

175 St.
J. E. Gb.



Rev. J. E. Hartman.

Mount Pleasant

Pa.

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Dayton, O., March 28-13

Dear Parents & All:

"When thru the deep waters I cause
thee to go

The Rivers of Sorrow shall not overflow."

I am writing this today, but when it can possibly be mailed is hard to tell. I write you know because as soon as possible there will be so much else to do that there will be little leisure to write. No doubt you have for days known about our general situation better than we. Only to-day faint rumors begin to reach us of the magnitude of the calamity. But yet we have very vague ideas ^{of} conditions. But what you will be most interested ⁱⁿ ~~was~~, is the very inside. That we know all about.

The first we knew of what was to be the most fearful experience of all our miseries, was

The alarm whistle of the Platt Iron works, at 4 or 5 o'clock Tuesday morning. I got up and looked out the window and saw men hurrying to the Mad river about two blocks away. I awakened Cora and we dressed. I went down to see the river. I had to go ankle-deep thru the water and found the banks brimful and spilling over. I came home and we packed our goods with the purpose of hurrying to Eclis. By the time we were ready - in half an hour we were warned that the bridge was already impassable. So we went inside and moved all we could of our rugs and furniture to the second floor. We had hardly finished when the alarm whistled again. We looked north and in a minute we saw the terrible wall of water rushing toward us swift as a train. In a few minutes the water came up thru the floor. We started up stairs. Steadily the water followed us.

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Soon we heard the sound of hammers
beating the roofs out of the cottages and people
climbing to their house-tops. Whistles, blowing-
bells ringing, guns cracking - and mixed
^{into the rest,} in the pitiful cry in every direction - "Help
Help!" Then a few boats appeared and
folks were helped from the roofs of the lower
houses into the windows of the higher ones.

Soon we opened our window to welcome some
of our neighbors. But the ^{water} ~~water~~ kept rising.
Three inches an hour: my how long an inch
and how short an hour began to be! Our
house is only two stories high. But we are
built pretty well up from the ground. Over
our second floor is a loft about two feet
at the highest part slopping off to the sides
 This loft was accessible from a closet.

Into that with the help of our neighbors we
worked our mattresses and all our bedding.

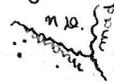
also an oil lamp - a lard can filled with what eatables we could snatch up hastily and a six-quart tea-kettle filled with clean water. There was also a dish pan and a few other dishes etc.

Just before the torrent arrived I had run to the grocer's for a two gallon can of oil and a few things to eat. When I got home I got our oil-cook stove up from the basement, carried it up-stairs; a one gallon oil-can; and another 2 gal can of oil.

It was soon plain that the water would be on us - 3 inches an hour. We calculated that within two hours we'd need to climb to our loft. And in less time it happened so. With a monkey wrench and a pocket-knife we made a hole in the roof over us. Our quarters, tho very low - were rather commodious - say about 25 ft by 40 ft. We spread out

the mattresses and distributed comforters and quilts. The roof over-head was so low that lying down was the only position approaching anything like comfort. In the meantime rain and thunder. At intervals we would climb out on the roof and see miles of water in every direction. It was about noon when we went to the loft.

A boat-house providentially floated down to near our house and tilted over; here men in other boats rescued a number of sea-worthy shells. We manned them with what bed-slats we had, to use as oars - since the oars proper were locked. This little event saved many lives in North Dayton.

The flood kept rising; we were in our last refuge save one - the roof. North Dayton is located on a flat tongue of land between the Miami and Mad rivers:  How far north

The land continues flat and low, I can't say. Probably for miles. So there was no hope of getting away. Boats could do no more than transfer to higher buildings. It was utterly impossible to cross the raging rivers into the city where the sky-scrapers are. There are very few higher buildings than ours in N. Dayton. So we had a square look into the face of death. There was nine or ten feet between us and eternity and lessening at the rate of three inches an hour! My valuable papers - all our good clothes were packed into our suit-cases and on the "attic" with us. I made this memorandum about one p. m. You may be interested in a quotation or two as it was intended for you and others under possible different circumstances: "We heard the first alarm about five a. m. At 7 our first floor was beginning to be endangered. We moved to

the second floor; a dozen neighbors sought refuge at the chapel. The terrible cries of folk all around us is beyond description. At 12 we climb to the loft as the water begins to enter the second floor, - mattresses - water.

Eatables. Water still rising. We can't imagine where all the water can come from. Has there been some disaster to the north of us? As the possibility and almost the probability of our failure to escape increases, I seem to be calmer and reconciled - and even almost glad to go. etc. This last is an interesting psychological experience with which religion has much to do.

