

The End of the Road

by Eric B. Hare

I would like to tell you about the great day when the good and bad shall be divided, and I will not talk to you in cunningly devised fables, for I was an eyewitness of the things that I have seen. God gave me a preview of that day, and I know how the good and the bad are separated. I was there; I know the joy that belongs to those on the right hand of God. I have seen the weeping and the wailing and the gnashing of teeth of those who have waited until it is too late.

I was in Rangoon when the merchants closed their shops and dismissed their tired clerks. I saw them fleeing for their lives. I saw the banks close their doors, and the bankers flee for their lives. I saw the post office close, and the post office workers flee for their lives. I was in Rangoon when the doctors and nurses in the general hospital put their weak, sick patients out on the sidewalks, and then fled for their lives. The Japanese Army was within seventy- five miles of the city, and our last supply line had been cut. Out at the zoo the keepers of the animals shot the lions and tigers to keep them from starving to death, then they fled for their lives. Out at the leper and insane asylums the warders opened the doors and let the loathsome and unfortunate people come into town, while they too fled for their lives. And out at the jail, just three miles from our mission station, the prison doors were opened, and three thousand criminals came walking into town, while the keepers of the jail and the policemen fled for their lives. I was there; I saw it. I saw the last boat leave for India; I saw the last train leave the depot. I saw the government headquarters move out of the city. I saw the military head- quarters move out, and I know what happens then.

I was in our beautiful church on the morning that we escaped for our lives. It was my privilege to play the organ for the last time. Little did I realize that that was the last hymn that organ would ever play. A few days later the Japanese soldiers used our church as a barracks and broke , the organ up and used it for firewood. I was there when E. M. Meleen read from the dear old Book and closed the Bible on the pulpit for the last, last time. It fell to my lot to turn the key in the door when the pews were all emptied of men. I was there; I saw it. I know what happens then. And I am going to tell you what happens, and can speak with a note of confidence, for in what happened in Rangoon God gave me a preview of the end of the world and the day of judgment.

In a little ditty, in which there may be more truth than poetry, I found a line or two that describes the situation well:

"Mr. Meant-to has a comrade,
And his name is Didn't Do;
Have you ever chanced to meet them?
Did they ever call on you?
These two fellows live together
In a house of Never-Win,
And I'm told that it is haunted
By the ghost of Might-Have-Been."

Yes, that's what happens at the end of the road; that's what happens when you

come to the day that has no tomorrow- you are “haunted by the ghost of Might-Have-Been.”

Just two days before we escaped, I was packing away some of our most valuable articles in the closet under the staircase, when a well-to-do woman came into the mission headquarters and asked for the superintendent. I pointed to his office and assured her that he was in. She knocked on the door. Mr. Meleen came out, and though I didn't mean to eavesdrop, I couldn't help overhearing the conversation. The woman said, “O Mr. Meleen, I have to go, and I can't take anything with me except a little suitcase and a rug for the journey. You may not know me, but I know you. I live in that grand home just a few blocks away where the coconut palms and the big mango trees are, and now I have to go and leave my lovely home behind. I hate to think of the thieves breaking in to steal and loot and plunder; won't you mission people go over and take all my lovely furniture. Take my beds and my tables and my chairs and my beautiful rugs. I will feel so much happier if I know you mission people can use them.”

And I heard Mr. Meleen say, “O Mrs. ___ it is too late now. We are all packed up. We will be leaving any moment ourselves. We have been waiting to evacuate our church members, and when they are out we will be going too, with only a suitcase each. If we could have had some of those things three months ago when we were outfitting our clinic, we could have used every bed and chair and table. But now it is too late—too late!”

