

## En Route.

(By Della Dimmitt.)

The Philomathean quartette chanced to be standing together on the rear platform when the train pulled out.

There was a treble chorus of 'Good-bye! Good-bye!' and a wild flutter of handkerchiefs from the crowd of girls on the depot platform.

The response from the Philos was a snatch of some farewell college glee.

The four clear, perfectly blending voices sounding from the rear platform brought a swift line of heads out of the car windows, and by a common impulse every eye in the car was turned on the four young figures entering a moment later.

The Philos fell to talking, after the manner of college girls, and the people about them listened and grew interested.

A man sitting opposite finally leaned over and said, with a note of inquiry in his voice, 'You are all from X—— College?'

'Yes,' said the girls.

'Well,' said the stranger, 'I have been listening to you. It was not intentional on my part, I assure you, for I have some problems of my own to solve; but there was a disturbing quality to some of the things you have just been saying, and so I listened. Now, I have never been to college, I have never thought about having missed much. I have made a fair success of life—a fair success, you might call it. I suppose, though, you look at things from a somewhat different standpoint; and now I would like to ask you what, in your judgment, is the object of a college life; in fact, what has it done, or, rather, what will it do for you?'

He was regarding them with a steady, level glance.

One after another they answered him.

He pondered over their replies a moment or two, then he said, 'I suppose it is altogether too soon for any of you to have much of an idea of what you expect to be or to do.'

'No; O, no,' said the four quickly, in chorus, and they each spoke definitely of certain things which they hoped to accomplish.

It seemed to strike the stranger oddly that no one of them made any reference to possible pecuniary benefits or advanced social position, and he said so. 'I have always thought—with a man, at least—the idea was that it got him a better job. It has been my experience that a young fellow is always trying to trade on his college education.'

One of the girls said softly, 'We believe "the end of life is service."'

'A short creed,' said the stranger; 'a short creed; but it is terribly comprehensive, isn't it. I would think it impossible to live up to; but then I am not a college man, you know. Now, if I looked at things from your standpoint—'

He broke off suddenly as a hand touched his shoulder and one of the trainmen spoke to him. He rose hurriedly, and went into the forward car. After a long time he came back.

'There's been a smash-up down below here,' he said, in answer to the half-expectant faces the quartette turned toward him; 'that accounts for the long stop we have had. The fireman was horribly burned, got jammed in between the fire box and a broken car beam. I have been thinking—wondering a little to myself just how one would regard this poor fellow—from the college standpoint, you know.'

One of the girls, and it was not the one

who had said she hoped to be a missionary, repeated in her clear girlish tones:—

'I behold in thee  
An image of Him who died on the tree:  
Thou also hast had thy crown of thorns,  
Thou also hast had the world's buffets and  
scorns,

And to thy life were not denied  
The wounds in the hands and feet and side:  
Mild Mary's Son, acknowledge me,  
Behold, through Him, I give to thee!'

'Lowell,' said the stranger, 'I believe it was. And you think, then, a Sir Launfal's vision possible to realize? What will you do—you four girls, I mean—with this fireman?'

'Does he need attention now?' asked one of the four. She spoke briefly, in the manner of one who might bind up a wound.

'There is a physician with him who is doing all he can to relieve his sufferings.'

The girl opened her purse, and with an odd little smile held it out. It was empty.

The man laughingly shook his head.

'But let me ask you one straight question more,' he said. 'Suppose there should be anything possible to be done for this poor fellow moaning on the floor of the baggage car, would your adherence to your Meals be sufficiently strong for you four girls to undertake the task?'

It was a purely hypothetical case, but they gave it some moments of thoughtful consideration, and then they all answered yes.

The man went away again, and the girls fell to talking as before. The night had drawn on before the stranger came back again. This time he stood in the aisle, bracing himself against the vacant seat across from the four girls. They saw how tall and powerful he was, with a fine, resolute face.

