

CHARLIE COULSON

The Drummer Boy



A Christian Hero of the American War

by the late Dr. M. L. Rossvally,

Surgeon in the United States Army

Two or three times in my life God in His mercy touched my heart, and twice before my conversion I was under deep conviction.

During the American war I was surgeon in the United States army, and after the battle of Gettysburg there were many hundreds of wounded soldiers in the hospital, twenty-eight of whom had been wounded so severely that they required my services at once; some whose legs had to be amputated, some their arms, and others both their arm and leg. One of the latter was a boy who had been but three months in the service, and being too young for a soldier had enlisted as a drummer. When my assistant surgeon and one of my stewards wished to administer chloroform previous to the amputation, he turned his head aside and positively refused to receive it. When the steward told him that it was the doctor's orders he said, "*Send the doctor to me.*"

When I came up to his bedside I said: "*Young man, why do you refuse chloroform? When I found you on the battlefield you were so far gone that I thought it hardly worthwhile to pick you up, but when you opened those large blue eyes I thought you had a mother somewhere who might at that moment be thinking of her boy. I did not want you to die on the field, so ordered you to be brought here, but you have now lost so much blood that you are too weak to endure an operation without chloroform, therefore you had better let me give you some.*"

He laid his hand on mine, and looking me in the face said: "*Doctor, one Sunday afternoon in the Sunday school, when I was nine-and-a-half years old, I accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour. I learned to trust Him then, I have been trusting Him ever since, and I know I can trust Him now. He is my strength and my stay; He will support me while you amputate my arm and leg.*"

I then asked him if he would allow me to give him a little brandy. Again he looked me in the face saying, "*Doctor, when I was about five years old my mother knelt by my side with her arm around my neck and said, 'Charlie, I am now praying to the Lord Jesus that you may never know the taste of strong drink. Your dear father died a drunkard, and went down to a drunkard's grave, and I promised God, if it was His will that you should grow up, that you should warn young men against the bitter cup.' I am now seventeen years old, but I have never tasted anything stronger than tea and coffee, and as I am, in all probability, about to go into the presence of my God, would you send me there smelling with brandy?'*"

The look that boy gave me I shall never forget. At that time I hated Jesus, but I respected that boy's loyalty to his Saviour, and when I saw how he loved and trusted Him to the last, there was something that touched my heart, and I did for that boy what I had never done for any other soldier – I asked him if he wished to see his chaplain. "*Oh yes, Sir!*" was the answer.

When Chaplain R – came, he at once knew the boy from having often met him at the tent prayer meetings, and taking his hand, said, "Well, Charlie, I am sorry to see you in this sad condition!"

"Oh, I am all right, Sir," he answered. "The doctor offered me chloroform, but I declined it, then he wished to give me brandy, which I also declined, and now, if my Saviour calls me, I am ready, and can go to Him in my right mind."

"You may not die, Charlie," said the chaplain, "but if the Lord should call you away, is there anything I can do for you after you are gone?"

"Chaplain, please put your hand under my pillow and **take my little Bible**, in which you will find my mother's address. Please send it to her, and write a letter, and tell her that since the day I left home I have never let a day pass without reading a portion of God's Word, and daily praying that God would bless my dear mother, no matter whether I was on the march, on the battlefield, or in the hospital."

"Is there anything else that I can do for you, my lad?" said the chaplain.

"Yes, please write a letter to the superintendent of the Sands Street Sunday School, Brooklyn, N.Y., and tell him the kind words, many prayers, and good advice he gave me I have never forgotten; they have followed me through all the dangers of battle, and now, in my dying hour, I ask my Saviour to bless my dear old superintendent; that is all."

Turning towards me he said: "Now, doctor, I am ready, and I promise you that I will not even groan while you take off my arm and leg if you will not offer me chloroform."

I promised, but I had not the courage to take the knife in my hand to perform the operation without first going to the next room and taking a little stimulant to nerve myself to perform my duty. While cutting through the flesh Charlie Coulson never groaned, but when I took the saw to separate the bone the lad took the corner of his pillow in his mouth, and all that I could hear him utter was, "O Jesus, blessed Jesus, stand by me now!" He kept his promise, and never groaned.

That night I could not sleep for whichever way I turned I saw those soft blue eyes, and when I closed mine the words, "Blessed Jesus, stand by me now," kept ringing in my ears.

Between twelve and one o'clock I left my bed and visited the hospital, a thing I had never done before unless specially called, but such was my desire to see that boy. Upon my arrival there I was informed by the night stewards that sixteen of the hopeless cases had died, and had been carried down to the dead-house.

"How is Charlie Coulson? Is he among the dead?" I asked. "No, Sir," answered the steward; "he is sleeping as sweetly as a babe."

When I came up to the bed where he lay, one of the nurses informed me that about nine o'clock two members of the Young Men's Christian Association came through the hospital to read and sing a hymn. They were accompanied by Chaplain R – who knelt by Charlie Coulson's bed, and offered up a fervent and soul-stirring prayer, after which they sang, "Jesus Lover Of My Soul," in which Charlie joined. I could not understand how that boy, who had undergone such excruciating pain, could sing.

