

Bishop Jens Nielson

A Brief Biography by Albert R. Lyman

Jens Nielson was born in 1820 on the island of Laaland, one of the group of islands which composes the little Kingdom of Denmark. The island is about 40 miles long and 18 to 20 miles wide. Its shores are washed by the Baltic Sea and 40 miles south is the shore of Prussia and the province of Mecklenburg.

We have no account of his childhood, and much of the little we know of his early manhood is gleaned from a letter he wrote to his son, Uriah, in 1901. In that letter he says, "I was born April 26, 1821" (note the discrepancy in the year of birth), "on the island of Laaland, Denmark, son of Niels Jensen and Dorothy M. Thompson."

After saying this much he skips a period of 30 years. We know that he was denied the care of his real father, that he had a stepfather and half brothers and sisters. One of his half-brothers, Francis, sailed away to the west and is supposed to have been lost at sea, for they never heard of him again.

How long Jens stayed in Laaland is uncertain, but at some time he made his way to Aarhus, a coast city on the mainland 100 miles to the northwest. He belonged to the better middle-class. He was thrifty and industrious and fairly successful, and he had many friends, many of the people of some importance. Being a natural farmer, he liked to possess land and livestock.

In this letter, he goes on to say, "I was married to Elsie Rasmussen when I was 30 years old. Soon after that I bought 5 acres of land that cost \$600, and I built a house that cost about \$400. I had very little money to start with, but the Lord blessed me on my right hand and on my left and I was very successful and prospects in temporal concerns were very bright. I was looked upon as a respectable neighbor and many times invited to the higher class of society."

"In the fall of 1852, two Mormon elders came to our neighborhood. I knew nothing of the Mormons except very bad reports. They had the privilege of holding a meeting close to my home. I thought I would go there for curiosity sake. As soon as I saw the men's faces, I knew they were not the men as represented to be, and I told my friend so before I heard them speak. Before the meeting was out, I knew the testimony they bore was of God. We bought some few of their tracts and studied them for a few weeks and were perfectly satisfied the work was of God."

"On 29 March, 1854, I and my wife went into the waters of baptism. From that time on all my former friends turned against me and spoke all kinds of evil against me, and that falsely, all of my possessions had no power over me then, my only desire was to sell out and come to Zion. That same year I partly made a bargain with the man for my home but before the bargain

was closed, the president of the conference paid me a visit and told me I had not done my duty. He told me I had been warned and it was my duty to warn others. That counsel came right in contact with my natural feeling, but the Spirit whispered me I must obey, for obedience is better than sacrifice. Then I was ordained a priest and sent out to preach with another young man holding the same priesthood. We baptized some 12 or 15 persons but we did not have the power to confer the Holy Ghost. Soon after that I was ordained an elder and called to preside over the branch where I lived. I was very successful in my mission, after which I received an honorable release to go to Zion. I sold my place, got my money, and paid all my obligations.”

As stated in his account he made positive preparation to come to Utah soon after being baptized but he accepted the advice to stay and for a year and a half or more he was an active missionary to his native land. A full account of this eventful time would be a wonderful story, inspiring us with faith and impelling us to appreciate it even more than we do now.

He referred to some of these impressive events of that time, but so far as we know, he never undertook to write anything like an account. We would like to know whether his missionary work took him to Laaland and to Copenhagen, the capital, or whether he preached only in the neighborhood of Aarhus. It is probable that his work took him back to his native island, where among those who came into the church through his preaching was Kirsten Jensen of Laaland, whom he baptized. It was the great program of events that she was to follow him to Utah and become the honorable mother of most of his children.

He did relate a testimony meeting in Bluff, that after he joined the church, he was attacked by an angry mob of his countrymen, that they tore his clothes to rags and left him injured and outraged. When he appealed to the magistrate of the law, presenting his quote as evidence of what he had suffered, he was told there was “no law in Denmark to protect the Mormons.”