At 3 p.m. we are encouraged by a slow rise - and later by an apparent slight fall - if our hopes did not deceive us. So we waited as the horrible night fell. So the very dark we heard the cries of "Help." The night was sleepless for me. Under the roof we heard the incessant fall of the rain drumming with increased emphasis. I placed the dish-pan under the broken-roof to catch the rain-water for use. Up to a little after one, the thunder crashed and the rain poured. Then it ceased. I got out on the roof and saw what I thought must be a big fire over in the city, and another north. As soon as the rain slackened again we heard "Help - oh! Help!" - above the rest in every direction - was the wail of a woman and the "cry of children in the night." Thousands spent that dreadful night in the rain on the house-tops.

Toward morning a foot-rule revealed a marked fall of eleven inches. Its maximum depth reached 22 inches over our second floor. We felt the danger over - but the discomfort at hand. There was nothing to do but wait. About noon the water receded below the second floor and we found the floor covered with an inch of mud - over the ruga and all. We got

brooms and swept the mud down the stairs. Then dipped of the flood and scrubbed the floors. This improved them very much. We cleaned up the bed-steads as well as possible and moved our mattresses down from the roof. It was cold and damp and yet how comfortable! In the meantime we ate of the few things we had saved.

During the first and second days we saw houses - barns - sheds - furnaces - anything and everything floating by. I saw two horses swimming and finally perish across the street. I don't know how many hogs swam past. A rooster sailed past on a plank - and a rabbit on a barn. Some hogs are at home yet - I guess on a roof around the house across the alley. N. Dayton is altogether disarranged. We have two stables right in front of our house. Horses are out of line, some turned over - some entirely gone.

Since the second day we have been fed from boats. Yesterday, for the first, the militia have been here to help us. To-day the marines and life-savers of Cleveland have been about. Yesterday I was a bit hungry - just enough to be interesting; but to-day we have abundance. We could to-day for the first get on our first floor - after we had swept a path three or four inch mud.

Just now we heard that only yesterday - the third day a woman and some children were rescued from a roof where they were hanging to the rafters yet. I presume we are in blissful ignorance of the terrible misery of these days. We hear that North Dayton is fortunate compared to the main part of the city where it is reported 3000 perished by fire or water.

Our Noah's ark company consists of some eight souls besides ourselves - in all six women - two men, two nearly-grown boys and a mid-age Canadian carpenter. This last chap is strong as a horse and has been a fine help to us. We spend most of our days in bed in order to keep warm. The oil-cooker stood in the water. We drained it out, dried the wicks. The two gallon can of oil I found under my study table in O. K. condition. The one gallon

Case was in another room lying over but almost full of oil. This stove has been a great comfort. We can cook our meals - warm drinks, soups etc. Most of our first provisions came in tin cans goods. To-day we got a fine basket of sandwiches - hard-boiled eggs, boiled potatoes etc. - probably from Cleveland. I think we are the most fortunate gang of prisoners in N. Dayton. Our losses will be a less proportion of our total possessions than that of any others I know. Even my books - with possibly 50 exceptions are o.k. I set my most valuable volumes which stood in the lowest shelf on top of the case. About all the rest are saved. Most of our furniture, our best rugs, silver-ware and linens are alright. The piano - dining-room table and library-table - Morris-chair which we could not easily move up stairs - are completely ruined. Our best clothing - in fact all our clothes are saved. It seemed we proceeded as if by a well-planned purpose. But it wasn't. It looks like pure providence.

I must write several other letters to-day I tried to get messages thru from the second day but it was impossible. It is very comfortable to be under martial law. In this is a veritable Sodom. Yesterday two ghoulz were lined up along a building and shot. One man was caught with several suit-cases filled with jewelry. There was only one proper thing to do to such a chap. Two women also were caught pilfering.

Outside of the cold we are as comfortable as possible under the circumstances. We try to make up for lack of fire with clothing. I have two suits on. I think by Sunday we may be able to get coal and a little stove or something. If not we'll just shift along the best we can.

We'll never settle down here. As our boxes dry and our goods & seasons we'll pack it and ship it to Lindsay. All our dishes are in good shape. I suppose our total loss will hardly reach \$500 - not in salable value - but what we paid for it.

John Herman wants me to be sure to tell you that he is alright. But he doesn't like floods. He had been sick, we had the doctor for him Sunday, but since we are "prisoners of hope" he has been well. We save the best eatables for him.

I have given you but a sketch; you will know plenty when you are sure we are alright. But I'll try to write down again - about a week. I guess it will be useless for you to write us until the mail-service is in working order again.

Affectionately
Edwin

P. S. Send this to Olin and Chas. and have the last one save it for me. Hope you receive it O.K.