Five days after I had amputated that dear boy's arm and leg he sent for me, and it was from him that I heard the first Gospel sermon. "Doctor," he said, "my time has come, I do not expect to see another sun rise, but, thank God, I am ready to go, and before I die I desire to thank you with all my heart for your kindness to me. Doctor, you are a Jew—you do not believe in Jesus; will you please stand here and see me die, trusting my Saviour to the last moment of my life?"

I tried to stay, but I could not, for I had not the courage to stand by and **see a Christian boy** die rejoicing in the love of that Jesus whom I had been taught to hate, so I hurriedly left the room. About twenty minutes later a steward who found me sitting in my private office covering my face with my hand said, "Doctor, Charlie Coulson wishes to see you."

"I have just seen him," I answered, "and I cannot see him again."

"But, doctor, he says he must see you once more before he dies." I made up my mind to see him, say an endearing word, and let him die, but I was determined that no word of his should influence me in the least so far as his Jesus was concerned. When I entered the hospital I saw he was sinking fast, so I sat down by his bed. Asking me to take his hand, he said, "Doctor I love you because you are a Jew; the best FRIEND I have found in this world was a Jew."

I asked, *"Who was that?"*

He answered, *"Jesus Christ, to whom I want to introduce you before I die, and will you promise me, doctor, that what I am about to say to you, you will never forget?"*

I promised, and he said, *"Five days ago, while you amputated my arm and leg, I prayed to the Lord Jesus Christ to save your soul."*

These words went deep into my heart. I could not understand how, when I was causing him the most intense pain, he could forget all about himself, and think of nothing but this Saviour and my unconverted state. All I could say to him was, *"Well, my dear boy, you will soon be all right."* With these words I left him, and twelve minutes later he fell asleep, *"Safe in the arms of Jesus."*

Hundreds of soldiers died in my hospital during the war, but I only followed one to the grave—that one was Charlie Coulson, the drummer boy, and I rode three miles to see him buried. I had him dressed in a new uniform, and placed in an officer's coffin with a new United States flag over it.

That dear boy's dying words made a deep impression upon me. I was rich at that time, so far as money is concerned, but I would have given every penny I possessed if I could have felt towards Christ as Charlie did, but that feeling cannot be bought with money. For several months after Charlie Coulson's death I could not get rid of the words of that dear boy. They kept ringing in my ears, but being in the company of worldly officers, I gradually forgot the sermon Charlie preached in his dying hour, but I never could forget his wonderful patience under acute suffering, and his simple trust in that Jesus whose Name to me at that time was a by-word and a reproach.

For ten long years I fought against Christ with all the hatred of an orthodox Jew until God in His mercy brought me in contact with a **Christian barber**, who proved himself a second instrument in my conversion to God.

At the close of the American war I was detailed as inspecting surgeon, and to take charge of the military hospital in Galveston, Texas. Returning one day from an inspecting tour, and on my way to Washington, I stopped to rest a few hours at New York. After dinner I stepped downstairs to the barber's shop (which is attached to every hotel of note in the United States). On entering the room I was surprised to see hung around the room sixteen beautifully framed Scripture texts in different colors. Sitting down in one of the barber's chairs I saw directly opposite to me, hanging up in a frame on the wall, this notice:

"PLEASE DO NOT SWEAR IN THIS ROOM."

No sooner had the barber put the brush to my face than he began also to talk to me about Jesus. He spoke in such an attractive and loving manner that my prejudices were disarmed, and I listened with growing attention to what he said. All the while he was talking, "**Charlie Coulson, the drummer boy,**" came swelling up in my mind, although he had been dead ten years. I was so well pleased with the words and deportment of the barber that no sooner had he gotten done shaving me that I told him next to cut my hair, although when I entered the room I had no such thought or intention. All the while he was cutting my hair he kept steadily on preaching Christ to me, and telling me that although not a Jew himself, he was at one time as far away from Christ as I was then.

I listened attentively, my interest increasing with every word he said to such an extent that when he had finished cutting my hair I said, "*Barber, you may now give me a shampoo;*" in fact, I allowed him to do all that one in his profession could do for a gentleman at one sitting. There is, however, an end to all things, and my time being short I prepared to leave. I paid my bill, thanked the barber for his remarks, and said, "*I must catch the next train.*" He, however, was not

yet satisfied. It was a bitter cold February day, and the ice on the ground made it somewhat dangerous to walk on the streets. It was only two minutes' walk to the station from the hotel, and the kind barber at once offered to walk to the station with me. I accepted his offer gladly, and no sooner had we reached the street than he put his arm in mine to keep me from falling. He said but little as we were walking along the street until we arrived at our destination, but when we got to the station he broke the silence by saying: *"Stranger, perhaps you do not understand why I chose to talk to you upon a subject so dear to me. When you entered my shop I saw by your face that you were a Jew."*

He still continued to talk to me about his "dear Saviour," and said he felt it his duty, whenever he came in contact with a Jew, to try and introduce him to One whom he felt was his BEST FRIEND, both for this world and for the world to come. On looking a second time into his face, I saw tears trickling down his cheeks, and he was evidently under deep emotion. I could not understand how it was that this man, a total stranger to me, should take such a deep interest in my welfare, and also shed tears while talking to me.

