

## The Home Mission Journal.

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### Railroading With Christ.

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#### CHAPTER V.

##### SUFFERING FOR ANOTHER'S FAULT.

**J**AMES SUMMERS kept quietly watching for a chance to ruin Joe Benton's prospects. At length the opportunity seemed to offer.

The through freight had one evening been lying for the half-hour on the long switch at Walnut Siding, when, finally obtaining the right of way westward, it slowly pulled out on the main track. Then it came to a standstill to allow Joe Benton, who had been assigned to that duty, to close the switch behind it, leaving the train track clear again for through travel. Joe performed this task in his usual thorough manner, carefully inspecting the switch in the bright light of his lantern to see that it was securely locked. Then as he regained the platform of the caboose he swung his lantern as a signal to go ahead. But the freight had not pulled on its way more than a train length when a slight break-down on the engine occurred, making necessary another stop. The delay lasted only for a few minutes, when four sharp whistles sounded from the locomotive, calling in the brakeman who had been sent down the track with a red light. The man who was so sent happened to be Jake Summers.

That very evening when the freight slowly crawled into the yard at Hammerville the crew learned that a serious accident had occurred shortly before at Walnut Siding. The faces of the trainmen immediately became grave, fearing as they did the investigation which would surely follow as to the handling of their train when at the siding—for the despatch announcing the disaster also mentioned the fact that an open switch was the cause of the derailment of the unfortunate passenger train.

The next day it was reported that no lives had been lost as a result of the accident, though a few trainmen had been severely injured, and two cars had been overturned. The railroad authorities did not feel at all amiable over the affair. The papers were all criticising them severely, and clamoring for a thorough investigation of the cause of the catastrophe.

Accordingly in due time the crew of the through freight were summoned to appear before an inquisitive board of railroad officials. The freight had been the last train to pass Walnut Siding before the accident, and the evidence all pointed to gross culpability on the part of some member of its crew.

Joe Benton admitted that his duty on that

particular night was to close and lock the switch. "Why then did you not do so?" sharply demanded the Superintendent, who served as chief inquisitor.

"I did, sir!" replied Joe, his face flushing hotly.

He knew that he spoke the truth, but under the sharp scrutiny of the official examiners he was conscious of blushing painfully—they thought guiltily.

"Do you mean, sir, in the face of all this evidence against you, to deny your guilt?" demanded the Superintendent, who prided himself on his knowledge of human nature and his ability to detect all culprits.

"The evidence may be against me, sir," replied Joe, quietly, regaining somewhat his composure; "but I know that I locked the switch, and looked it over afterward carefully with my lantern to make perfectly sure!"

"I don't believe a word of that! You were the last man to handle the switch before the passenger train struck it. The evidence is all against you. I'll teach you men not to be careless of the Company's rolling-stock, and the lives of its passengers! That no men were killed outright the other night was not your fault. You are discharged, sir!"

"But Superintendent,—" began Joe.

"Not another word, sir! You leave the room!"

Joe's face flushed scarlet. He felt that he was suffering from a cruel injustice. He had not been half heard in his own defence, nor allowed to say anything of especial weight in rebuttal of the charges. The fact of the case was that the Superintendent, in his haste to find a victim on whom to unload the burden of the public's fierce wrath, was intolerant of any contradiction, or even discussion, of the truth of his hastily-formed theory as to the identity of the culprit in the case. Joe knew well enough that Jake Summers had had a key to that switch as well as himself; he recollected Summers' pointed threats; and was aware who had carried the red light to the rear, and thus secured an opportunity of tampering with the switch, that dark night the train was delayed at Walnut Siding.

But Joe had been given no chance to say aught of all this, nor could he prove the truth of the facts of which he was absolutely certain in his own mind.