At another time during his eventful mission in his home country, a mob threw two of the elders into a pond of filthy water declaring they would baptize them. Whenever the elders struggled to the bank and try to get out, they were struck by some of the cheering crowd on the bank and pushed truly back into the water. This torment continued till the others were almost worn out with chill and exhaustion.

In spring of 1856, he was given honorable release from his call to preach in Denmark. He sold his property at once and went to the mission headquarters at Copenhagen preparatory to starting for Utah. Of this time he says: “when I came to Copenhagen, I paid my first tithing, and I hold the receipt for the \$60 to this day.” His family at that time consisted of himself and a wife, and a little boy Jens Junior, about six years old. But he was bringing with him a little girl. Her father, Lars Mortensen, had already come to Utah. He writes; “we left Copenhagen the third day of May, 1856, and six weeks after we landed in New York.”

Whether they crossed the North Sea in a small vessel to Grimsby, England, and embarked again from Liverpool as was customary for our immigrants at that time, we do not

know. He crossed the Atlantic in a slow, old-time sailing vessel which at best entailed many hardships on its passengers, and sometimes the Mormons came in for more than their share. Whether he took a Danish vessel all the way to New York, or whether he took an English boat at Liverpool, at Grimsby, or at New York, he found himself in the midst of the people whose speech was meaningless to him, and none of his own native words conveyed any ideas to them.

What an aggravating experience it must've been! 4000 miles from home, a stranger in a strange land, strange and complicated customs all around him. And among the throng of strangers, those who took any notice of him at all, regarded him with scorn and contempt for having joined the most hated of all churches on earth. All this was hardly a beginning to the hardships he was soon to meet.

He paid his fare for him and his little family to the end of the railroad over which he traveled in comparative comfort. Yet even on this lap of the journey he suffered indignation. At Toledo, Ohio, his company was treated very unkindly and put to great inconvenience by the railroad officials. This much we know but we lack the details.

"Then we came to the city of Iowa," he writes, "that is as far west as the railroad was built. It was 1300 miles to Salt Lake City from where we started our journey with the handcarts. The handcarts and the other things were not ready for our journey, so we had to lay over here for five weeks. One reason we came to Salt Lake City so late. It was 300 miles across Iowa to Council Bluffs and very few settlers in the country at that time. At Council Bluffs we laid our supplies for the 1000 mile trip to Salt Lake City. We calculated 1 pound of flour a day for grown people and ½ pound for children, and we figured the trip at 70 days. Instead of that it took us 90 days to make the trip. Owing to that, the captain had to cut down our flour to one half a pound a day until there was not a pound of flour in our camp."

"This caused the terrible starvation in camp. When we started from Iowa there were 20 people to each tent, five men and the rest women and children to make it up to the number. I was captain of one tent." As we begin following this handcart trail which was to be stained with the blood from weary feet and marked with rude graves by desolate campgrounds, let us remember that Jens Nielsen was in the company only because he would listen to counsel, and not because he had no means to make the journey in a more comfortable way.

"I had enough money to come to Utah," he writes, "but we were counseled to let all the money go that we could spare and crossed the plains with handcarts."

They left Iowa city in July numbering about 500 souls. They had 12 yoke of cattle, 120 handcarts, 25 tents and five wagons. Each person was allowed 15 pounds of baggage including bedding. This was Capt. Willie's company, most of them from England and therefore unable to understand or to be understood by their brother from Denmark.

It was a long story and the brief parts we give a bit here are gleaned from many sources and may not be given in chronological order.

Through the fraud or folly of somebody, the carts were never made right in the first place and were not fit for the road. Because of their poor workmanship and poor material they began early on in the journey to break and fall to pieces, causing unspeakable grief to the poor souls depending on them.

The little company of 500 met opposition all the way across Iowa. A posse of men followed and annoyed them, threatening them with first one kind of violence, and then another. Under this grinding pressure the faint-hearted of the company deserted till it numbered only 425.

Winter was not too far away, but their destination lay hundreds of miles beyond the misty horizon. Jens Nielsen was far from his native Denmark struggling with a new and difficult language and that at every human contact. It was a strange country, strange surroundings and its people strangely hateful to the struggling company, yet with his wife and the two children he struggled onward with his cart towards the west.

