

EARLY HISTORY OF CLOUD COUNTY BY H.E. SMITH

MY NIGHT IN A STAGE COACH

I looked into the face of the woman who said this, and I saw that her eyes were red with weeping. I disengaged the hand she held, and turned my face to the wall. The woman laid her hand upon my arm. "You must not feel like that. It is better so. He had only one friend, and he is with Him this beautiful Christmas morning. He had no home here. It is Christmas day, and he is at home there."

I took in mine the comforting hand that lay upon my arm. "I would like to see him," I said.

"He gave his life for me." They took me down afterward to what had been the family sitting room. There were warm red curtains at the windows; a bright, glowing carpet on the floor; there were bunches of holly and laurel scattered here and there, and over all was the atmosphere of home.

They left me at the door. I went in and stood by the side of the couch on which they had laid him. The eyes of tender blue were closed forever, the yellow hair was parted over the boyish brows, and still about the brave, sweet mouth the bright smile played as it did at the first moment of our meeting, when my implied doubt of him called it there. He lay before me dead, in all the glow and promise of his youth.

The smile which triumphed above death's ruin, rebuked me, and as I stooped to kiss the lips of the beautiful boy, I knew, as well as man could know, that he was not dead; that He who had given more life to the dead girl and the widow's son had given it also to him; and that he had only gone farther on his journey than I-into a sweeter, fuller, more gracious like than he had ever known. I also knew that I should see him again if I had only made my own life as brave, unselfish, and true as his had been.

**Register of Deeds
Judy Lambert**