

GO

FORWARD



Go Forward

*A story of faith and courage for
the followers of Present Truth*

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and to go through many difficult places; but my secretary and myself
always found a way of passage by using a plank, and the men managed
the horses skillfully as we came down the steep embankments in the
mountain road.”*

Ellen White, July 1889



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Introduction

Dear brothers and sisters in the present truth. This morning I awoke with thoughts of many of our Adventist brethren. My heart yearned for them in prayer and a great desire for them to know the truth. I prayed for ways to connect with them and let them know of our beloved Saviour, the Son of the Father who is holy harmless and undefiled.

For worship this morning we read from the Review and Herald article from the date July 30, 1889. Ellen White tells the story of her travels from Battle Creek to Williamsport, Pennsylvania. This was a trip of about 500 miles (800kms).

There had been a lot of rain and so they began their trip slowly. As she continued, she began to realise the devastation of the floods that had occurred on account of the rain.

As I read the story and of the obstacles that Ellen White endured to reach her destination, I discovered more of the tenacity of her character and her determination to move forward trusting in God's provision.

They were obliged to abandon the train on account of the floods and some of the brethren took her by horse and carriage. One of the last obstacles required them to make a raft and float their carriage across a swollen river. The horses had to swim and as the second horse made it across the river, she wept like a child, she says.

I was deeply affected by this story and rejoiced to have a spiritual mother in Israel such as this. How blessed we are to have this example of courage to spread the present truth.

The parallels are real. We in the present truth are in the first flush of unspeakable joy in the knowledge of our gentle Father and His precious Son. Ellen White was filled with joy in the reception of the 1888 message delivered just 9 months earlier.

Brethren, I pray you will drink in the spirit of this story. It speaks to us of the character we shall need for the days just before us. We shall meet obstacles and challenges that feel beyond our capacity but let us trust in our Father

to make a way for us and seek to advance the message with the determination of the faith of Jesus.

In ourselves we are weak and faithless but connected to our Saviour we are unstoppable. May you remember this story when you face checkpoints and obstacles that would appear to hinder your advance.

Thank you Father for our spiritual mother Ellen who displays for us the courage of Jesus and the love of souls that will not yield the battle till we have completed our objectives.

Your brother in the blessed hope

Adrian Ebens

July 5, 2020

Long before the camp-meeting at Williamsport, I had promised the brethren of Pennsylvania that if the Lord would give me strength, I would attend their camp-meeting of this season. During the State meeting at Des Moines, Iowa, last fall, the Lord gave me a message for the people, and their hearts were stirred to respond to the light. By a standing vote, an invitation was extended to me to be in attendance at the camp-meeting in Iowa. I told the people that if I was on this side of the Rocky Mountains, and the Lord so directed me, I would gladly respond to their invitation. But when the appointments for camp-meetings were made known through the Review, I saw that the meetings in Iowa and Pennsylvania had been appointed for the same time. I was perplexed as to my duty, and prayed that the Lord would direct me. After laying the matter before the ministering brethren, in the hope that some change might be made, and finding no change possible, I finally decided to attend the meeting at Williamsport.

I should have been spared a long and wearisome journey, had I attended the Iowa meeting instead of the meeting at Williamsport; but after writing to responsible men in Iowa, and receiving no response as to the condition of things there, my duty seemed clear to go to Pennsylvania, especially since letters from the brethren there came in week after week, urging that I should not disappoint their expectation. The Williamsport meeting was to take place almost immediately after the Kansas camp-meeting, where I had been laboring for three weeks. I needed rest as I returned to Battle Creek, but this was not for me then; for fresh burdens of a difficult nature were laid upon me.

Thursday night, May 30, we left Battle Creek on our way to Williamsport. Our train was an hour and a half behind time. On account of continuous rains, the cars were obliged to move slowly, and in the morning we found that we were three hours behind time, and could not make connections with the train for Elmira, New York. We were detained at Buffalo five hours, and when we reached Elmira, we were informed that it was impossible to go on toward Williamsport, because bridges had been swept away, and the roads had been made impassable by washouts. We were advised to remain at Elmira, where we could obtain better accommodation, than farther on in our journey. We stepped from the cars, thinking to remain there. My secretary and myself were alone, but upon a few moments' consideration, we again boarded the train; for we determined to go as far as possible

toward our destination, hoping that reports were exaggerated as to the condition of the road. We met Bro. Teft and family on their way to the meeting. About a mile and a half before reaching Canton, the train was stopped by a serious washout. We were switched off on a side track, where we remained all day Sabbath, although we had expected to reach Williamsport on Friday, at 5 P. M.

I could not remain in the sleeper except at the risk of my life; for the air was very oppressive, and the window could not be opened on account of the rain. We were made comfortable, however, in the passenger car. The passengers on the sleeper employed the time in card-playing and smoking; but, providentially, we were left to enjoy the peace of the Sabbath day, as no others were in the car except those who observed God's commandments. Although we were anxious, we were enabled to stay our minds upon the Lord.