In contemplating the unfriendly picture which Iowa offered the company with the handcarts, it is refreshing to know that at Des Moines, a Captain Good presented them with 15 pairs of children's shoes, and at Omaha they met friendly Indians who sold them meat.

At one place on the plains, they found and buried the mangled bodies of Almon F. Babbitt's wagon train who had been massacred by Indians. But the Indians gave this little company no trouble, and in spite of the fact that they have started too late in the season, they seem to get along well enough at first, only that their poorly made carts were forever breaking down.

On 4 September, half of their new oxen stampeded and could not be found. In this crisis they got some wild Arkansas cows and made desperate efforts to use them, but they had to increase the loads of the animals they retained, dividing some of the extra burdens, compelling the people to throw away almost everything they could part with, and much, of course, that they did not want to part with at all.

On the seventh they encountered their first frost which, if we consider the nature of their whole trip, might be called their first suffering, yet it was but a small beginning to the days and weeks of agony ahead. Through all the rest of September they trudged on along the winding road, dragging their carts wearily towards the west, and watching with apprehension the steady approach of stern winter. The chill winds moaning over the wide plains numbed their stiff fingers by day and penetrated their scant coverings in their unprotected camp that night.

October found them still far from Zion, the level plains and dreaded winter meeting their gaze as they turned it ever hopefully to the west. On the 12th they had to begin reducing their rations, allowing a man 10 ounces of flour a day, and a woman 9 ounces and a child 6 ounces.

On the 20th the cold storm broke upon them, leaving them to wade through 2 inches of snow. Next day the children cried with hunger. Yet solitude and desolation reached her way to the distance on every side – no food, no shelter – – they must face the cold wind and lean forward on the road toward Zion while the specter of death marched ever along with them.

In an offhand review of these days the Bishop writes; “when we came to Laramie city we had the first snowstorm about 500 miles from Salt Lake City. From that time on the people began to die very fast. We traveled about 200 miles further, pulled the handcarts through the snow, sometimes 2 feet deep. Then the captain told us there was not a pound of flour in camp. The captain said he would saddle his mule and ride night and day until he found a team with flour for we understood there were teams on the road to meet us.”

“Next night the flour came to camp there was great rejoicing, but we could get very little because we had to pass it on to another handcart company three weeks behind us. So we had to start our journey again, but before we did we had to bury 14 bodies of our number, my only son was among them, and the girl I had brought along for brother Mortensen who lived in Parowan.”

“I told you there were five men to the tent, but now the four were dead and I was the only man left so I had to have some of the largest and strongest women to help me raise the tent. It looked like we should all die. I remember my prayers as distinctly today as I did then, if the Lord would let me live to reach Salt Lake City, that all my days would be spent in usefulness under the direction of His Holy Priesthood. How far I have come short of this promise I do not know, but I have been called to make six homes and as far as this goes I have fulfilled my promise.”

Speaking of hardships of the handcart company, no person can describe it, nor could it be comprehended or understood by any human living in this life, but only those who were called to pass through it. It would not have been so terrible had they started in good season.

Coleridge, in his “ancient mariner” describing himself as the last survivor of his stricken ship wrote; “the merry men so beautiful, and they all dead did lie.” That may be purely fiction, but here is the stern fact that our beloved Bishop was the one survivor of five men to raise the tent in which they sought shelter from the biting cold, and now the widowed women and their surviving orphaned children looked in their helplessness to him as they huddled there in the flimsy shelter at night, their sobs and tears lacerating the ache in his own heart.

For their only child brought with them all the way from fertile Denmark, the object of their concern and their affection on all this peerless journey thus far – – he was gone. The little girl who had been their sacred trust, traveling with them these thousands of miles – – she was frozen, starved, worn out. Persisting in their memory was the vision of a shallow grave in the frozen ground of the road side behind them.

Their hearts ached, their limbs ached, famine and winter gnawed with sharp teeth at their vitals. "No person can describe it! It cannot be comprehended or understood by any human in this life but only those who are called to pass through it!"