I reached out my hand to bid him good-bye. He took it in both of his and gently pressed it, the tears still continuing to run down his face, and said: *"Stranger, if it is any satisfaction for you to know it, if you will give me your card or name, I promise you; on the honor of a Christian man, that during the next three months I will not retire to rest at night without making mention of you by name in my prayers. And now may my Saviour follow you, trouble you, and give you no rest until you find Him, what I have found Him to be, a precious Saviour, and the Messiah you are looking for."*

I thanked him for his attention and his consideration, and after handing him my card, said [I fear rather sneeringly] *"There is not much danger of my ever becoming a Christian."*

He then handed me his card, saying as he did so, *"Will you please drop me a note or a letter if God should answer my prayers on your behalf."* I smiled incredulously, and said, *"Certainly I will,"* never dreaming that within the next forty-eight hours, God in His mercy, would answer that barber's prayer. I shook his hand heartily and said *"Good-bye;"* but in spite of outward appearance of unconcern, I felt he had made a deep impression on my mind, which indeed he had as the sequel will show.

As is well known, the American railway carriage is much longer than the ordinary English railway carriage. It has also only one compartment, which will seat from sixty to eighty persons. As the weather was bitterly cold, the passengers were not numerous on this train--the carriage I had entered not being more than half filled. Without being conscious of the fact, in less than ten or fifteen minutes, I had occupied every empty seat in the compartment.

The passengers began to look upon me with suspicion as they saw me change my seat so frequently in so short a time without any apparent object. For my

part, I did not think at that time that the wrong was in my heart, although I could not account for my erratic movements. Finally, I went to an empty seat in the corner of the carriage, with the firm intention of going to sleep. The moment I closed my eyes, however, **I felt myself between two fires**. On the one side there was the Christian barber of New York, and on the other there was the drummer boy of Gettysburg, both talking to me about that Jesus whose very Name I hated. I felt it impossible either to go to sleep or to shake off the impression made upon my mind by those two faithful Christians, one of whom had bid me goodbye only an hour previously, whilst the other had been dead nearly ten years, and so continued to be troubled and perplexed all the while I was on the train.

On my arrival at Washington I purchased a morning newspaper, and one of the first things that caught my attention was the announcement of a Revival service in Dr. Rankin's church, the largest church in Washington. No sooner had I seen that announcement than an inner monitor seemed to say to me, "*Go to that church.*" I had never been inside of a Christian church during divine service, and at any other time I should have scouted such a thought as from the devil. It was my father's intention when I was a boy that I should become a rabbi, and so I promised him that I would never enter a place where "Jesus, the Imposter," was worshipped as God, and that I would never attempt to read a book containing that Name, and I had faithfully kept my word up to that moment.

In connection with the Revival meetings just referred to, it was stated that there would be a united choir from the various churches in the city, who would sing at each of the services. Being a passionate lover of music, this attracted my attention, and I made it my excuse for seeking to visit the church during the Revival service that night. When I entered the building, which was filled with worshippers, one of the ushers, attracted doubtless by my gold epaulettes (for I had not changed my uniform), led me up to the front seat, right in front of the preacher, an evangelist well known both in England and America. I was charmed with the beautiful singing, but the evangelist had not been speaking five minutes before I came to the conclusion that someone must have been informing him who I was, for I thought he pointed his finger at me. He kept watching me, and every now and then appeared to be shaking his fist at me. In spite of all this, however, I felt deeply interested in what he said. But this was not all, for still ringing in my ears were the words of the two former preachers – the Christian barber of New York and the drummer boy of Gettysburg – emphasizing the utterances of the evangelist, and in my mind I could plainly see those two dear friends also repeating their messages. Growing more and more interested in the words of the preacher, I felt tears trickling down my face. This startled me, and I began to feel ashamed that I an orthodox Jew, should be childish enough to shed tears in a Christian church, the first I had ever shed in such a place.

I omitted to say that during the service, and whilst the preacher was watching me, the thought occurred to me that possibly he might be pointing his finger at some person behind me, and I turned around in my seat to discover who the individual was, when to my astonishment a congregation of more than 2000 persons of all grades of society seemed to be looking at me. I at once came to the conclusion that I was the only Jew in the place, and heartily wished myself out of the building, for I felt I had gotten into bad company. Being well known in Washington, both by Jew and Gentile, the thought flashed across my mind: how will it read in a Washington paper that *"Dr. Rossvally, a Jew, was present at the Revival services, not five minutes' walk from the synagogue he usually attends, and was seen to shed tears during the sermon?"*

Not wishing to make myself conspicuous (for there were faces there I recognized), I made up my mind not to take out my handkerchief to wipe off the tears--they must dry up themselves; but blessed be God, I could not keep them back, for they came flowing faster and faster.