As we were detained, and could not safely occupy the sleeper, we thought that we ladies, three in number, might have the privilege of making our toilet in the toilet-room of the sleeper; but upon making known our desire, the conductor of the sleeper curtly informed us that it was against the rules, and could not be permitted. This man did not seem in the least disposed to do anything to alleviate the difficulties of our situation. But we are glad to state that this is the first instance we have met in our extensive travels, of such a lack of courtesy. Previous to this instance, we have always found those who were placed in positions of trust on the cars, ready to aid passengers placed in disagreeable circumstances. Conductors have displayed tact, manifested the spirit of gentlemen, and sought to make the unavoidable as pleasant as possible. The conductor of the day coaches was very kind and accommodating, and his courteous way was in marked contrast to the surly, disagreeable manner of the conductor of the sleeper.

While we waited at this place, the construction train passed us, and twenty men were soon busily employed in repairing the track that had been swept away by the rising of the creek. At evening we were informed that the road was temporarily repaired, and that we could go on to Canton. We moved very slowly over the newly-made road, but found that it was impossible to proceed farther than Canton by rail, as the deluge had swept everything before it. {RH, July 30, 1889 par. 6}

We could send no information to our friends as to our whereabouts or condition; for communication was cut off in all directions. We knew that they would be anxious concerning us, and sent a dispatch from Buffalo to Williamsport to the effect that we would reach that place about midnight, but we had no certainty that it would reach its destination. We made an effort to get a telegram to Williamsport by way of New York, but learned that the wires were down, and no connection could be made.

Sixteen miles from Canton, ten lives were lost, and between Canton and Williamsport eighteen bridges had been carried away. Many houses and two large mills had been swept down the valley in the devastating flood. We could see the workmen engaged in repairing the road at Canton. An embankment had been washed away, and from many feet deep a trellis work had been raised to support the train across the gulch; but we were told that it would be many weeks before the road could be repaired to Williamsport. A bridge over the river at Canton, connecting one part of the town with the other, had been swept away, and what had been before a harmless looking creek was then a mad torrent. A man, seeing that a barn near the bank of this stream was doomed to destruction, ventured into it again and again to save the property from ruin; and although warned of his danger, he entered it once too often. The flood swept the barn away, and the man was drowned. His lifeless body was recovered from the wreck five hours afterward. While we were viewing the scene of the wreck, he was lying in his coffin. Our hearts were made sad by the thought of the insecurity of human life.

Those who claimed to be judges, declared that it would be weeks before the railroad would be sufficiently repaired for the running of trains upon it. All the passengers for Williamsport, except our party, decided to go back to Elmira. But we were determined to take no backward steps until we felt assured that it was all we could do. We learned afterward that the road between Canton and Elmira had become impassable. The passengers who thought to return to Elmira were obliged to remain on the track until Monday.

We secured rooms at the hotel in Canton, and felt that we had much for which to be thankful; for our lives had been preserved through many perils. After the Sabbath, we tried to make arrangements to go by team to

Williamsport, and the landlord agreed to take us on Monday, providing he found the roads passable. It was about forty miles from Canton to Williamsport. Sunday morning he told us he had decided that it would be folly to attempt the journey until the roads were reconstructed. It was reported that in many places the road was so washed out that only deep gullies were left, and in other places it was filled up with the debris of the flood. All the bridges, both small and great, were gone. Bro. Rockwell, of Roaring Branch, having learned of our situation, came with teams to take us to his home, ten miles from Canton. At Roaring Branch there is a church of our people, and as the brethren and sisters had been kept from going to the meeting at Williamsport because of the flood, they desired that I should speak to them on Tuesday night. We were especially glad to meet those of like precious faith under these circumstances.

The roads were not as bad as we had anticipated, although the marks of destruction were seen on every side. At Ralston two large mills had been carried away, with other buildings, and many lives were lost. The rails of the track were twisted out of shape in a singular manner.

We met a young man who was journeying to Williamsport on foot, and he told us that he thought if we should take the mountain road we could get through. The valley road, he said, was wholly impassable. This seemed like a daring enterprise, but we decided to undertake it, and on Tuesday morning, with a good team, carriage, and two men, we started on our way. Along the way men were diligently at work repairing the breaches, and erecting bridges. The road was in a bad condition, but not impassable, and we decided to go as far as possible. When we should come to an insurmountable obstacle, we would return to Roaring Branch, but not before. We have passed over more perilous roads in Colorado, but never over a worse road than that from Canton to Williamsport. My heart was drawn out in prayer to God that his angels might go before us, and that his protecting care might be over us.

We were obliged to cross streams where bridges had been swept away, and to go through many difficult places; but my secretary and myself always found a way of passage by using a plank, and the men managed the horses skillfully as we came down the steep embankments in the mountain road. We found it was even as the keeper of the hotel had said,—in many places

where once had been a good road there were only gullies, while in other places the road was filled up with rocks, not equally distributed, but in great heaps, as though they had been dumped in wagon loads along the way. We were obliged to walk miles on this journey, and it seemed marvelous that I could endure to travel as I did. Both of my ankles were broken years ago, and ever since they have been weak. Before leaving Battle Creek for Kansas, I sprained one of my ankles, and was confined to crutches for some time; but in this emergency I felt no weakness or inconvenience, and traveled safely over the rough, sliding rocks.

