

“PAY-DAY—SOME DAY”

With Other Sketches From Life and Messages From The Word

by

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CHAPTER SIX

RAMBLINGS FROM A TRAIN COACH

“All-a-boooo-ard!” And the night train pulled out exactly on time from the Denver station. It was just 11:45 p.m. I had turned one of the seats around and thrown my overcoat up on the rack. My traveling bag and briefcase sat snugly at my side, my only companions. A long journey, with two nights on this train, was ahead, but what of it! I was on my way home. I settled down and made myself comfortable, reached in the inside coat pocket for my Testament and in the dimly lighted special-fare coach my eyes rested on I Corinthians 2:

“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God . . . And I was with you in weakness and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom . . . and God hath chosen the weak things of the world . . . that no flesh should glory in his presence.”

I closed the book, buried my face in my hands and thanked God for the past two weeks, indeed glorious, yes, two weeks that will stand out as a pole-star in a dark night.

“Pillow, mister?” called a dark-skinned porter, and in a few moments I had closed my eyes in slumber. Though it was a spasmodic slumber, still it was rest. While waiting for weariness to act as a sleeping potion, my thoughts wandered back to the many new-found friends and the scenes from the last labors in the Master’s service. That Sunday night meeting in E__ had left an indelible impression that to me will be a cheering incentive to press on. Those many upraised hands at the close, young and old in front and on the platform with happy faces, most of them shining through tears of joy, that only a moment ago had been tears of sadness and defeat . . . now with upraised hands, as a testimony to the redeeming power of the cross, they sang: “Glory, glory, Jesus saves me, glory, glory to the Lamb. Oh, the cleansing blood has reached me, glory, glory to His name.”

The best singing is from redeemed hearts, made glad by the old-time gospel power.

The lights were turned off and from my window I caught an occasional glimpse of the bleak Nebraska plains; in the darkness I noticed here and there a dim light in the window of some farmhouse . . .

Possibly some gray-haired, brokenhearted mother had left it burning while she sat in the early hours of the night awaiting her wayward son or daughter . . . this same child that received mother's tender care and during the childhood years was hushed to sleep by mother's love . . . now the sacrifices of a loving father and compassion of a darling mother were forgotten.

Again I'm awakened, this time by the screeching, grinding noise of the brakes as the train comes to a stop at a little country-town station, where men hustled about with lamps on their arms. Here on the side of the dingy little station, in the dim light, I noticed an old-style Ford, which gave evidence of many thousand miles of country-roads. I guessed it belonged to an old couple who anxiously looked up and down our long train that cold dismal morning. Inside of those time-worn winter coverings were warm hearts that expressed themselves in the hugs and kisses that welcomed a weary traveler, a daughter coming home to the old homestead, to be loved at mother's and dad's old fireside . . . I thanked God for a mother that loves me when others misunderstand me. I thanked God for children who only think of my comfort and welfare, and for the response in my heart to love in return.

The train pulled away with the customary jerky motion and I buried my face in my handkerchief as I made a futile attempt to dry my tears. I changed the position of my pillow and tried to fall asleep, but I lived over and over again the last Sunday's meeting in G__.

All four services were saturated with God's power and Holy Ghost conviction. Indeed it was an unusual day in God's house. I thanked God for every meeting but it seemed God's approval and seal was placed on the entire series by this last service. It was close to eleven o'clock when the song leader announced that we sing, God Be With You Till We Meet Again, and while we sang this farewell song two more came forward through the crowd and found Christ. With the many who came to Jesus this night we could blend our voices and raise our hands as we sang,

On the cross He sealed my pardon,
Paid the debt and set me free.

We closed with a warm thanksgiving service in which two of the neighboring pastors, who had been present at most every meeting, took part and the dear pastor closed with the benediction. It had been an unusually heavy day but we were refreshed over this victory by what our eyes had seen and what our ears had heard.

I was again hushed to sleep, as the monotone of the wheels blended with the last strain of that beautiful Heaven's harmony: Till we mee-eet. . . God be with you till we meet again.

"Coffee and sandwiches?" Here came the white-coated waiter from the dining car.

"Coffee, mister?" "Yes, sir, give me a cup."

"And what kind of sandwiches?" he asked, as he handed me a cup of warm coffee. "Turkey," was my reply.

“Sorry, mister, but we have no turkey sandwiches,” said the waiter. “But I have,” was my triumphant reply. “You see this box? It is full of turkey sandwiches that my aunt in Denver packed up and handed me as I left Denver last night, and by the way they beat anything you’ve got.”