We are left to imagine torture and anguish which cannot be told. We know the splendid integrity of Jens Nielson, we who saw his face and heard his uncompromising testimony of the gospel, can picture him there in the midst of those perils, a saint in tribulation with a fervent prayer in his heart and the covenant of service which he remembered always.

In the fury those storms which raged around them the bishop and his faithful wife toiled through the frozen snow till his feet were shapeless and useless with frost – – he could walk no further. What was to be done? Should he sink in the snow to die of despair?

His young wife, later known and everywhere loved as "Aunt Elsie", had a vivid picture of that grave behind them with its 14 frozen forms, under their shallow covering. She looked at him – – how desolate the world would be without him. "Ride," she urged. "I can't leave you – – I can pull the cart."

Should he let her pull as an ox that he might ride? She who already suffered everything but death? There was no other way. Mile after mile over the wintry road, the heroic woman dragged the old cart toward Zion that they might live the gospel and gain eternal life.

In the light of what these people suffered, who are we living our lives of unprecedented luxury? If they, to gain their salvation had to come thus "up through much tribulation" to their splendid place in the kingdom of God, what shall we from our abundance not be willing to give that we may have our inheritance with them?

Continuing with his brief account: "I have already told you we laid over 5 weeks at Iowa and one week at Omaha. About 100 miles from there we lost 14 young oxen, looked 5 days for them and did not find them. So we have to yoke our steers and heifers which we had brought along for beef. These were used to haul food, tents and other things we could not get on the handcarts. Then we had to put 100 pounds more on each cart and it made the journey very slow."

"About a week after the 1st team met us with flour, another team met us and we were allowed a pound of flour a day after that. If the Saints in Zion (Salt Lake Valley) had not given us a helping hand, not one of us could have been able to reach Zion."

"You have heard about brother Kimball's prophecies that a bushel of flour would be worth a bushel of gold, if I had been offered a bushel of flour or a bushel of gold I would say keep your gold and give me the flour, for the gold cannot sustain life."

"We came to Fort Bridger and teams came from Salt Lake City to meet us, and here we left our carts. We came to Salt Lake City on the 9th of November, 1856."

Our account of the next 24 years of his life is very fragmentary. Some of the most important events of that time are nowhere on record, and we get them only on the verbal testimony of men who had a right to know, and who affirm they do know. When he arrived in Salt Lake City in 1856, he went on to Iron County and settled in Parowan, built a store there and was recognized from the first as a man of solid, sterling qualities, fitting him for the leading part which he held from that time forward.

After the death of their only child on the plains, no other children had been born to them, and prospects were that they would have no family. With this dreary outlook for the future and with the obligation upon them to live the whole law of the gospel as it was required at that time, he promised his wife, Elsie, that if she would consent to their going into polygamy she would have children. This promise, which rises to the dignity of a prophecy, was fulfilled later in the birth of Mary, Agnes, and Julia; Aunt Elsie's three daughters.

In keeping with this mutual understanding that they would go into polygamy, in 1856 he married Kirsten Jensen, whom he had baptized in Denmark, and was prospered to sustain two homes instead of one.

In spite of his having grown up in faraway Denmark he adapted readily to the wild, mountainous frontier; making farms, building homes, raising livestock and filling the bill of a frontiersman with splendid efficiency. He was always industrious and thrifty, a man of unusual good judgment.

Besides building a home in Parowan (Utah) he built another in Paragonah. A company was called to settle what later became Circleville, and being one to be called, he built another home there.

Indian trouble hindered the progress of the work in Circleville, bloodshed and vexation, and some of the settlers contrived to get some of the Indians by treachery into their power, intending to kill them. There was a shameful procedure, altogether contrary to the spirit of the gospel, and Jens Nielson protested strongly against us.

When these Indians, locked in the cellar, were set upon in their helplessness and killed, he sickened at the thought of it and could never refer to it with anything but horror.

