



(Photo by Jim Burton)

Peace Pilgrim's Progress

NUMBER TWELVE

Peace Pilgrim, Cologne, N. J.

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE COUNTRY

In the Dakotas I got the impression of a vast treeless prairie, except for the lovely Black Hills region of South Dakotas and North Dakota's Red River Valley. On the extensive flat farmlands of the Dakotas, Nebraska and Kansas a variety of crops are grown without irrigation, but what I noticed most was grain - and on the highways I noticed the season. In Nebraska I walked almost every day and spoke almost every evening - and the roads I walked were pleasant roads, with grass on the shoulders and often trees also. Kansas, where I had good opportunities to speak at colleges, is a state which I have walked through on every pilgrimage route, so it wasn't surprising that I encountered many old friends there. I think of Oklahoma as a western state, although on a map it is quite centrally located. I think of Oklahoma as an oil state, and I could usually see an oil well or hear an oil pump, and when darkness came there were bright lights in lonely places where well-drilling crews worked all night. There is an oil well under Oklahoma's capitol and there are oil pumps on the capitol grounds. In Oklahoma I found I could walk at below zero temperatures. Although there was plenty of snow all around, the highways were fairly clear. In Oklahoma I found much friendliness and much peace interest. One bitter cold morning a college student gave me gloves from his hands and threw his scarf around my neck. That night, when the temperature dropped below zero, an American Indian couple gave me shelter. I met quite a few Indians in Oklahoma, for there are quite a few there. I think of Louisiana as a southern state, although its large French population gives it a somewhat different flavor. First I noticed that there were Parishes instead of Counties, then as I journeyed south I heard many people speaking French, and in New Orleans - which I visited at the beginning of the gay and costly Mardi Gras season - I walked along the narrow streets of the picturesque French Quarter where the tourists were admiring the wrought iron decorations and eating Creole pralines. My Louisiana highway was often bordered by big pine trees with their long soft-looking needles shining in the sun, sometimes I walked where the forest floor was carpeted with palmettos, and sometimes where massive live oaks or tall straight cypress trees were thickly hung with Spanish moss - but always I noticed abundant spring flowers in spite of the freeze only a month before. One thing I cannot imagine in Louisiana is a drought. There seems to be water everywhere, and it is interesting - and to some a little frightening - to look from the river bridge at New Orleans and see the vast Mississippi - confined between its levees - flowing along above the city. I walked in Arkansas in jonquil season - and the jonquils were abundant and lovely. I walked in Arkansas in fruit blossoms time - when pear trees were thick with white blooms and dainty pink petals appeared on bare peach boughs and delicate wild plum flowers decorated mountainsides. There is a special beauty in the Ozarks. If you have been there you understand - if you have not been there I cannot explain - but I can tell you how they were formed. Swift-flowing streams went to work on a dome-shaped mass, and the present-day result is the Ozarks. There is an old-fashioned friendliness in the Ozarks. People invited me in and offered me various home grown and homemade foods. Even in the winter I saw tourists in the Ozarks - enjoying the scenic vistas and choosing souvenirs from displays of sunbonnets and apple-dolls. Some people must still walk in the Ozarks, for on every highway there are pedestrian signs reading "Walk on the Left Facing Traffic." People born in Arkansas tend to stay in Arkansas, and when you look from a high ledge across a lake-studded valley to the blue haze-shrouded ledges beyond - and feel the spell of the Ozarks - you understand why. In Missouri I enjoyed visiting so many old friends and meeting so many new friends. The Ozarks extend into

Missouri, and I found myself walking up and down winding roads amid the special beauty of the Ozarks. Iowa in May was lovely with redbud and tulips and other spring blossoms. Because of a late season, the black earth of the neatly plowed fields was just being seeded - and I learned that Iowa contains one quarter of the nation's first class farmland. In Minnesota in June I found tulips and lilacs and iris at their loveliest. In Southern Minnesota there were so many trees, and everything looked so green. In Northern Minnesota there were so many lakes, attracting so many tourists. I noticed how liberated people felt after the long cold winter, and how they really enjoyed the pleasant weather and the pleasant out-of-doors. In Wisconsin - the "Dairy State," where it is "unpatriotic" to use oleo - there were low rolling hills for scenic beauty, and abundant clear lakes for swimming, and big thick trees for shade. How well I remember my walk along Lake Michigan, where the fresh water waves were rolling in, and where instead of shells there were smooth pebbles of many sizes and colors scattered on the beach. In Illinois I experienced the golden beauty of Indian Summer, and watched the maple trees put on their bright autumn raiment. My visit to big, big Chicago was, as always, rather overwhelming. In a week it was possible to just scratch the surface of the opportunities for contacting people there. How good it is to travel south in the fall of the year, experiencing the tranquil beauty of the harvest time - but staying just ahead of the frost, experiencing the brilliant beauty of the autumn leaves - but traveling on before they are swept from the trees. How good it is to travel north with the spring, both wonderful experiences in the middle of the country.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: I think your definition of God is excellent. Will you please define prayer?