I saw the tears come to that poor woman's eyes. “Too late?” she groaned, as if she couldn't believe it. “You are going too?” And as she turned to leave she threw her shawl over her face to hide her grief, and from her lips came the heartbreaking cry, “Oh, how I wish-” Then emotion choked her words, and she left us to fill in the blanks, but I knew what she wished. Yes, I knew. That's what I call being “haunted by the ghost of Might-Have- Been.” As we talked over this sad experience we tried to remember if that well-to-do woman, just two blocks away, had ever helped out in the clinic program or the Ingathering program, but we couldn't think of a single occasion on which that poor rich woman had done anything for humanity. And now that it was too late, she had to leave everything behind, and oh, how she wished! And the only picture that will burn itself into her memory is a picture of thieves breaking into her lovely house to burn, break, loot, and steal. I have seen these, and I have seen others “haunted by the ghost of Might-Have-Been.”

Some days later as we were leaving the little town of Pakokku, just after crossing the Irrawaddy River, in our escape into India, W. W. Christensen waved us to stop at the side of the road. We pulled up behind him, got out of our cars, and walked up to see what was the matter. We found him in conversation with a well-to-do Indian woman. She was saying, “O Pastor Christensen, this is just like the end of the world. Oh, I wish I could get I baptized now. Isn't there time to come back to the river and baptize me? No one can tell what is going to happen tomorrow, and if I were only baptized, I would feel it was all right with my soul.”

And I heard Pastor Christensen say: “It is too late now, Mrs. ___ Can't you remember six weeks ago I was kneeling in your home with you and your children, pleading that the Spirit of God would help you to make a decision then? We are fleeing for our lives now, and we must be on our way. We pray that God will bring you safely into India, so that we can study together and get ready for baptism then.” And I saw that

well-to-do, well-dressed Indian woman sink to the ground and cover her face with her sari as she sobbed, "Too late! Too late! Oh, why didn't I get baptized six weeks ago? There was time then. I could have done it then, but now it is too late. It is too late."

It is impossible to forget things like that. But I was there, I saw people "haunted by the ghost of Might- Have- Been," and I have to tell you what I saw. I want to change the picture, for I want to assure you that everybody is not "haunted by the ghost of Might- Have-Been." Some people come to the end of the road conscious that they have served God with all their heart, and soul, and strength; and though they are not perfect, they have given the Lord the best they had, and when they come into tight places and difficult circumstances, there is a smile of triumph on their countenances.

After escaping from Rangoon we hoped to establish our headquarters at Maymyo in north Burma. One day as F. A. Wyman and I were walking along the road to town we saw a stranger approaching. We stepped to one side to let him pass, but he stepped to the same side. We stepped back again, and so did he. We thought how strange it was, and so we stepped back again. Then as he did likewise for the third time, he extended his hand. We did not mind shaking hands, but we did not recognize him till he spoke. It was Brother Johns, one of our deacons in the Rangoon church. He had on dark spectacles and was dressed in clothes we had never seen him wear before. He was thinner than usual, but there was a smile on his face. "O brethren," he said, "I've been praying that I could meet some of the workers. You know, I was one of the E- men, and I couldn't leave the city until the demolition squads had done their work. I had to walk along the rail- way line by night and hide in the bushes by day. It took me five days to reach the Irrawaddy River, and the steamer was so crowded that there was not a bite to eat for five more days, and every time I wanted a drink I had to pay sixteen cents for a glass of water, but I am so glad to see you."

He pulled out his pocketbook, opened it, and said, "I was paid my last money two days before I escaped from Rangoon. It may be the last money I will have on this earth, but I folded away my tithe, because I want the Lord to have His share, and I was afraid I might never see another worker to pay my tithe to. Now here you are, and I want to pay my tithe."

He handed his tithe to me, but I did not feel worthy to take the last money a man might ever have. So I said, "No! No! Brother Wyman is the elder of the church; give it to him." But Brother Wyman did not feel worthy, and he said, "No! No! Brother Hare is the union mission department secretary; give it to him."

But I insisted, "No, no! Give it to Brother Wyman." Then Deacon Johns took Brother Wyman's hand and put his tithe in it, and while his face shone with a halo of triumph and joy he said, "Brethren, don't worry about me: I have known the Lord too long to fear that He will forget me now ." And with that he took another folded bill from his pocket and pressed it into my hands. "This is my Sabbath school offering," he said; "I want the Lord to have part of my last money." Then he said, "O brethren, I don't know where my wife and my children are. The Government promised to fly them out three weeks ago. Have you heard anything about my family?"

