

EARLY HISTORY OF CLOUD COUNTY BY H.E. SMITH

MY NIGHT IN A STAGE COACH

In that longer journey I dreamed of home, of the wondering Christmas miracle, the lighted tree; of the glad faces of children, whose voices I heard; I heard one of them repeat two or three times, with startling distinctness, "We are lost." I was conscious that the child who said it had thrown herself into my arms, and was lying there a dull, heavy weight. Aside from the cry it was all bright and pleasant-this real, terrible journey through the snow, over the rough dangerous mountain road, in that far off December.

The dream lasted a long while, through all that night, and the day following, and the night following that. When I awoke from it, I was in a large room, which I had never seen before. There were piles of the softest blankets upon me, there was a great wood fire blazing on the hearth, and I had never felt so warm and comfortable in all my life. There were two strangers in the room, a man and a woman, whose faces were kindly ones, but sorely troubled.

When I stirred, and they saw I recognized them, they came and stood by my bed. "Where am I?" I asked of them. "At Ilium, in the house of the Methodist minister." "how long have I been here?" "Since night before last. You came in the stage, and the horse stopped before our door," the man said. "What day is this?"

"It is Christmas Day," the woman replied taking my hand in hers. "I have been ill, then?" "Yes!"

"There was a boy brought me here. Where is he?" "He is here too." The voice that said it was husky with tears, and the hand that held mine shook. "Has he been ill, too." "Yes!" "Is he better now?"

"He was never so well. He will never be ill again."

**Register of Deeds
Judy Lambert
(Continued)**