Whether it was because of this Indian trouble or for some other reason, he left Circleville, being directed always in his movements by the leaders of the church, and in 1864, he went with 75 other families to settle Panquitch. Here he built a 4th home and stayed 2 years, but the Indians became so hostile that the place was abandoned.

His experience as presiding elder in Panquitch, menaced so much of the time by Indians, and also his thrilling times in Circleville, are not on record, and we shall not know the perilous situation of these years still sometime in the future.

In 1866, he went to Cedar where he was called at once to be a member of the High Council, and in 1867 he became counselor to Bishop Christopher Arthur.

In 1874 he married his 3rd wife, Catherine Johnson who bore him 3 children, a daughter, Annette, and two sons, Uriah Albert, and Freeman August.

The children of the first wife, Elsie, are Jens Junior, who died on the plains, Mary, Julia and Agnes.

In the old records of the Cedar Ward and of the stake, frequent mention is made of Jens Nielson and among other things it is recorded that on November 27, 1877, he laid the cornerstone of the Cedar City meetinghouse.

In 1879 the leaders of the church decided to plan a colony somewhere near the Navajo country in southeastern Utah, a great uncharted region cut off from the rest of the state by the deep gorge of the Colorado River, and they called Jens Nielson to help make the colony. He was then 59 years old, and since leaving his native land and suffering much to reach Utah he had built 5 homes and helped to make 5 towns. And now he had reached the age when most men like to withdraw from the heat of the fight and begin to rest with such comfort as they have succeeded in gathering around them.

If this call broke into any cherished hope Jens Nielsen had of taking it more easy, he had the faith and the wisdom to refrain from saying anything about it. He did remember a covenant he had made to spend his life in usefulness under the direction of the priesthood and he responded to the call without a word but of cheerful service. He had already spent years on the wild and hazardous outskirts and knew what it meant, but now he was to enter a region more wild, more remote than any the church had yet settled.

The company started from various towns in southern and western Utah, and Jens Nielsen, his wife Kirsten, her family and most of his family from Cedar joined them at the nearest point.

The company turned eastward for San Juan, little dreaming that between them and their goal bristled the roughest country on earth from Escalante their 80 odd wagons, drawn by horses and oxen, followed a trail which had been traveled by one or two horsemen. When they had followed this trail through hardships and tribulation to the abrupt breaks of the big river, the Colorado, they faced a howling wilderness with no way of guessing what they would find beyond the profile of its immediate hills.

It is not possible to relate here the details of that perilous trip, the trip they began in November 1879 to stop exploration on the 6th of the following April. The future Bishop of Bluff was not only a presiding official, but a vigorous, leading spirit in all that dangerous and difficult journey.

It is quite a contradiction to what we would naturally expect that this man, born and raised in middle life in Denmark should adapt not only to the unprecedented frontier in general, but should be so much better fitted than the ordinary Westerner to meet the wildest and most unusual frontier of all, the rock bound San Juan with its horde of savages. No school anywhere in the world could have given more splendid fitness to find a way or to make a way where there was none.

Jens Nielsen was appointed Bishop of bluff September 2, 1880, 5 months after he came there. The splendid resourcefulness of this man who had been destined to preside over, and maintain the new settlement on the San Juan River was something to study for fresh inspiration. Surrounded as they were on the north and east and west by the Piutes and on the south by the Navajos, with nothing worthy the name leading out which could be called a road, the little town began its existence on a sandbar through which the treacherous old river might gnaw its way at any time with but little warning. His hard fight for existence in the handcart company had developed a sense of appreciation and the kind of rare leadership necessary for these troublesome times.

It is quite out of the question to give here a chronological account of the important 26 years yet ahead of the Bishop, but the most essential events of this period can be found with their dates. They should be collected and preserved in their order as appendages to this record.

I have very strong personal interest in Bishop Jens Nielsen who, as a father to my father, had strong claim on my respect and confidence from early childhood. I have deliberated about the priority of telling here one of my special reasons for making this effort and I have decided to tell this much of it.