After a while the preacher finished his address, and I was surprised to hear him announce an after-meeting, and invited all who could do so to remain. I did not accept the invitation, being only too glad of the opportunity to leave the church. With that intention I got up from my seat, and had reached the door, when I felt that someone held me by the skirt of my coat. Turning around, I saw an elderly-looking lady who proved to be Mrs. Young of Washington, a well-known Christian worker.

Addressing me, she said: *"Pardon me, stranger: I see you are an officer in the army. I have been watching you all this evening, and I beg of you not to leave this house, for I think you are under conviction of sin. I believe you came here to seek the Saviour, and you have not found Him yet. Do come back; I would like to talk to you, and, if you will permit me I will pray for you."*

"Madam," I answered, *"I am a Jew."* She replied: *"I do not care if you are a Jew; Jesus Christ died for Jew as well as Gentile."*

The persuasive manner in which she said these words was not without its effect. I followed her back to the very spot that I had just left so abruptly, and when we came up to the front she said: *"If you will kneel I will pray for you."*

"Madame, that is something I have never done, and never will do," for orthodox Jews never kneel in prayer except twice a year--on the Feast of Trumpets and Day of Atonement, and then it is not kneeling as Christians do; it is a prostration on the ground.

Mrs. Young looked me calmly in the face and said: *"Dear stranger, I have found such a dear, loving, and forgiving Saviour in the Lord Jesus that I firmly believe in my heart He can convert a Jew standing on his feet, and I will go on my knees and pray for that."* She suited the action to the word, fell on her knees, and began to pray, talking to her Saviour in such a simple, childlike manner that

completely unnerved me. I felt so ashamed of myself to see that dear old lady kneeling near me while I was standing and praying so fervently on my behalf. My whole past life floated so vividly before my mind that I heartily wished the floor would open and that I might sink out of sight. When she arose from her knees, she extended her hand and with a motherly sympathy said: "*Will you pray to Jesus before you sleep tonight?*"

"Madam" I replied, "*I will pray to my God the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but not to Jesus.*"

"Bless you!" she said, "***your God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is my Christ and your Messiah.***"

"Goodnight, madam, and thank you for your kindness," I said as I left the church.

On my way home, reflecting on my recent strange experiences, I began to reason with myself: '*Why is it that these Christians take such an interest in Jew or Gentile, perfect strangers to them? Is it possible that all these millions of men and women who, during the last 1800 years, have lived and died trusting in Christ, are mistaken, and a little handful of Jews, scattered all over the world, are right? Why should that dying drummer boy think only of what he was pleased to call my unsaved soul? And why, also, should that Christian barber of New York manifest such a deep interest in me? Why should the preacher tonight single me out and point his finger at me, or that dear woman follow me to the door and hold me back? It must be all for the love they bear to their Jesus, whom I despise so much.*'

The more I thought of this, the worse I felt. On the other hand, I argued: '*Is it possible that my father and mother, who loved me so dearly, should teach me anything that is wrong? In my childhood they taught me to hate Jesus; that there was but one God, and that He had no Son.*' I now felt a desire springing up in my heart to become acquainted with that Jesus whom the Christians so much loved and worshipped. I started to walk faster, fully determined that if there was a reality in the religion of Jesus Christ I would know something of it before I slept.'

When I arrived at home, my wife (who was a very strict orthodox Jewess) thought I looked rather excited and asked where I had been. The truth I dare not tell her, and a falsehood I would not, and so I said: "*Wife, please do not ask me any questions. I have some very important business to attend to. I wish to go to my private study, where I can be alone.*"

I went at once to my study, locked the door, and began to pray, standing with my face towards the east, as I always had done. The more I prayed the worse I felt. I could not account for the feeling that had come over me. I was in great perplexity as to the meaning of many prophecies in the Old Testament which deeply interested me. My prayer gave me no satisfaction, and then it occurred

to me that Christians kneel when they pray. Was there anything in that? Having been brought up as a strict orthodox Jew, and taught never to kneel in prayer, a fear came over me that if I should kneel I might be deceived in thus bowing my knee to that Jesus whom I had been taught in childhood to believe to be an imposter.

Although the night was bitterly cold, and there was no fire in my study (it was not thought that I should use the room that night), yet I never perspired so much in my life as I did that night. My phylacteries were hanging in my study on the wall, and I caught sight of them. Never since I was thirteen years of age had I missed a day in wearing them, except on Jewish Sabbaths and feasts. I loved them dearly. I took them in my hand, and while looking at them **Genesis 49:10** came flashing across my mind: *"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be."*

Two other passages also which I had often read and pondered over, presented themselves vividly to my mind, the first of these being from **Micah 5:2**, *"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."*

The other passage is the well-known prediction in **Isaiah 7:14**, *"Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Emmanuel."*

These three passages impressed themselves so forcibly on my mind that I cried out: *"O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Thou knowest I am sincere in this thing. If Jesus Christ is the Son of God, reveal Him to me this night, and I will accept Him as my Messiah."*

No sooner had I said this than almost unconsciously I flung my phylacteries into a corner of the room, and in less time than I can tell it I was on my knees praying in the same corner where my phylacteries were lying on the floor by my side. To throw the phylacteries on the floor as I had done, was, for a Jew, an act of blasphemy. I was now on my knees praying for the first time in my life, and my mind was much agitated and in doubt as to the wisdom of my proceedings.