'I have found out about this fireman,' he said; 'he is only a boy, not more than seventeen, I should say. He comes from some mountain town down in Georgia. The physician in there says his burns are so deep that his lungs are in bad shape, and that if he can't get back to a mild climate and stay there, he won't live six months. The boy, burned as he is, fights against it, and says that his people are too poor to be burdened with him; but he's got to go, there's no other way out of it. Of course the railway company will carry him down there, but he ought to have some money—he must have some.'

'You see how this car is crowded. Well, there are six other coaches on to-night, and all as full as this.'

'We have a wait at Sedalla of over two hours, and do you know what the men on this train will do? There is a show down town—not a very respectable one, either—and these men will go down there in droves just to pass away these two hours.'

'Now, don't you think it would be a great deal better if we could persuade all these folks to turn in the money that would otherwise go to a fourth-rate vaudeville performance, to give this poor fellow in the baggage car a chance for his life?'

'Ah! yes, I knew you would say so. Well, now, you sing don't you? What do you say to singing that money out of this crowd—at Sedalla—during the wait?'

Sing in a railway station to a crowd like this! The girl who had quoted Lowell looked up at the stranger, and he was holding them all in his strong, purposeful glance.

'We'll do it,' she said, quietly, and while every fibre in her being was in revolt.

No one who was on the train that night ever forgot that strange scene at the rail-

way platform in Sedalla. The stranger had gone from end to end through the six coaches, inviting the passengers to remain, and when the train slowed up even the men due in Sedalla stayed behind. The four girls stood on the rear platform of the last car, in the faint glow of a switch light. All about was a wide, shadowy fringe of faces upturned to catch the first notes of the four voices blending and melting into one. The sounds of traffic died away into silence, and the crowd, augmenting momentarily, listened breathlessly. Then came wild bursts of applause and still the sweet-keyed voices sang tirelessly on and on, while the minutes lengthened into hours.

At length the stranger interposed. In a few brief sentences he told the story of the boy in the baggage car, and by the deep stillness that reached even to the outer fringe of toughs from the saloons he knew he had won. Then, turning to the girls, 'They shall sing but once more,' he said; 'what will you have?' There was a quick shout, and to the music of 'Maxwellton braes are bonny,' the hat went round. Still singing, 'I'd lay me down and dee,' the girls carried it in filled with the generous outpouring of the moved and mastered crowd, to the boy moaning among the cushions on the floor of the baggage car. He opened his eyes, full of dumb, boyish gratitude, and his poor, seared face twitched in a pitiful attempt at a smile. The girls bent over him in tears, and the stranger pulled his hat down over his eyes for an instant. Then he cleared the way for their return to the rear car and saw them seated. He warmly shook the hand of each.

'I believe in you,' he said to the four collectively, 'and I believe in your ideals. If all college women live up to them as faithfully as you have done to-night, then I say: "All hail to the college woman";' and he made them a princely bow.

He apparently failed to appreciate his own part in the night's achievement, but the Philos had suddenly awakened to the fact that this swift-thinking man, who had so wonderful a power of combining circumstances, was the object of much distinguished consideration.

'Wait a minute,' cried one of the quartette, as he was walking away. 'I am Flo. Givens, and this is Alice Wycoff, and this is Bell Whitaker, and this is Elizabeth Towne, and—and who are you, sir?'

'I?' said the stranger, smiling genially. 'Why, I happen to be the superintendent of the road.'—Christian Advocate.

## The Impregnable Word.

Last eve I paused beside a blacksmith's door,

And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;

Then, looking in, I saw upon the floor  
Old hammers worn with beating years of time.

'How many anvils have you had?' said I,  
'To wear and batter all these hammers so?'

'Just one,' said he; then said, with twinkling eye,

'The anvil wears the hammer out, you know.'

And so I thought the anvil of God's word  
For ages skeptic blows have beat upon;  
Yes, though the noise of falling blows was heard,

The anvil is unharmed—the hammers gone.

—'The Current.'

It doesn't take much capital to show whether we are doing business for God or not.  
—'Ram's Horn.'