Many years ago I had an unforgettable dream in which Bishop Nielson placed before me several objects representing his sons to illustrate more by pantomime than by words, what was to him a matter of tremendous importance; that there was a disparity of degree in the progress his sons had made. Without naming one of them or giving me any definite clue he motioned to the objects and said, "These are my sons." It was a very unusual allegory, imposing on me a sort of obligation about which I shall feel better when I have completed this account and given it with my sincere compliments to the bishop's posterity.

In spite of the fact that Brother Nielson was permanently crippled from his experience with the frost on the plains, he was ever a hard worker. But his feet were twisted and out of place, and the right foot he carried at right angles to the left instead of on a parallel with it. He limped heavily wherever he went, yet he went nonetheless on that account, he went early and late. He liked to rise in the great dawn and get impressions from crossing the fields before the sun came out. He had been blessed with a rugged constitution, otherwise he would have succumbed to the rigor of the frontier life and experiences he was called to undergo.

The story of Bluff, as I have written it in other places, is the story of Bishop Nielson. The first ditch and all the sickening disasters attending it, the long fight with the cribs (structures

built to control water on the San Juan River), the building of the fort and life in the fort, are all an essential part of his history. The account of stolen horses, of cattle butchered by the Indians, and the mischievous skulking desperados, is a part of his biography. Into that biography will sometime be written the part he took when raging floods came down the San Juan and down the Cottonwood; the part he took when serious sickness found them without doctors or nurses or medical help. It will tell how he gave cheer when the people were cast down with discouragement and how he inspired them with new courage when they were distracted with fear.

Brother Nielson's policy was to promote industry, to make his people self-sustaining. He encouraged them to organize the San Juan Co-op, the first store in Bluff, and as soon as practicable he advised them to buy cattle and sheep.

In 1884, a raging flood down the river washed away the little town of Montezuma east of Bluff, and did so much damage all along the river that the people of Bluff became much discouraged and most of them wanted to leave. Apostles Joseph F. Smith and Erastus Snow came to look over the situation, and they figured first on keeping the colony together and sending them to a more favorable place. After taking account of what remained of the Bluff ditch they held a meeting in which Brother Smith told the people he felt impressed that Bluff should be held. Those who wanted to go would be blessed in going, but those who stayed would be doubly blessed.

He turned to Bishop Nielson and promised him in the name of the Lord that if he would stay he would be blessed. At that time brother Nielson was in debt, his team had died in a mud hole and he was a poor man. His old white mule with spavins and ring bones had been a common joke, but after the visit of the brethren of the Twelve and his promise to stay, even though many of the people got up and moved away, his fortunes began to change.

He raised big crops of corn and sold them to the cowboys for good money with which he began to buy cattle and to build up. He discarded his log houses and built one of brick and another of stone. His property increased in value from then till the time of his death.

Yet the existence of the settlement was menaced and threatened by first one thing and then another, and through it all the bishop stood firmly at his post. It was proposed (by the government) to give San Juan to the Indians, and for a while it appeared that whether it were given to the Indians or not they would steal the little colony blind. Through all this the bishop took no stock in the many propositions to move away. "This is the sixth time I have built in Utah," he would say, "and when I move again I want to move on the hill," meaning the cemetery.

In 1886 or 87 when the people of Bluff were ready to buy sheep or cattle, the bankers came from Durango Colorado and offered to supply them with all the money they needed to make the deals. The credit of the people with Bishop Nielson at the head was good as gold.

In 1888 a large cattle outfit moved in from Texas, and in 1891 the bishop advised to buy them out. It turned out to be a profitable move for Bluff, so that at one time, the little town was the richest for its size of any town, with one exception, west of the Mississippi.

Early in the “nineties” the Bishop advised the co-op store to sell their sheep, and at the same time, even though he was a heavy owner in the store, he advised L.H. Redd and Hansen Bayless to buy the sheep. They might have inferred that he had a selfish interest in the advice he gave, and they might have discounted his judgment because it was a presidential year with the usual uncertainty of business. But they believed him and bought the sheep. He had promised them it would be a profitable investment, and in this matter too, his promise rose to the dignity of prophecy, for that was the beginning of their financial growth and they became the two wealthiest men in the stake.

