The Blizzard of 1888

by G. S. Gardiner

(Wilson, New Castle, N. H., who after his college years at

Wesleyan became Collector of the Port at Providence, R. I., where

he now lives, refers in his story of the "Big Blizzard" to the
during the storm

experiences of a center on the football team."

A peculiar of the records reveals that Mr. Gardiner was that anonymous center.)

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Sunday evening, March 11, 1888, had a sort of mild-mannered nightfall
for that time of year. Ursa Major and Orion were veiled from mortal gaze by
drapery of clouds, while a gentle northeast wind diffused the chill of
early spring or late winter (as you prefer) across the Wesleyan campus.

By eight o'clock, snow was falling in a haphazard way. An hour later, when
a couple of sophomores returned from services at the A.M.E. Zion Church, the
wind had freshened and the whirling swarm of flakes was whirling through the air as if old Ioreas was operating a mammoth exhaust fan at several thousand

r.p.m.

Extra pitchers and balls were piled at the famous pump in the rear of
old North College that night, for fear the usual early morning accomplish-
ment of that chore might be unsuited to carpet-slippers and unoffeared night
rain. New true the foreboding proved to be.

Monday morning dawned late, with low visibility, for the college pre-
cincts were enveloped and almost sealed with a raging blizzard. Breakfasts
had to be sought for with struggling plunges through drifts, to the accom-
paniment of a howling gale and zero temperatures. College classes were the
victims of more or less willing "cuts". In some cases, they were devoid of
a venerable and distant-residing professor, to the feigned sadness of folk
with low marks. The "Quill Boost" was black-eyed against both exports and
imports, while fraternity houses rang with the glees of beleaguered fel-

ows who were "ridin' out the gale".

The storm's severity increased savagely all day Monday. That night,
an enthused football center ran "before the wind" to his frat house, for
supper. Sunday left-overs constituted most meals, since fresh deliveries,
like the little man, just simply weren't there. Our gallant gridironer ate
as heartily as the limited menu would permit and bravely departed for North
College in the very teeth of the gale. Many times, in that desperate flight
with waist-deep drifts, he realized how difficult it had been with the wind
astern of him.

How often, too, there came to him those unifying lines of Vergil--

Puris descensum Amare;
Ead gressus, hanc opus est; hic labor.

(For the benefit of modern buyotters of the classics, this may be
translated freely--

Sailing down-hill into hell is easy
But the return trip is damned hard work.)

Fortunately, the campus trees, bare of leaves, stood the shock. Our
pigeon here, with fast-ebbing breath, worked his way to the lee side of a

noble elm. There he stood for hour-like minutes until his expired breath

came back. Then he dashed forth, flapping and stumbling through heaving,
wind-swept billows of snow, and made 20 yards to the lee side of the next

elm. Again he waited for that recalcitrant breath. Then he was off again
for another 20 yards or more, and the third elm. And so on, as it seemed
to him, ad infinitum.

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