My feelings at that time are best expressed in the first hymn I ever composed after my conversion, and dedicated to the preacher who had so powerfully impressed me.

**LEAVE ME NOT ALONE:
THE PRAYER OF A CONVERTED JEW**

Dedicated to my Dear Friend, E. Payson Hammond

My life is filled with sad regrets;
No peace attends my way;
Each day the sun in darkness sets,
Oh, hear me Lord, I pray:
Oh, let me not in darkness rove,
But melt my heart of stone;
Accept my faint attempts at love,
And fix my heart on things above.
Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly dove,
Oh leave me not alone.

Indulgent God of love and power,
To Thee for help I fly;
He with me at this solemn hour,
And hear my contrite sigh;
Renew my heart and be my Guide
To Thy celestial throne:
Oh, let me see Thy wounded side;
I come to Thee, the crucified Lord,
Condescend to be my Guide,
Oh, leave me not alone.

My heart with inward horror shrinks,
I feel this load of sin;
Far from the shadow of Thy wings,
All darkness is within.
Now, take me, Lord, into Thy care,
And melt my heart of stone;
My load is more than I can bear,
And Thou didst not disdain to hear
The publican in fervent prayer,
Oh, leave me not alone.

I know Thou canst not let me go--
Thy blood for me was shed;
Now let me sink beneath its flow,
And raise me from the dead,
And bid me stretch my withered arm
To Thee whose love is shown,
And grasp Thy mantle with its charm
To take from Death its dread alarm,
And then, reclining on Thine arm,
I shall not be alone.

My first prayer to Jesus I shall never forget. It was as follows: *"O Lord Jesus Christ, if Thou art the Son of God; if Thou art the Saviour of the world; if Thou art the Jews' Messiah for whom we Jews are still looking; and if Thou canst convert sinners as Christians say, Thou canst convert me, for I am a sinner, and I will promise to serve Thee all the days of my life."*

This prayer of mine, however, went no higher than my head. The reason was not far to seek. I had tried to make a bargain with Jesus that if He would do what I asked of Him, I, on my part, would do what I then promised Him. I remained on my knees for about half an hour, and whilst so engaged drops of sweat came running down my face. My head also felt hot, and I put it against the wall of my study to cool it. I was in agony, but I was not converted. I arose and paced to and fro in my room. Then the thought came to me that I had gone too far already, and I vowed I would never go on my knees again. I began to reason with myself, *'Why should I go on my knees? Cannot the God of Abraham, whom I have loved, served, and worshipped all the days of my life, do for me what Christ is said to do for the Gentiles?'* I looked at it, of course, from a Jewish standpoint and went on reasoning, *'Why should I go to the Son? Is not the Father above the Son?'*

The more I reasoned the worse I felt, and became increasingly perplexed. In one corner of the room lay my phylacteries, which still possessed a magnetic influence over me. I instinctively turned towards them, and I involuntarily fell on my knees again, but could not utter any words. My heart ached, for I had a sincere desire to become acquainted with Christ, if He was the Messiah. I changed my posture time after time, alternately kneeling and then walking about the room from a quarter-to-ten until five-minutes-to-two in the morning.

At that time light began to dawn on my mind, and I began to feel and believe in my soul that **Jesus Christ was really the true Messiah**. No sooner had I realized this than, for the last time that night, I fell on my knees; but this time my doubts were gone, and I began to praise God for a joy and happiness had penetrated my soul such as I had never known before. I had found the true Shiloh, the Ruler of Israel, Emmanuel – *"God with us"* – I had believed the report of Isaiah concerning the true Messiah – Jesus – who was *"despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,"* who was *"wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed"* (Isaiah 53:5).

I had looked on Him whom they had pierced, and I knew that I was converted, and that God for Christ's sake had pardoned my sin. I now felt that neither circumcision availed anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

I arose from my knees and, in my new-found happiness, thought that my dear wife would at once share my joy when I told her of the great change which had come over me. With that thought uppermost in my mind, I rushed out of my study into the bedroom (for my wife had retired to rest, although the gas had not been turned off). I threw my arms around her neck, began to kiss her

eagerly, saying: "Wife, I have found the Messiah." She looked annoyed, and, pushing me from her, coldly asked, "Found who?" "Jesus Christ my Messiah and Saviour," was my reply.

