of "Brown's in Town."

"I thought you had canceled," said the manager of Bowersock's.

"But you got my telegram telling that we were on the way?"

"I did not," said the local manager, "and, thinking you were headed elsewhere, I called off the engagement and gave 'em their money back."

Over at the telegraph office the information that commercial wires to Denver had been down for 48 hours afforded little comfort to the owner of "Brown's in Town," but he got considerable satisfaction out of the threat that he intended to sue the telegraph officials for all the money in the world, and he was on the verge of forgetting his own immediate troubles when the leading comedian touched him on the shoulder and made this modest suggestion:

"Just give me the price of a ticket to Kansas City, George, and I'll give you my share of the damages."

Then it snowed some more.

BANKRUPT THEATRICAL TROUPE VICTIMS OF OLD SUNFLOWER STATE BLIZZARD AND DOWN WIRES

Booking in Lawrence Called Off Because Telegram Fails to Reach Manager of Opera House Announcing Intention to Keep Engagements to Play in That City as Scheduled.

IN THE show business, at least the show business of the halcyon days, before the advent of moving pictures and million-dollar theaters in which to display them, it was proverbial among actors that bad luck invariably begot bad luck, says the Kansas City Star. In other words, when a theatrical troupe began to bump into a run of misfortune, the old adage that "it never rains but it pours," always was abundantly sustained. Nothing short of a miracle could save the strolling players when they were headed for the breakers.

The farce comedy, which had played to as small an audience as 60 paid admissions in Laramie, Wyo., was known as "Brown's in Town," and the producing managers, starting with high hopes and little money out on the coast, had decided to work gradually to New York, where it was confidently expected this western-made stage product would "knock 'em dead."

The company manager, after a miserable opening at the Broadway theater in Denver, held a council of war with the actors, who were far back in their salaries, and decided to cancel by telegraph all future dates. Lawrence, Kan., was the next jump—an all day jump out of

Denver, and when the manager of Bowersock's opera house received the telegram of cancellation he became frantic.

"We have an advance sale of \$400 for your engagement here Monday night," telegraphed the Lawrence man, "and it is very urgent that you come."

Manager Is Convinced.

Was it urgent? From whose standpoint? From the standpoint of the owner of "Brown's in Town" more than anyone else in the world, but the Lawrence manager didn't realize that delicate point.

"We must get to Lawrence," soliloquized the owner of "Brown's in Town," but how?

He hadn't money to buy the transportation after the dismal week in Denver, and the unpaid actors were a source of great distress—to the man who had hired them.

But the case was laid before Peter McCourt, proprietor of Denver's Broadway theater, and the symbol of faith, hope and charity to the stranded troupers in the early days. Mr. McCourt came across with the necessary funds and a telegram was forwarded to Lawrence, notifying the manager there that "Brown's in Town" was on the way.

Getting out of Colorado and entering

upon the soil of Kansas, the Union Pacific train upon which the hopeful actors were passengers, encountered a storm, which seemed to combine everything that was disagreeable. There was rain, snow, hail and wind. The train lost time, but it traveled on.

At Hays a man who boarded the train told the anxious players that Kansas had been in the grip of a great storm for two days. The storm extended over the entire area of the state, as far as the Kaw's mouth.

The train, due to arrive in Lawrence at noon Monday, continued to lose time, but the actors were hopeful when the Overland Limited, about six hours late, finally pulled up in the North Lawrence station. It was 7 o'clock, one hour prior to the ringing up of the curtain, when the eager members of the company started to plod across the bridge that spans the Kaw river.

"There'll be no \$300 gate," said the owner of the farce comedy, a bit cheerless, "but the \$400 advance sale is still good."

Manager Found Alone.

And through the snow they journeyed—snow drifting to a depth of two and