“Well, you might be right at that, boss,” he said, as he walked down the aisle. And I was right. I had apples and turkey sandwiches for breakfast, cake and turkey sandwiches for lunch, and cookies and turkey sandwiches for supper.

Opposite me sat an elderly lady who gave evidence of not having an oversupply of this world’s goods—I could tell by her lunch, her shoes and the newly-bought traveling case, both the shoes and luggage being of the “bargain basement” variety. That morning as I handed her a tract and a Gospel of John, she excused herself with a few broken words of “no speak de English,” and seeing by the big tag on her suitcase that she was to take the “German Line” to Hamburg, I used the few German words I have command of and told her of a Savior who can save and satisfy. I shared my aunt’s lunch with her that noon and she gladly accepted all the three varieties; in fact she not only smiled, but it helped her to speak English quite fluently, and she enjoyed reading the tract.

When the train stopped at the Holdrege station in came Pastor Rodine and Supt. Gustin from the Children’s Home. They had some mail for the Free Church President, who was supposed to be on this same train, coming from Denver. But we walked through every car and no E. A. Halleen could be found. I was hoping for good company as the train-ride was getting a little monotonous and Bro. Halleen and myself have many things in common. He is always an interesting man, a great mind to tackle knotty problems. But evidently I was destined to ride all alone. At least it has one advantage—it’s agreeable company and there are no arguments. But presently Henry Gustin, superintendent of the Children’s Home, came and took his seat beside me. He was on his way to Minden to call on supporters for the Children’s Home. The Home was in financial need just now.

He makes a big impression wherever he goes and evidently he impressed the conductor, too, as he looked him over and examined his pass. After he had left the train at Minden, the gray-haired, dignified-looking conductor came and sat down in the seat opposite me and inquired about “this great personality.”

“You two seemed quite friendly,” he added. “I thought you knew him,” was my answer.

“Sorry I did not introduce you to him. He is one of our country’s most useful citizens, a great man, with a great purpose and big heart. He is a father to the fatherless and he molds character that makes for better and more useful citizens.”

“I thought his face familiar; who is he and what’s his title?” he asked.

“Why, my dear man, he is the superintendent of the Christian Orphan’s Home at Holdrege, Nebr.”

“And, by the way, may I ask who you are?” was his next inquiry, as he gazed over the collection of books spread before me, on a little improvised table made from cardboard. I promptly gave him my business card and after reading it he looked a bit bewildered, and without waiting for a question from him I said, “I know just what’s on your mind and I’ll save you the embarrassment. You were going to ask why I ride in this cheap coach when I have three stores.”

“Well, I admit I thought just that, . . . but . . .” Then I continued by giving my testimony of how Jesus became real to me and that He had given me the call to go out with His message of saving grace; that one-half of my time is spent in this way.

We had a very pleasant chat and I was happy to be able to answer some of his seemingly perplexing questions. As he took my hand and accepted a little booklet and a Gospel of John, he said: “In the rear of this train we have an observation car with table and library. I want you to go in there and make yourself comfortable.”

But riding in a coach gets you closer to the human heart. On my first trip through the two coaches that morning I had with me a very attractive tract, “Christ the Savior,” a couple of dozen Gospels of John and my early morning smile. I greeted everyone in the same manner, just like a well-trained insurance salesman: “Nice morning, here is something very nice to read, in fact it will add more luster to the day, and it’s free!”

Evidently I made an impression on my first “sales trip,” because no one refused taking what I offered. Returning through the car someone pulled at my coat sleeve, and it was an elderly, white-haired lady who in her refinement looked even out of place in this common car. She had put on an extra pair of “specs” that hung on a long silver chain. She removed them for a minute as she looked up at me, clasped my hand tightly, and as moisture came to her eyes, said: “God bless you, sonny.” . . . It really felt good; my heart really became a few degrees warmer.

I responded by giving a few Bible verses, loud enough so that they became a testimony to those in the near-by seats. “Are you a preacher, my boy?” she inquired.

“No madam, I’m sorry I’m not; just an ordinary small businessman running errands for God,” was my answer. “How far are you going?” “All the way to Chicago,” was my answer. “I’m only going to Omaha, but I’ll meet you in Heaven.”

Listen, friend, you and I are travelers. Some travel through this world with more comfort than others, but we are all travelers. At our journey’s end where are you going? Will we meet in Heaven?

~ end of chapter 6 ~

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