She spoke not another word, but in less than fifteen minutes was dressed and had left the house, although it was then two in the morning and bitterly cold, and went across the street to the house of her parents, who lived immediately opposite. I did not follow her, but dropped on my knees imploring my newly-found Saviour that my wife might also have her eyes opened as I had, and afterwards went to sleep. On the following morning my poor wife was told by her parents that if she ever called me "*husband*" again she would be disinherited, excommunicated from the synagogue, and accursed. At the same time my two children were sent for by their grandparents, and told that they must never call me "*father*" again; that I, in worshipping Jesus, the "*Impostor*," was fully as bad as He was.

Oh! the inveterate hatred of the human heart to the Gospel of God. Well might the converted Hebrew of the Hebrews who wrote the Epistle to the Romans declare that "*both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one...For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*" (**Romans 3:9-10, 23**).

Five days after my conversion I received orders from the Surgeon-General at Washington to proceed west on Government business. I tried all the means in my power to communicate personally with my wife and to bid her goodbye, but she would neither see me nor write to me. She, however, sent me a message by a neighbor to the effect that as long as I called Jesus Christ my Saviour **I should not call her my wife**, for she would not live with me. I did not expect to receive such a message from my wife, for I loved her and my children dearly, and it was with a sad heart therefore that I left home that morning to travel 1300 miles to my sphere of duty without being able to see either my wife or children.

For fifty-four days my wife would not answer any of my letters, although I wrote her one daily, and with every letter sent I prayed that God would incline her heart to read at least one of them. I felt that if she would but read one of my letters (for Christ was preached and the joy I was experiencing in my soul was told forth in every one of them), she would reconsider what she had said and done before I left home. Never in my experience were Cowper's lines more signally fulfilled:

**"God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And. rides upon the storm,"**

for it was through the disobedience of my daughter that my wife was converted. My daughter was the youngest of our two children; she was

generally considered her father's pet. After my conversion to Christ, a sense of duty to her mother on the one hand and her love to her father on the other, kept her mind in continual agitation.

On the fifty-third night she dreamed she saw her father die. A fear came over her, and she made up her mind that, come what would, she would not destroy the next letter in her father's handwriting. The following morning she waited for the postman at the door. As he handed the letters to her she took her father's letter, quickly slipped it into her bosom, ran upstairs into her room, locked the door, and opened the letter. She began to read it, and then read it three times before she laid it down. That letter made her sad at heart to such an extent that when she went downstairs her mother saw she had been crying, and asked her the cause of her grief.

"Mother, if I tell you, you will be offended; but if you promise me not to be grieved, I will tell you all about it."

"What is it, my child?" asked her mother.

Taking out my letter from under her dress, she told her mother her dream of the night previous, and added, *"I have opened my papa's letter this morning, and now I cannot and will not believe what my grandpa and grandma or anybody else says about my papa being a bad man, for a bad man couldn't write such a letter as this to his wife and children. I beg of you to read this, mother,"* she added, as she handed to her the letter.

My wife took the letter, carried it into the next room, and locked it in her desk. That afternoon she locked herself in her room, and, opening the desk, took my letter and began to read it. The more she read the worse she felt. She afterwards told me she read it through five times before she finally laid it down. After the last reading of the letter my wife returned it to the desk and went back to the room she had just left. Her eyes were full of tears, and now it was my daughter's turn to ask, **"Mother, why are you crying?"** *"Child my heart aches,"* was the reply; *"I wish to lie down on the lounge."* She did so. The servant made her a cup of tea, thinking that was all that was needed to take away the heartache of which she complained. There are many cases, doubtless, in which a cup of tea may possibly be a benefit, but it brought no relief to my poor wife.

After a while my wife's mother came across the street to our house. Thinking my wife to be very ill, she administered some simple home remedies, as mothers frequently do. This also failed to give any relief. At half-past seven in the evening my mother-in-law sent for Dr. D-. He came at once and prescribed for her, but his medicine likewise failed to remove the heartache of which my wife complained. My mother-in-law stayed at our house that night attending to my wife until a quarter-past eleven o'clock. I heard my wife say afterwards that the desire of her heart was that her mother should leave the room, for she had fully made up her mind to go on her knees, as I had previously done, as soon as

her mother had gone. No sooner, therefore, had she left our house than my wife locked the door and fell on her knees by the side of her bed, and in less than two minutes Christ, the Great Physician, met her, healed her, and saved her.

Like her husband, the moment she came to an end of human effort, worldly wisdom and vain tradition, and surrendered herself, body, soul, and spirit, to God, she found the Holy Spirit ready to open her blind eyes, to turn her from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God (**Acts 26:28**). The moment she was enabled to "*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,*" she could say with Philip of old, "*We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph;*" and add with Nathaniel, "*Rabbi, THOU art the Son of God; THOU art the King of Israel*" (**John 1:29, 45, 49**).

