HOW IT FEELS TO FREEZE.

Minneapolis Tribune.

Early in January, 1854, I left Red Wing in company with S. J. Willard, John Day and Albert Olson, for a place fourteen miles distant, near where Vasa Church now stands, for the purpose of cutting and hauling logs preparatory for our settlement at that point the following Spring. It was a clear beautiful day, with the thermometer 20 degrees above zero. We had a span of good horses, a sleigh partly loaded with lumber, and provisions for a few days.

We arrived at the spot just before dark, and camped in a ravine well sheltered with timber. After making ourselves comfortable with a good supper and a blazing log fire, all four laid down to sleep on a bed made on the snow with a thin layer of hay laid on top of some boards, and were well wrapped up in blankets. During the night the air turned to a terrible cold, the theremometer falling to 45 below zero, as we learned afterward. Had we known this and kept our fire burning, there would, of course, have been no danger. But being very comfortable we all fell asleep early in the right, and were unconscious of the danger we were in until awakened by the pain of intense cold and then we were so overcome with the cold that we lacked power or energy to get up or even to move.

Comparing notes afterward we found that all had experienced a like sensation, namely, first, an acute pain, like the point of a needle in every pore, but free from all mental anxiety except a dull conception of something wrong and a desire to get up, but without sufficient energy to do so. This feeling, however, did not last long, and subsided gradually into one of quiet rest and satisfaction until consciousness ceased altogether, and without any struggle or pain, either bodily or mentally. We had all reached that stage when, by an accident, the arm and bare hand of Mr. Day, who lay on the outside, fell in the snow. This started the circulation in his body, and gave him such intense pain that he quickly aroused himself and got on his feet, and of course we were all saved. It took a long time before we could use our limbs sufficiently to rebuild the fire, and during that time we suffered much more pain than we had before. I am satisfied from that experience that a person perishing in this way has a very easy death, because he sinks gradually into a stupor, which blunts his sensibility both to physical pain and mental agony long before life becomes extinct.

It was about 50 degrees in the morning when we got up; we did not lie down again or attempt to haul out building logs, but started in a few hours on a beeline for a ravine that would lead us back to Red Wing. It was a struggle of life and death to get across the rolling prairie, and had the cold been accompanied by a blizzard we would not have got across.

To keep warm we took turns to walk or run behind the sleigh, and Mr. Willard was walking when he was suddenly missed and the team turned back, following its tracks a short distance to a hill side, where we found him sitting down in the snow, apparently comfortable and with no desire to move. He rather censured us for coming back after him, claiming that he was all right, and would have come along when he got ready, but the fact was that he was already so stupified with cold that he would never have made any exertion to move.

After a drive of ten miles we arrived at the first and only inhabited house between Vasa and Red Wing, and it was high time that we found shelter, both for ourselves and the horses. That was the coldest day of that year, and to me the coldest day in the history of Minnesota.

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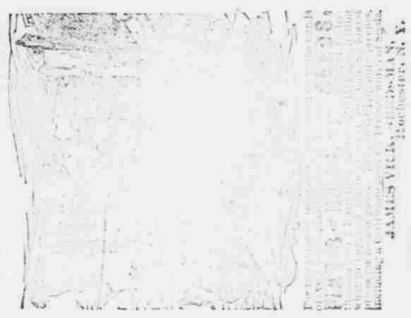

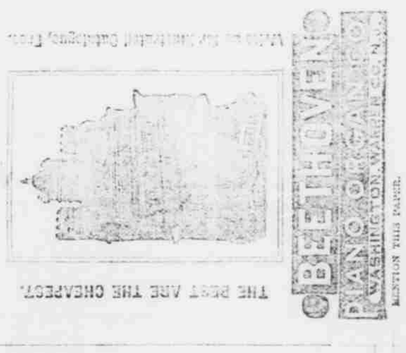

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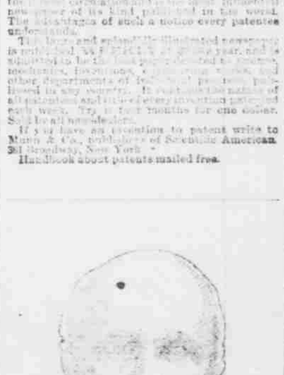

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