We had heard, and we were able to tell him that his wife and little ones were at Lashio, just seventy miles away, expecting to be flown out any time. We told him that if he caught the next train, he might get there in time to fly out with them. He ran to the depot, caught the train, arrived in Lashio half an hour before the plane came in, and

flew out with his wife and family. His God did not forget him.

When we got into India we met Deacon Johns again in Calcutta, his face still beaming in triumph, and I will never forget it as long as I live. When we live up to all the light we have, and serve God with all our heart, and soul, and strength, we can approach the end of the road in confidence and joy. When at last I come to the end of the way, I want my face to light up with confidence and joy as Deacon Johns' did that day, don't you?

But I saw more than that when I came to the end of the road. I saw the division between those at the right hand and those at the left. All the way from Rangoon we traveled with every kind of person imaginable-the rich and the poor, the great and the small, the bond and the free, and the colored and the white. I saw the rich with their servants, their folding beds, their folding chairs, and their folding tables, and they camped at the side of the road in luxury. I saw the poor in their poverty sitting in the dust eating a handful of rice they had half-boiled, half- roasted in a joint of bamboo. I saw men with hundred- dollar uniforms walking by in their greatness and little men with fifty-cent loincloths around their waists walking along in their humility. I saw every kind of person imaginable, until we got to the end of the road, and then something happened. It was just as if a magic general had waved a magic wand, and all the camouflage of life was taken away. The rich had to leave their automobiles and servants behind, and they had to walk out of the country on foot, with no more than sixty pounds of luggage. The poor also walked out on foot with a similar load of luggage, if they had that much. The great and the small walked out on foot, but none was allowed more than sixty pounds of luggage.

And when we all got down on our own feet, there was no longer any difference between the rich and the poor, or between the great and the small. Everybody slept on the bamboo floor or on the ground. There was not enough water to bathe, and no one shaved, and in just a day or two you could scarcely tell the difference between the white and the colored any more. They were all only people. It didn't matter any more what kind of bank account you used to have, or what kind of car you used to drive, or what kind of house you used to live in. Nothing mattered then but what you were.

And in every camp I saw two distinct groups of people. It was just as though someone had built a fence in every camp in no man's land. It was just as though someone had built a wall, and an unseen general had stood at the entrance of each camp and said, you to the right, and you to the left. You stay over here, and you stay over there." But they were not the rich and the poor; they were the good and the bad. They were not the great and the small; they were the kind and the unkind. They were not the bond and free; they were the selfless and the selfish. They were not the white and the colored; they were those that sang praise to the name of Christ and those who cursed and blasphemed that holy name. I was there. I saw it.

When I was a boy I thought when I read that twenty- fifth chapter of Matthew that Christ would cause the nations to march toward Him, and like a majestic drill- master He would point, "you to the right," and "you to the left," but I have changed my ideas. I know now how the division is made. I saw no one dividing them, and heard no one say. "You to the right, and you to the left." I saw that the good ones went over to the right because they were good, and that was where they belonged. They had been singing long, long before they had come to the end of the road. They went where people were

speaking kindly, because that was the way they had been speaking long, long before. They did not wait until they came to the end of the road to determine whether they would be among the ones who cursed or those who sang.

Those who blasphemed went among the blasphemers, because they had been doing that all the way. The unkind and the selfish went with the unkind and selfish, because they had always been selfish. Thus when we came to the end of the road, just as naturally as water and oil separate after they have been shaken together, the good went to one place in the camp, and the bad went to the other. Even boys and girls know that if oil and water are shaken together, we don't have to say, "Water go to the bottom; and, oil, you go to the top," to separate them again. Oil always goes to the top, because it is oil. It always was oil. And as soon as it comes to rest it just naturally goes to the place where it belongs. The water had always been water, so the water just naturally went where water belongs. That is the way the good and bad are going to be separated in that great day when Christ comes. If you and I want to be at the right hand of God then, we had better get to the right of God now, and we had better stay there today, and tomorrow, and the next day, and every day till Jesus comes. That's the only way we can be sure of being at His right hand.