On the following morning I received a telegram worded as follows: "*Dear Husband, **Come home at once.** I thought you were in the wrong and I was in the right, but I have found that you were in the right and I in the wrong. Your Christ is my Messiah – your Jesus, my Saviour. Last night, at nineteen minutes past eleven, while on my knees for the first time in my life, the Lord Jesus saved thy soul,*"

After reading the telegram I felt for a moment as if I did not care one cent for the Government under which I served. I left my business unfinished, took the first express train, and started for Washington. My house at that time being well known there, especially amongst the Jews (for I had frequently sung in the synagogue), I did not wish to create a sensation, and so I telegraphed to my wife not to meet me at the station, for I would take a carriage on my arrival at Washington, and drive quietly home. When I got to the front of my home I saw my wife standing at the open door expecting me. Her face beamed with joy. She ran to meet me as I stepped out of the carriage and threw her arms around my neck and kissed me. Her father and mother were also standing at their open door across the street, and when they saw us in each other's arms, they began to curse both me and my wife. Ten days after my wife had accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as her Saviour, my daughter was converted. She is now the wife of a Christian, and a co-worker with her husband in Christ's vineyard. My son (would to God I could say the same of him as of his sister!) was promised by his grandparents on his mother's side that if he would never again call me "father" or his mother, "mother," they would leave all their property to him, and thus far he has kept his promise.

A year and nine months after her conversion, my wife died. The desire of her heart, previous to her death, was to see her son, who resided about seven minutes' walk from our house. I sent again and again to him, begging of him to come and see his dying mother. One of the ministers of the city, along with his wife, personally saw my son, and tried to persuade him to grant his dying

mother's request but his only reply was, *"Curse her, let her die, she is no mother of mine."*

On Thursday morning (the day of her death), my wife asked me to send for as many members of the congregation where she worshipped as could come, to be with her in her dying hour. At half-past ten she asked Mrs. Ryle, the minister's wife, who was a very dear friend of hers, to take her left hand, and let all the ladies in the room join hands with her. I stood at the other side of the bed and took hold of the right hand, and the gentlemen joined hands with me, and at my wife's request we formed a circle, about thirty-eight of us, and then we sang,

**"Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is high:
Hide me, O my Saviour hide,
Till the storm of life is past;
Safe into the haven guide;
O receive my soul at last,"**

very softly. As we began to sing,

**"Thou, O Christ, art all I want,
More than all in Thee I find;
Raise the fallen, cheer the faint,
Heal the sick and lead the blind.
Just and holy is Thy Name,
I am all unrighteousness;
Vile and full of sin I am,
Thou art full of truth and grace,"**

My wife in a feeble, though clear voice, said: *"Yes, it is all I want; it is all I have. Come, Lord Jesus, take me home,"* and she fell asleep.

She, who from infancy had been taught to hate the Name of Jesus, had, by grace, learned to value that *"Name above every name"* as the One who so recently had saved her precious soul, made and kept her happy during the last trying months, and in our presence had given her a triumphant exodus from this world of sin and sorrow into the everlasting habitations prepared for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the redeemed, whether Jew or Gentile.

The manner of her home-going I have sought to describe in the following poem:

I AM COMING

O glorious hour! I'm going home,
The gate's ajar for me,
The angels' wings are rustling near,
Their forms I almost see.
The shadows of that sinless throng
Are falling over me;
Saviour! loving Saviour!
I come, I come to Thee.

Chorus:

I am coming, I am coming,
Coming now to Thee;
I am coming, blessed Saviour,
Coming now to Thee.

What though this temple slow decays,
And pain is hard to bear,
I have a home not made with hands,
Eternal over there.

Thy blood alone has purchased it,
Those mansions bright and free,
Jesus! loving Jesus!
O glorious hour! the gates of pearl
Are open wide, I'm free!
The angel songs are ringing clear,
Praise God, praise God with me.

My work is done, I'm going home,
Sinless soon I'll be;
Saviour! loving Saviour!
I come, I come to Thee.

My son would not come to the funeral, nor, so far as I have known, has he ever visited his mother's grave, neither has he called me "*father*," nor answered any letter of mine since my conversion, although I have three times crossed the Atlantic, from America to Germany, trying to see him and be reconciled, but have failed in every instance, for he would not see me. This, however, has only called forth more fervent prayer on his behalf that he also may be emancipated from the thralldom of Jewish prejudice, and in Jesus' "*Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world*" (**John 1:29**). A fourth visit to Germany in July, 1887, has strengthened and confirmed my faith, for my son not only consented to see me, but he shed bitter tears on the remembrance of the past, and at once declared his determination to see his dear sister in America.

I wrote to my mother, who resided in Germany, immediately after my conversion, recounting to her how I had found the true Messiah. I could not keep the good news from her, and in my heart thought she would believe me, the eldest of her fourteen children. Indeed, I may say that the first desire of my heart after my conversion was that all my friends, Jew as well as Gentile, should share with me in my new-found joy. I felt like the Psalmist when he wrote: *"Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul"* (Ps. 66:16) This hope, as far as my mother was concerned, was destined to be bitterly disappointing for she wrote me but one letter (if a curse can be called a letter), prolonged silence at last awakening within me a suspicion that if she did write at all it would be to send me that curse which every Jew must expect from his nearest relations when he embraces Christianity. This suspicion was only too fully confirmed after a lapse of five months-and-a-half, during which time I was in suspense, for previous to my conversion my mother had written to me once a month.