Brother Nielson’s daughter, Mary was the wife of Kumen Jones, but they had no prospect of a family. Her father promised her that if she and her husband would go into polygamy, she would be a mother. This promise also proved to be inspired, for after Brother Jones had married his second wife, Aunt Mary had a son; known and loved as Leonard Jones.

After the trouble in which Amasa Barton was killed, a hundred Navajos rode into Bluff with faces painted black, carrying guns across their saddles in front of them and demanding to have somebody talk with them – – quarrel with them – preliminary to the big row for which their hands were itching. The town had then, three men in its borders, the rest being away on the range, on the road or somewhere else, and a helpless community of women and children took terrified account of the fierce -looking army, as they peered out through curtained windows or through holes in the wall.

Someone went in great haste for the Bishop and he came limping readily forward to meet the painted danger. There was no hesitation in his step, no fear in his heart. The nearest help, far away, could be of no possible comfort to the helpless town, they were completely at the mercy of the Indians if the Indians were to attack them.

The Bishop had only his broken English and no knowledge of the Navajo language, yet he was perfectly calm; he had known more terrible things than that of an army of angry Navajos. He hurried to meet the situation, fully assured that the Lord who had ever been with him would make him equal to this ugly emergency.

Brother Kumen Jones was there ready to act as interpreter, and through him the Bishop began calmly to tell the Indians that it was not our business to fight, but to make and preserve peace. He stood unmoved there before them, his age, his white hair, his crippled feet indicating nothing of fear. It disturbed them, it contradicted their brave notion that they looked terrible, and that people should flee from their presence. Here was courage, dignity – – it disarmed them.

Through his faithful interpreter he told them if they wanted to talk things over to get down from their horses, stand their guns against the wall of the store, and come sit in a friendly circle on the ground. The older man caught the force of legitimate command in his words and sat unarmed on the sand to talk and listen. He won them. They all dismounted. They all became friendly.

Then to complete this movement for peace which he had been inspired to begin, he invited the Navajos to stay overnight. He had some of the people bring and butcher a fat steer, and they got bacon, coffee, flour and other things from the store that these strangers might be well fed and return to be friends instead of enemies. They ate and they remembered "Kagoochee" (crooked feet), and from that time forward they were friends to him and his people.

Like Joseph of old, Brother Nielson was prospered in his undertakings. He had wisdom in business, he knew what to do, he had the knack of handling land and livestock. He raised big crops. He planned in terms of the welfare of the people who looked to him for guidance. He looked always for projects which would be profitable for them to work out, and somehow he just knew what was the proper thing for each man to do.

He was a lover of good horses, he bred good horses and he knew how to take care of them. He had wisdom in making ditches, roads, fences, he could estimate how long it would take and what it would cost. He could not figure with a pencil on paper, but he would figure accurately in his head.

Once when Brother Barton had planted a patch of lucerne, there was a low place in it where the water stood and the lucerne would not grow. The Bishop told him to dig a hole in the center of the low place and save his lucerne. The hole was all that was necessary.

Brother Nielson was never weak nor compromising about what he knew to be right, and he expected his people to accept what he told them. Edward F. Thompson relates that after he had joined the church in Bluff, the Bishop told him what to do in a certain matter, but Thompson explained what he wanted to do. "I don't care what you want to do," said the Bishop, "I want you to do it this way."

"When Monroe was away on his mission," says Sister Lucinda Redd, "the Bishop told us what to do, and by doing just that way we were able to keep Monroe there till he fulfilled his mission."

Sister Sarah Perkins said of the Bishop, "He advised and directed us and knew our affairs as well as we knew them ourselves."

My mother's mother was 93 years old and lived in Fillmore, 300 miles away from Bluff. They wrote from Fillmore for my mother to come at once if she wanted to see her mother alive, and she went to consult the Bishop about it, expecting to start very early the next morning. He

could not tell her at once, but he promised to tell her early in the morning what she ought to do.

Early the next morning he advised her not to go. "You will not get to see your mother," he says, "she will be dead before you get there, and your long trip will be in vain".