I discovered something else in that wartime experience too. I discovered that those who belonged over on one side were most unhappy if they happened to get over on the other side, and those in one group couldn't be hired to eat or associate with the other group. It was just as different as that. One evening they said to me, "O Mr. Hare, won't you play your trumpet for us?" I asked, "What shall I play?"

They said, "Take the name of Jesus with you, child of sorrow and of woe." I pulled out my old trumpet, for I still had it with me. I had left my motion pictures and everything else behind, and I had brought just enough clothes to wear. But the old trumpet- I had to bring it with me. I threw away the case and the extra mouthpiece, but I brought the trumpet. I wrapped it in my blanket, and was so happy to play it every night of that march into India. So I began to play the hymn they requested. Having just finished our supper, one man who belonged to the other side was still sitting on a rock below me. When he heard me he listened for a moment to see whether I would be playing "Roll Out the Barrel" or something like that; but when he recognized that I was playing hymns he clapped his hands over his ears and ran to the other side of the camp, saying, "I don't belong here. I don't belong here. Let me get out of here quick," and you couldn't stop him. He belonged with those who cursed and swore, and it was punishment to him to be over where people sang, "Take the name of Jesus with you, child of sorrow and of woe."

My dear young people, if you want to make certain that you will be among those who are singing and praising God at His right hand when He comes, you had better go where people sing praise to Him now. Go to Sabbath school and to prayer meeting, where people become familiar with their heavenly Father now. Then when you come to the end of the road, you will naturally be among the good ones at the right hand of God.

On the third day out, at the little camp of Tempele, I had one of the sweetest experiences I have ever had in my life. It was an awful day, for, counting evacuees and coolies, there were about two hundred people in our group, but there was only enough water for eighty. As we came down the side of the hill toward the little leaf and bamboo sheds, the captain shouted: "No washing even your face or your teeth here! Drink as

little as you possibly can, for there is only water enough for eighty, and we have more than two hundred here! When the good ones got into camp they formed lines by the five-gallon cans of chlorinated water, each waiting patiently for his turn to get a drink, but the selfish ones did not wait in line. They pushed and pulled and fought and quarreled and soon the water was all drunk up.

Then we went to the spring, where a little trickle of water as big as your little finger was coming out of the rock. A line of forty people was waiting, but the bad ones wouldn't wait. They pushed and pulled and yelled and shouted to get a drink of water. I saw strong men snatch water from women and children, and I just couldn't watch it. For aught we knew we were all standing on the brink of eternity, and nobody knew what might happen before tomorrow. I said in my heart, "If I die of thirst, I'm not going to look upon such selfishness as that. I will get my drink tonight." So I went back to camp. "Someone will have to make fires," I thought, and began gathering an arm load of sticks. But when I got back the camp fires were already lighted. I looked to see who was preparing to do the cooking. Can you guess who they were? Yes, it was the people who sang every night, "Lead, Kindly Light," "Under His Wings." That's where I belong! They are the people I love to associate with, and I gladly took my turn stirring the soup and poking the fire.

I wish you could have been there when the dinner bell rang. The selfish ones who had not gathered a stick could not wait to eat. It is hard work to cook over a wood fire in a kerosene can, and I will admit that the soup was burned on the bottom and smoked on the top, but when the selfish ones tasted it they spat it out and began grumbling and growling, "Rotten old camp! Rotten old soup! Rotten old government." But you should have seen the good ones eating that same soup. To be sure, they had to swallow twice on the same mouthful to get it down, but they smiled and said, "Well, it is not very wonderful, is it? But it will keep the sides of our stomach from rubbing together during the night, and maybe in the morning it won't be quite so bad." They are the people I like! That is the kind of people I want to be with. They are the ones I am going to be with all along life's highway, and by the grace of God I am going to be there with the same kind of people at the right hand of God when I come to the end of the road.