A: Prayer is a sincere seeking for a good thing, and a concentration on the thing sought, with faith that it is obtainable. All right prayer has good effect, but if you give your whole life to the prayer you multiply its power. And of course right prayer will motivate to right action.

Q: Where did you learn the things you talk about? Obviously you have found something which all of us are seeking, and you have no right to conceal the source of your information.

A: I have never concealed the source of my information. For Light I go directly to the Source of Light - not to any of the reflections. Also I make it possible for more Light to come to me by living up to the highest Light I have. You cannot mistake Light coming from the Source, for it comes with complete understanding so that you can explain it and discuss it.

Q: Often I tell myself that good is stronger than evil, love stronger than hatred, that good must win, but will it win in this world?

A: Yes, good will win in this world. The darkness that we see in the world today is due to the disintegration of things which are not good. Only the things which are good can endure. Yes, love will win in this world. Those who are filled with hatred are desperately unhappy and desperately - even though unconsciously - seeking a better way. Only those who are filled with love are serene and at peace.

I THINK AS I WALK THROUGH THE PLANTED FIELDS

How good it is for childhood to be spent on a farm, where there is plenty of room to grow. When plants are growing too close together they become thin and sickly, and perhaps we humans are also a little like that. How good it is to eat fruit tasty and ripe from the tree and vegetables fresh and crisp from the field. And how good it would be for the farming of the future to concentrate on the non-use of poisonous substances, such as sprays, so food would be fit to go from farm to table. In the spring and

summer when the days are long, how good it is to get up with the sun and go to bed with the sun. In the fall and winter when the days are shorter you can enjoy some of the night. I am inclined to agree that: there is a substance in the air, left there by the sun, which diminishes after the sun goes down and which can be absorbed only while you sleep. Nine to five is about right for me. How good it is to work in the invigorating fresh air under the life-giving sun amid the inspiring beauty of nature. There are many who recognize this, like the young man I met whose life had been interrupted by the peacetime draft, and while he was away his father who was in poor health was not able to keep up the family farm so it was sold. The young man then undertook to do years of distasteful work in order to be able to buy another farm. How good it is to earn your livelihood helping plants to grow to provide people with food. In other words, how good it is to earn your livelihood by contributing constructively to the society in which you live - everyone should, of course, and in a healthy society everyone would.

THE FREEDOM OF SIMPLICITY

Some seem to think that my life dedicated to simplicity and service is austere and joyless, but these do not know the freedom of simplicity. I know enough about food to nourish my body properly and I have excellent health. I enjoy my food, but I eat to live, I do not live to eat, and I know when to stop eating. I am not enslaved by food. My clothes are most comfortable as well as most practical. My shoes, for instance, have soft fabric tops and soft rubber-like soles - I feel as free as though I were walking barefoot. I am not enslaved by fashion. I am not a slave to comfort and convenience - for instance, I slept equally well in a soft bed or on the grass beside the road. I am not burdened by unnecessary possessions or meaningless activities. My life is full and good, but not over-crowded, and I do my work easily and joyously. I feel beauty all around me and I see beauty in everyone I meet - for I see God in everything. I recognize the laws which govern this universe, and I find harmony through gladly and joyously obeying them. I recognize my part in the life-pattern, and I find harmony through gladly and joyously living it. I recognize my oneness with all mankind and my oneness with God. My happiness overflows in loving and giving toward everyone and everything.

THE INNER WAY

That which is received from without can be compared with knowledge. It leads to a believing, which is seldom strong enough to motivate to action. That which is confirmed from within after it is contacted from without, or that which is directly perceived from within - which is my way, can be compared with wisdom. It leads to a knowing, and action goes right along with it.