

A MINNESOTA TORNADO.

KRISTOFER JANSON'S TOUCHING DESCRIPTION OF THE DESOLATING BLAST.

From the Madison (Wis.) Journal. Aug. 7.

The popular Norwegian poet, novelist, preacher, and philosopher, Kristofer Janson, lost heavily in a recent tornado which passed over the little Minnesota parish in which he is stationed. It is the purpose of the Unitarian society here, together with other friends and admirers of his in Madison, to personally tender the afflicted littérateur a purse of money as an assistance toward financial recuperation. For the purpose of starting the fund Miss Woodward has arranged a concert, to be given at the Unitarian church Thursday evening of this week. It is to be sincerely hoped that the receipts will be worthy of the excellent object. In a letter to the current number of the *Chicago Unity* Mr. Janson describes the tornado in his characteristic sweet, simple, quaint, and graphic style. Here is a bit of description well worthy of Jean Ingelow:

"We had built two wings on the church, you know, as a Summer resort for me and my family, and we had just moved in. The church itself was not yet finished, the doors and windows not put in, and the carpenters and joiners busy at their work when the misfortune happened. The weather had been turbulent for many days, every night lightning and thundering and violent showers. It was in the morning on the 21st. We had just taken our breakfast, and had gathered out on the porch to look at the grand play of the elements performed before us. Around in the horizon there flashed lightning on lightning, and it thickened and darkened more and more. We foresaw a violent tempest. It seemed as if the storm moved away from us in the direction of New-Ulm, and we wondered if that poor town should be drowned to death for the second time. It was swept away by a cyclone two years ago, you remember. A cloud, black as the raven's wing, appeared in the west. Suddenly it split, and between the two black trains expanded the most fearful, dismal sky I ever saw. The color was green—gray—yellow, and it darkened the sun, so it became dim as twilight. The carpenters had by and by gathered together with us on the porch. 'This must be a hall-storm,' one of them said; 'now we will pretty soon hear of disasters.' Suddenly the cleft widened between the two black cloud-wings, and the upper one came with a terrible speed, hurrying back toward us. 'Let us walk in,' I said. 'It seems as if we, too, shall get a taste of it.' We went in, and our parlor looked quite dark. We had scarcely locked the door before we heard the roaring of the storm coming. In a moment we were surrounded by a white cloud, and the wind and rain lashed the house, which groaned and shivered all through. It was not rain, it was furious torrents of water mixed with heavy hail, which poured down from heaven. The storm tried to burst open the door, but five men pressed against it with all their might. The wall seemed to give way and stood in a bow, the building shook as in convulsions. I felt like a tightening of my heart every time the house seemed to be lifted from the ground and dropped down again. Twice we had these terrible shocks, then in a moment, house, men, furniture were hurled through the air 100 feet away. I do not remember anything before I found myself on the ground crawling among the débris of my new home. The first I discovered was my wife with a child in each arm lying at my side. Men and children were scattered around among lumber and sdings, whether alive or dead nobody could tell. A table and a staircase came flying through the air; some men met them and pushed them away, so they did not kill my wife and children; bits of wall and roof whirled round us; here it was impossible to remain. We crept and crawled and ran for our lives down to the forest. As we found each other there, we were only six; a friend of ours, a farmer, had one of the small girls in his arms, my wife another, and one of my sons slung to me. But where were the rest of the children? I had myself seen one of the carpenters run with my third little girl—but the eldest and youngest boy? Killed, perhaps, or lying mutilated among the ruins and impossible to look for them. The hurricane would have swept us away as soon as we had moved from the wood. The only thing to do was to press the children to us and give them so much shelter as we could with our broader backs. The rain and the hail lashed us, the oak shrubs were blown flat to the ground and their limbs struck our heads and shoulders like whips. We were obliged to change place twice to get more shelter deeper into the brush. Four other men came to us in the wood. They could tell that my eldest soon was seen following the man who carried my little girl, but the youngest boy nobody had seen. One of the men—it was the contractor of the building—said that he had been out in the other wing of the church, the kitchen, when the storm carried that wing away, and he had just saved his life by jumping into the cellar. From this shelter he had seen his pride—the church—splintered. It was lifted from the ground twice, and sailed like a ship down hill till the roof burst, and then it was torn to pieces.

"The lips of the children became quite blue, and they shivered all through; we must try to escape to the nearest farm down in the larger forest. Two of the men carried the two small girls, then followed I myself with my son and one of the carpenters, hand in hand, and at last came my wife, supported by two other men. We waded through the grass and underbrush and mud, while the wind howled and the rain lashed and chilled us. We saw at a distance the house of our nearest neighbor, the man who had made his escape with my little girl; it was moved from its ground, but not tipped over; but it was impossible to stop and investigate whether the rest of the children were there or not; we must run all we could. I shall never forget the calm but pale face of my wife, with her hair whirling round her head in wet tatters, and with the water streaming from face, hands, and dress, dragged along between the two men. As long as we had shelter in the wood it went on pretty well, but soon we had to pass a shelterless road. Then came a lightning and a thunder-crash, so that I believed the heaven would crack, and I bowed down; I did not dare to look back, whether my wife was struck or not. At last we reached the farm. God be praised! Saved, and with unbroken limbs! But the rest of the children!

"As soon as possible the men went out to search for them. In less than half an hour they came back with them all alive; they were found on the neighbor's farm. My little girl had got some slight wounds round the eyes from hail; she had cried on her mother the whole time, and the man who saved her was compelled to take her by the neck and keep her to the ground. The youngest boy had lain down, grasped the grass and cried: 'I shall die! I shall die!' As soon as possible our neighbor had moved from his shelter among the shrubs and tried to reach his farm. He had not moved far away before the roof of the church came flying and dropped down just where he had been with the children. The kitchen wing had been ground to small pieces. We were 16 together in the house, and nobody is seriously hurt. It sounds like a miracle."

Mr. Janson's personal loss was heavy, almost complete. One hundred and fifty dollars in money were strewn about over the prairie; his "furniture, clothing, and all chattles broken and spoiled." His manuscripts, including a new book ready for the press, and all his literary work since coming to America, are also gone upon the wings of the destroying blast. The little church and home are total wrecks, and the crops of the congregation are utterly blasted. Genial, philosophical, mild-eyed, big-brained Janson has indeed been afflicted. A considerable community here in Madison feel for him as they would for a brother.

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