After we lay down to sleep that night, H. Baird and I said to Brother Meleen, Brother Wyman, and Brother Christensen, who were quite exhausted after the day's march, "We are going for water now. Don't you bother to come, we can carry three waterpots as easily as one." So I off we went. Brother Baird had heard that there was another spring, and went off to explore with his flashlight, while I took my place at the camp spring, waiting behind six Indians. After awhile the man at the spring, having filled his can, moved away and walked back to camp. As he passed me he saw that I was a white man, and said, "Don't wait here, sahib. You are a white man, move up to the head of the line. They will let you; they are only coolies." I couldn't speak very much Hindustani, but I could speak enough to say, "Not tonight! Tonight there are no sahibs and coolies! Tonight we are just men. We are all tired and thirsty, and I can wait my turn like a man."

He walked on muttering to himself about the queer white I man who refused to push himself ahead of the coolies. After he left, the next five men began to chatter. Oh, how they chattered! But I could not understand what they were saying. I listened, but it

was not Burmese or Hindustani or English or American, and I couldn't understand a thing till the man just in front of me lifted his hand, and wriggling his fingers up and down said, "Da Da Da Da Da Da." Then I knew they had recognized me as the man t who played the trumpet around the campfire, and they I were talking about me! Oh, how good it felt to be recognized as one of the good people! in the darkness! by strangers!

My heart leaped within me, and just then the next man at the spring moved away, and we all moved up one place. He put his can down near me, and I thought he was about to make a head pad. You know in India where they carry so much on their heads, they take a cloth and twist it up into a circular pad and put that on their heads, and I thought he was doing that. Then I heard the sound of flowing water, and I looked, and what do you think I saw? He was filling my waterpots from his can of water! As soon as I he had filled them he pointed with a trembling finger right to my heart and lisped in broken English, "You Clistian." Then he pointed to his heart and said, "Me Clistian." I was overwhelmed with delight! I tried to talk f with him in English, but he shook his head. He did not f know any more English. I tried Hindustani, Burmese, Karen, but he shook his head. The only words we had in common were those simple words, "You Clistian, me Clistian." And there in the darkness of no man's land I put my arm around his shoulders and patted his back as I said, "you Clistian, me Clistian," and he returned the embrace and said again, "You Clistian, me Clistian."

I never expect to hear sweeter words than those as long as I live. You can have your power, position, and fame. I want only to be known as a Christian. It is the sweetest joy I have ever heard. As I went back to camp with my three waterpots filled with 'Clistian" water, I rededicated my life to God. "O Lord," I said, "help me to live every night and every day so that everybody will always know that Eric B. Hare is a Christian," and I intend by the grace of God to be that very thing until Jesus comes.

I saw something else in my preview of the end of the I world. I saw the punishment of the wicked. No, I didn't see them burning in fire, but I saw the smoke of their torment ascending up and up. It was after we reached the beginning of the Indian road, and were taken to the beautiful evacuation camp of Imphal. We had beautiful bamboo barracks, and hot water to bathe with! Think of it! But again I noticed the good ones went to one end, and the bad went to the other. The good ones at once began to clean up and shave, and what fun it was introducing our- selves to one another while waiting for dinner.

But at the other end of the barracks the bad ones were not cleaning up! The only thing they thought about was liquor. They inquired where the liquor shops were, and men and women went off together. When you come to the end of the way it doesn't matter any more whether you are a man or a woman. If you are a good woman, you go among the good people; and if you are a bad woman, you go among the bad people. And there is nothing worse than a bad woman.

These men and women drank all the liquor they could hold; then they carried back all the liquor they could carry. And that night while we were having our usual singing service, they had a drunken brawl at their end of the barracks. This is not what I mean by the punishment of the wicked. I'll be explaining that farther on. The next morning while we were having breakfast the captain came in, and clapping his hands to call us to attention he called, "Everybody be ready at eight-thirty! Busses and trucks will

be here to take you 104 miles to Dimapur Railway station. There you will be given free tickets to any part of India you want to go to. Everybody be ready at eight-thirty!" It didn't take us long to close our one suitcase and tie a string around our one blanket, and long before eight-thirty we were ready, standing on the side of the road that went through our camp. But again I noticed that the good ones were at this end, and the bad ones at that end. While waiting I couldn't help hearing what the people round me were saying. At this end they were counting their blessings. They were telling of the wonderful dinner they had had last night, and the wonderful breakfast and the clean bamboo platform we could sleep on, and the train we were going to ride on!