So, feeling bitterly, and cruelly smarting under a sense of the injustice done him, Joe Benton hurried from the brilliantly lighted room where the investigation had been held, out into the damp, chilling fog of the evening—which seemed cheerlessly to symbolize his deep perplexity of mind. Sick at heart he felt that he could not go home at once and burden his mother so soon with the unwelcome news; and so dejectedly, with all the pathetic sense of vagabondage and want which attends the laborer out of work, he stumbled along in the dark. Here and there the thick gloom was relieved by the garish gleam of the lights in some saloon, around whose doors, despite the hard times, scores of loafers were loitering, like moths hovering about a candle, waiting for a good chance to singe their wings. In his desperation Joe was strangely tempted to yield to the enticing calls of a saloon-keeper of oily manners, who stood by a door-way inviting Joe to enter his establishment and have a drink. But just then, in utter contrast with the smooth-shaved countenance of the tempter, there arose the vision of a sweet womanly face—that of the dear mother at home, who even then seemed to

be saying to her boy: "Joe, let the deceitful cup alone; and remember however great at any one time may appear to be your difficulties, to try to drown them in the wine-cup is but to exchange one trouble for another, and that a worse one!"

Instantly thereupon the charm of the serpent-eyed rum-seller seemed broken. Resolutely Joe Benton turned away, and sought his home instead of the saloon. After a little his composure somewhat returned. These words of his Sunday school teacher came to his mind: "Faith is for the darkest hours. When you cannot see, anchor and wait, as does the sailor. The fog may lift when morning breezes blow. Trust in God, and He will help you through!"

Then too, just as Joe Benton, rounding the street corner, came in sight of the light which he knew his thoughtful mother had placed in the parlor window for his benefit, there occurred to him the words spoken so lovingly by his father in the round-house that day, just before John Benton started out on the fatal run toward Giant Mountain: "Joe, be a man."

It almost seem as if the spirit of the father who had perished so heroically was again with his own, and strength came with the thought, and a strange new peace, and a surer confidence.

(To be Continued.)

#### Pardoned.

In an English bank were two clerks. "I want you to lend me half a sovereign," whispered one. "Watkins" said the other, "you know I cannot afford to. Please do not ask me." "Then" said the first, "I will report you," and the face of the other grew pale, and the money was found and given. There was a secret behind that episode. That clerk was a refugee from justice, a deserter from the British army, liable to arrest and life-long punishment, and the other knew his secret, and basely took advantage of it, and for years had, like a vampire, preyed upon his blood. And so it went on, until one day the wretched victim looking over his morning paper saw a strange announcement, that Queen Victoria, in honor of her Jubilee, offered to grant a free pardon to every deserter from the army who would make application stating all the facts. He trembled violently as he read the lines over and over again, and then he hurried to the office of the Adjutant and asked if it was true. The clerk thundered out, "Are you a deserter?" And he trembled and hesitated to answer. But his danger mastered his fears, and he frankly acknowledged it. Then the clerk handed him a blank to be filled out, in which he had to write his name and address, and all the facts of his history and his crime, and as he wrote it he shuddered under the awful shadow of his peril. But a few moments later another officer handed him a sealed package containing a pardon signed by his Queen, and with winged feet he hurried to his office, no longer afraid. That dreadful blot was gone from his memory, that awful shadow from his life; and when the knave at the next desk stealthily crept up to him again and demanded another sovereign, he calmly answered, "Not now." "Then I will report you." "Report away," said the other, and he showed him his pardon; and his knavery was baffled. Was that not liberty? Ah, dear unsaved friend, a heavier burden, a darker shadow rests on you, but God for Christ's sake offers you today, free and full forgiveness, and the power to forget even your darkest sins. But to have it, you must frankly acknowledge the worst; you must take the sinner's place. You must take it without reserve, you must take it now; and then you may claim the sinner's Saviour, and for you, henceforth and forevermore, memory will cease to be the red light of terrible warning, and will become the day stars that illumine your heavenly way, and the beginning of a future which shall be like the shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day.