After my grandmother had survived 93 years it took the real spirit of prophecy to truly foretell that this would be her final sickness. Bishop Nielson was a prophet, I accepted and loved him as a prophet because his prophecies came true.

His fervent testimony found permanent lodgment in my mind, his Danish brogue was ever musical. His earnestness gripped me; I had no shadow of doubt that every word he said was true. In the old log meetinghouse and later in the new stone building, though I was a fidgeting and uneasy child, and his hair was snowy with age, I was never bored with his preaching. I was pleased to hear my father say, "I am sure that if it were not for the handicap of this strange English language, the bishop would be a fluent speaker."

When my father lay dying, the bishop came in to see him. My father looked up with great love and reverence in his face, "Oh Bishop, you have been a true father to me," he declared, and he shed tears while he held to the firm honest hand which had gripped the hard shaft of the handcarts. The Bishop looked down as a father would look at his son, and watching them with intense interest it was written on my soul with indelible words that the gray veteran from Denmark was a holy man, a man of God.

Does this imply that he had no weakness? No failure on the one firing line of battle with his human tendencies? Not at all. He did have them. I know of them. I saw them there in his nature like a few little weeds not yet removed from a well ordered garden.

It is not fair to brother Nielson and is it not consistent from any angle for a man to justify a weakness in himself because he saw or heard that the Bishop indulged that weakness. If his failure is to be made justification for that same failure in you, then his virtues outweighing his failures, should be an imperative demand for your emulation. How can fairness and reason ever look at the character of Brother Nielson to see only and fix upon a weakness as the only thing to emulate?

The most wonderful, the most beautiful thing in this tangible world is a man or woman adorned with long years of faith and virtue and righteousness. The charm of it carries through their life and into their death. It hovers above them in the agonizing moments of their journey and settles upon them as they sink to rest.

It was something of the sort attending the invincible one to survive out of five in the perils of that terrible October on the plains when, in the fury of the storm and in the sharp teeth of the frost he had a prayer in his heart and a firm resolve to spend his life in usefulness under the priesthood. That is the charm attending him when he reached Salt Lake to be told

that his frozen feet could never be made straight again. That followed him through the 50 years of his life yet remaining, and it hung with sanctity over him to the last moment.

In the winter of 1906 he began to be dropsical, and with the coming of spring it was more and more difficult for him to leave his chair. Still he kept close account of the affairs of his ward, he knew who was still at home, who was away and where and why.

Towards the last when he had to sit in his chair through all the 24 hours of the day, watching the steady change which must soon bring the end, he called attention one day to the fact that there was not in town enough men to bury him. This is not in despair nor in the spirit of complaining, but to warn them kindly of the future as he had ever done.

When the end drew very near, so it was but a matter of hours or of minutes, to his loved ones around him he reviewed briefly his life mission, telling them again how the gospel had come to him in his native land and how he had embraced it and cherished it always through tribulation. Again he declared in firmness to them that Joseph Smith was a prophet, and that through him the gospel of Christ had been revealed again to an apostate world.

The standard he had found safe and dependable for his life's day, was safe and dependable for its evening shadows. Some great element of fidelity, as his night came on, made it as beautiful and as unfaltering as the noonday past.

He was gone — — the long, hard journey ended. It lacked two days of being 86 years since he the journey began on that distant island in the Baltic Sea. Around him stood a group of his children who by his determined effort and sacrifice had been born and established in Zion, and were free to carry on the work he had come so far and suffered so much to begin.

He had been appointed in the primeval world to act the part of the Savior to his progenitors, and now he had finished his part of the work which at most could be but a beginning. But he had accomplished that beginning; he had established his posterity in Zion where they could carry the work forward with lesser effort and with never the suffering it had cost him.

He looks to his children to take up the burden where he laid it down. His kinsman look to his children, for his children have also been appointed to this important mission, and are permitted to live at this time and in these favorable surroundings that they may do what their father began.

The note is added which states "died April 22, 1907".

Note: Albert R. Lyman was the son of Platte D. Lyman