Suddenly something seemed to tell me to go to the other end of the line and see what they were talking about. I sauntered along casually, but saw not a smile in the whole group there; they had the worst hang-over you could ever imagine. They were grumbling and growling, with the corners of their mouths drawn down: "Rotten old government. Rotten old camp. Couldn't sleep for mosquitoes. Why couldn't the trucks come earlier?" And I went back to my end of the line as fast as I could. You couldn't pay me enough money to spend one unnecessary minute in the company of such people. Back I came to the people who were counting their blessings. That's where I like to be, and I prayed that God would search my heart for the roots of bitterness and criticism, and that He would deliver me from these fearful habits, for I know where grumbling and murmuring and criticizing is going to place you at the end of the road, and I don't want to be there!

It seemed a very little while until we heard a rattle and a clatter, and two tea wagons-something like military trucks-came to the camp. They had canvas roofs and half walls, but no seats inside of them at all. As these tea wagons came in, those at the other end of the line yelled, "These are ours; we were waiting first. There are others coming; you wait for them."

We just said, "That's all right, you go ahead," but to ourselves we said, "You couldn't pay us enough money to ride in the same trucks with you." We watched them loading up. They threw in their boxes and bundles, and as they did so they were fighting, quarreling, cursing, pushing, poking, and knocking people off. At last, squeezed in like sardines, swearing at their drivers, they started off. As they disappeared around the corner one of our group said, "Good riddance. If we never see you again any more, it will be too soon." And I know five good preachers who said "Amen."

It was not very long before we heard the clattering of more vehicles, and there came into our camp compound three elegant passenger busses with padded seats and padded back rests, and there were no more selfish people to quarrel and fight. We put the weaker ones on a whole seat with a pillow under their heads, we put the womenfolk near the windows, we stacked the luggage carefully, and we checked each bus to make sure that everyone was comfortable. Then with a smile on our faces, we said to the drivers, "All right, let's be going," and away we went.

Five miles down the road we passed the first two tea wagons, and that's where I saw the punishment of the wicked. For just a moment we saw them screw their noses into the air as they decided not to notice us while we went by, but they couldn't help it. There they were jammed in like sardines in a can, and there we were driving along in elegance and comfort, with padded seats and back rests, and they couldn't keep quiet.

They poked their heads out and began to wave their hands up and down and rave and curse. They yelled to our drivers that it was time to change, or to put all the baggage in the tea wagons and let all the people ride in the busses, but our drivers gave them no heed. They drove on, and as we passed them I saw something I will never forget if I live to be a hundred. I saw the dust of that road going up and up, and there I saw their arms waving. I could see their lips forming curses and blasphemies, and I will always declare I had that day a little preview of the smoke of their torment ascending up forever and ever. The Good Book truly says, "So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen." Matt. 20: 16.

We learned afterward that the government arranged that transportation that way on purpose. They found out from experience that human nature generally reacts the same way, and they deliberately segregated the evacuees that way, but those selfish people got into the trucks themselves. The first came last, and those who were last came first. We got our tickets and had found our seats on the train two hours before the others came, and in a few more days we were reunited with our loved ones.

I know now that I don't mind being last for a few days in this world. I don't mind letting others go first, as long as I can be among those who go through the pearly gates.

Dear young people, this is what I saw when I came to the end of the road, and again I say, God gave me a preview of the end of the world and the Day of Judgment. Ever since that experience, as I have driven from one town to another, even the highway signs preach to me and remind me of the re-consecration that I made to God at that time. Everywhere little signs say, "Keep to the right." When I go to Baltimore I see them: "Keep to the right." In Los Angeles I see them: "Keep to the right."

Everywhere I see them, and every time I see one of those signs I rededicate my life to the Lord, and I say, "That is just exactly what I am going to do -keep to the right-for that is where I want to be when the Lord Jesus comes."