

“PAY-DAY—SOME DAY”

With Other Sketches From Life and Messages From The Word

by

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CHAPTER FIVE

FOUR MEN FOR A TURKEY

It was a cold November night. As the Northern Pacific train rolled over the bleak North Dakota prairies I noticed in the moonlight how the countryside was touched with the first snowfall, and as we passed through the little villages the clanging of the crossing bells added their bit to keep me from a much-needed slumber. In my berth my thoughts were riveted on the coming meetings in a section where I would be a total stranger, except for one of the preachers. I always dread coming to strange places, and more so this time because I had had difficulty getting away from the many duties in the stores. It was in the height of the busy season and by human reasoning I should have stayed at home. Added to this, I was tormented with the knowledge that I had had very little time to prepare myself for the meetings, and this added a touch of sadness to this lonely heart of mine. I poured out my heart to Him who understands all our problems and who had said that we should roll our cares upon Him, and in those hours of the night I asked Him to anoint me afresh for what He had for me to do in the coming meetings. If ever I needed a new infilling of Holy Ghost power it was now, so my earnest prayer was,

Consecrate me now for Thy service, Lord,
By the power of grace divine;
Let my soul look up with a steadfast hope
And my will be lost in Thine.

When I closed my prayer I said, “Lord, let me bless the first man I meet.” As I sat there waiting for the train to stop at my station the same earnest prayer went over my lips, “Lord, help me to be a blessing to the very first person I meet.”

At the station a little short German farmer met me and in his rickety old Overland car took me over the frozen mud roads some twenty miles to the town. While the radiator steamed and the makeshift windows rattled we tried to get acquainted as he sat there in his sheepskin lumber-jacket coat carefully avoiding the biggest ruts. He took me up to my room, put down my bags and said he would call for me at dinner time.

“Wait a minute, my friend, don’t be in such a hurry. We want to pray together a bit. Let me ask you a question. Are you a Christian?”

“Yes,” was his reply. “Are you a happy Christian?” was my next question.

“No, I can’t say that I am,” he answered, with a tone of sadness.

“Then we shall pray. You pray for me that God might take away from me anything that may hinder my ministry here and bless me greatly, and I’ll pray that you might be a happy Christian—Shall we?”

With that he removed his coat and we knelt together. Heaven opened and we felt the nearness of the Holy Spirit. He didn’t hold a long stereotyped prayer, but what he did say was from his heart. God really touched that farmer’s heart that early morning, and gave me a blessing too.

Now this farmer was the most interesting fellow and it gave me a real “kick” just to study him. Night after night he brought two and three loads of people to the meetings and when I knelt down at the side of someone he was at my side, and if I walked to the rear of the church to talk to someone this fellow was always with me. I never had a better follower in my life. But I noticed something strange. This man had no gift of expression. He never prayed publicly and when he testified it was with great effort, and one could easily understand that he was tormented by his poor attempts. But oh, how interested he was in the soul-saving business! He really beamed all over when some he had brought accepted Christ. If ever I had wanted to ask God to give the gift of evangelism to anyone it was to this fellow, because if ever there was one person who deserved to experience the joy of bringing someone to the saving knowledge of Christ, it was this fellow.

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Let’s forget him for a minute now and come back to him later. In the dining room at the hotel there was a waiter who was another rather peculiar man for his position. He never talked. A fine looking fellow. The necktie sat just perfectly on his white shirt and his hair looked as though he had just come from a barber’s chair. He was immaculate. Thursday night this man became a burden on my soul. But to approach him was almost impossible. So then I did the unusual. I placed a quarter under the plate as I left instead of the customary dime. When I came in for breakfast Saturday morning I noticed a wee bit of a smile as he beckoned me to the table.

“Nice morning,” I said, and to my surprise he answered me with these words: “Yes, it is a nice day, especially when one has such nice people to wait on as you.”

After he brought me the breakfast I said to him: “You are not saved, are you?”

“No, sir,” he replied, “but how do you know?”

“The Lord has placed you on my heart and He would not have done so if you were saved. Don’t you think you should be saved?”

“Yes,” he replied.

“Don’t you think you should come to Christ now?” “Yes,” he answered.

I was so surprised that I hardly knew what to say next, because there were many in the restaurant and I could not very well deal with him just then. I then asked him if he had attended any of the meetings and he said, “No.”

“Tomorrow is the last day of these meetings. Will you come tomorrow afternoon?”

“Yes,” was his terse answer.

In the afternoon he was there and when I gave the invitation several responded, but not he. Then, while the singing went on, I walked to his side in the rear of the Opera House, and at my side again was this farmer. After a few words with him and his wife they followed me to the front and both were gloriously saved.

Then I urged them to come back for the closing meeting that night and give their testimony. He replied that as much as he would love to do so, it was impossible as it was his turn to work in the restaurant. I then took him to the side and had a heart to heart talk with him, gave him some pamphlets and tracts, thanked God together with him, and we bid each other farewell and said we would meet in heaven.

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The evening service started and we were in full swing when in came this man and his wife. I quickly took two chairs from the platform and beckoned them to come to the front as I had these chairs placed on the side, half facing the audience. At the close of the meeting I asked all those who had found Christ during these meetings to arise and sing, We’er marching to Zion, beautiful, beautiful Zion.

Then I asked those who knew they were marching towards hell and wanted to turn around and join those fifty or sixty who had this new song in their heart, to arise and come to the front. Among those who accepted this invitation were four stalwart men at my left and all four of them walked over to where this waiter was standing and said they wanted to join him and those happy people, and wanted to be saved and march toward heaven.

At the close of this after-meeting we heard testimonies from those who had just come and one of these men stood up and said, “We have no use for church or religion, but came here to the Opera House just as a sort of habit, but when we saw this Mr. F. stand up and also heard his testimony we all said, If he needed salvation we really need it much more.’ The rest can speak for themselves, but as for me I’m glad I came and accepted Jesus as my Savior. I never knew what gladness was until tonight.”

Now how this waiter managed to get to this meeting, whose coming resulted in these four men accepting Christ, was to me an unsolved but interesting question. So I was determined to find out. And here is the story.

In the afternoon meeting when he said he could not come because he had to work, this young German farmer (who was always at my side) hurriedly left the building, jumped in his old worn-out Overland car and drove eight miles out to his farm, climbed up on one of his sheds and took down one of his big turkeys, killed it and brought it to town, and went in to the other waiter in the restaurant, and showing him this large turkey said, "Will you work for F. tonight if I give you this turkey?"

"I'll work for a turkey any time," he replied.

"Then when F. comes to work, tell him you are working in his place and tell him to go to church."

"You bet I will," he said. "That will be good for that old sinner; he needs to go to church."

So you see, friends, this man without even ordinary gifts, won four men for Christ with one turkey. Christ said: "Follow me, I'll show you," and He did.

A year or so later I received a card from his wife saying that "Arnold has gone to be with the Lord. A well he was digging caved in on him and buried him." Then this peace came to me: "And Arnold went to be with the Lord, and with him four men whose hearts God touched through him."

~ end of chapter 5 ~

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