At one place in the road our passage was barred by a large fallen tree, and in attempting to drive over it, we broke the double-tree of our carriage; but as we had brought tools and straps for such emergencies, we supplied its place with a limb of a tree, and drove on. Another large tree, partially fallen, filled our road with overhanging branches, and we had to stop to cut them away. The third fallen tree could neither be surmounted nor cut away, and we were obliged to make a road around it. With skillful driving, we made our way through the woods.

When we were miles away from any dwelling-place, it began to rain. The thunder rolled, and the lightning flashed; but for seventeen miles we had to pass on without catching even a glimpse of a habitable place. We had serious fears that we should have to remain in the woods all night, as it would be dangerous to drive on in the darkness. But just as twilight we came in sight of the little village Trout Run, in a basin-like valley. We were sad to see that it was filled with ruin and desolation. We found shelter in a hotel kept by a German, who informed us that he could give us rooms and bed, but little provision, as he could not obtain supplies. This, however, did not trouble us, as we had food enough. Nothing in the way of fire-wood could be found that was not soaked with rain, but a fire was kindled with some cigar boxes. We could not get sufficient heat to dry our damp clothing. Although we were uncomfortable, our hearts were filled with gratitude that no harm had befallen either ourselves or our horses.

At Trout Run we were told that it would not be possible to go any farther. We could obtain a small boat with which to cross the stream; but there was no provision for getting the horses over. We proposed that a raft be made on which to transport our carriage.

While preparations for crossing were in progress, we went out to look upon the desolated village. Those who have never witnessed such a scene, can hardly appreciate the effect of the flood and the rain. The storm had made terrible work. Fence-boards, logs, old cupboards, rubbish and debris of all kinds, had been swept into the valley by the flood. Bridges had been carried away, roads had been washed out, rails had been torn up and twisted and piled in grotesque heaps. One residence was pointed out to me as once the most beautiful place in the village; but the rich, well-cultivated acres were buried under uprooted and broken trees, and the grain-field on which I stood, was covered with about three feet of sand. The devastation witnessed in this place is beyond my power to describe.

At the end of three hours the raft was completed, and a boat was provided. A rope was attached to the raft on which the carriage was placed, and it was towed over by the men, who had rowed to the other side of the stream. As the first horse swam across, I was filled with anxiety; for at times the waves covered him. When he came to the bank, he struggled so that he freed himself from the rope that guided him, and as the bank was very steep, and even shelved over, because it was washed out below by the force of the waves, it seemed very difficult to get a footing. After several ineffectual attempts, he succeeded in making the ascent of the bank. The other horse was larger and less nervous, and as an experienced horseman swam him across, he had less difficulty in gaining the bank. When the noble animal emerged from the river, I found myself praising God aloud, and weeping like a child. We were rowed across in a boat, and were soon seated in our conveyance, and again on our journey toward Williamsport.

The marks of devastation and destruction apparent on every hand, forcibly called to mind scenes in connection with the second coming of Christ. How rapidly the signs of his coming are fulfilling before our eyes, and yet how few will be warned of the fast-hastening destruction! How few will humble their souls, repent of their sins, have faith in Christ, and be saved in the everlasting kingdom!

As I looked on every side, and saw the evidences of fulfilling prophecies, I felt more determined than ever to watch and pray, and to listen more carefully for the voice of Christ, our leader. I felt determined to understand more perfectly divine truth, to go forward and onward, catching every ray

of God's increasing light, that I might reprove, encourage, inspire to faith and hope and love, and be a light to all for whom I labor with voice and pen. How swiftly the hours of this our day are passing away! Christ says to us, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!" "If thou hadst known, even thou,"--he is addressing us in these words. He is pleading with his people, whose minds are darkened in rejecting his grace. While they claim to be rich and increased with goods, and in need of nothing, they do not know that they are wretched, and poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked. It is time for the people of God to awake. It is time to come to the heavenly Merchantman, and buy gold tried in the fire, and white raiment that we may be clothed, that the shame of our nakedness may not appear; to obtain the heavenly anointing, that we may discern the providences of God, and be prepared for the coming of the King of kings.

We arrived at Williamsport at three o'clock Wednesday afternoon. The experience and anxiety through which I passed on this journey, greatly exhausted me in mind and body; but we were grateful that we had suffered no serious trouble, and that the Lord had preserved us from the perils in the land, and prospered us on our way.

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When the religion of Christ is most held in contempt, when His law is most despised, then should our zeal be the warmest and our courage and firmness the most unflinching. To stand in defense of truth and righteousness when the majority forsake us, to fight the battles of the Lord when champions are few--this will be our test. At this time we must gather warmth from the coldness of others, courage from their cowardice, and loyalty from their treason. 5T 136 (1882).