One morning when the postman brought me my letters, I saw amongst them one bearing the German postmark, and in the old, familiar handwriting of my dear mother. As soon as I saw it I said to my wife, who was in the room: *"Wife, it has come at last."* Needless to say I opened that letter first. There was no heading to it, no date, no *"My dear son,"* as all her former letters to me began, but it read as follows:

"Max – You are no longer my son; we have buried you in effigy; we mourn you as one dead. And now may the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob strike you blind, deaf, and dumb, and damn your soul forever. You have left your father's religion and the synagogue for that Jesus, 'the impostor,' and now take your mother's curse.--CLARA."

Although I had by this time fully counted what it would cost me in embracing the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and knew what I had to expect from my relatives because I had turned my back on the synagogue, I confess I was hardly prepared for such a letter from my mother. My dear wife and I could now, however, more fully sympathize with each other in our new-found life; for, as stated before, her parents had already cursed her to her face for believing in Christ. It was not all sadness, however, for never before did the Psalmist's words seem so full of meaning and encouragement both to my wife and myself--*"When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up."*

Let not anyone think that it is an easy thing for a Jew to become a Christian. He must be prepared to forsake father, mother, and wife for the kingdom of God's sake, for the considerations which appeal alike to his affections and to his self-interest are brought to bear upon every Jew who is suspected of looking with favor towards Christianity. Yet such persecution only led me more and more to value the words of my newly-found Master, *"Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in*

the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My Name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life" (Matt. 19:28-29).

I answered my mother's letter a few days later in the following words:

ANSWER TO MY MOTHER'S CURSE

**Far away from home, my mother,
Daily I will pray for thee.
Why should I be cursed, my mother?
Why such message sent to me?
Once convinced of sin, my mother,
I cried, "Jesus, set me free!"
I am happy now, my mother,
Christ, the Jew, has died for me.**

**Him you taught me to hate, mother,
Him you still "Impostor" call,
Died for me on Calvary, mother,
Died to save me from the Fall.
Let me lead you to Him, mother,
While I pray on bended knee:
"Jesus, now accept my mother;
O Lord Jesus, set her free!"**

**Be persuaded, dearest mother,
Do not now so hardened be;
Jesus Christ, the Jew's Messiah,
Surely died for you and me.**

**Can you spurn such mercy, mother?
Can you turn away your face?
Come to Jesus, come, dear mother,
Fly, oh fly, to His embrace!**

Although she never wrote to me afterwards, I was told the last word she uttered when life was ebbing away was my own name, "Max." And who can tell but in the last moments the sad memory of her curse and the soul-craving, unsatisfied by Judaism, may have led her to find the God-provided Lamb in the true Messiah--JESUS (John 4:26-6:37).

The sequel to "Charlie Coulson" remains to be told. About eighteen months after my conversion I attended a prayer meeting one evening in the city of Brooklyn. It was one of those meetings when Christians testify to the loving-kindness of their Saviour. After several of them had spoken, an elderly lady

arose and said, "Dear friends, this may be the last time it is my privilege to testify for Christ. My family physician told me yesterday that my right lung is very nearly gone and my left lung is very much affected, so, at the best, I have but a short time to be with you, but what is left of me belongs to Jesus. Oh! it is a great joy to know that I shall meet my boy with Jesus in heaven. My son was not only a soldier for his country, but a soldier for Christ. He was wounded at the battle of Gettysburg. and fell into the hands of a Jewish doctor, who amputated his arm and leg, but he died five days after the operation. The chaplain of the regiment wrote me a letter and sent my boy's Bible. In that letter I was informed that my Charlie, in his dying hour, sent for that Jewish doctor and said to him, 'Doctor, before I die, I wish to tell you that five days ago, while you amputated my arm and leg, I prayed to the Lord Jesus Christ to save your soul.' "

When I heard this lady's testimony I could sit still no longer. I left my seat, crossed the room, and taking her by the hand, said, "God bless you, my dear sister; your boy's prayer has been heard and answered. I am the Jewish doctor for whom your Charlie prayed, and his Saviour is now my Saviour." A heavenly fervour spread over the meeting at the affecting sight of Jew and Gentile being made "one in Christ Jesus," and realized His wondrous power in enabling the dying drummer boy to manifest the Spirit of his Master in praying for the enemies of the Cross; in the wonderful answer to the dying lad's prayer and in the glorious prospect of the reunion of the great ransomed multitude which no man can number out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation.

**And there among the saved at last,
For ever blest and glad,
The mother dear and doctor saved
Shall meet that drummer lad.**

* * * * *

Writing in October, 1887, the doctor says: "It is with great joy and thankfulness of heart that I record **the conversion of my dear son.**" I firmly believe that the dear Saviour had been troubling his heart for some time prior to our meeting in July, 1887. For the first time in fourteen years he called me "father." He wept bitterly at our meeting, and it seemed his soul's desire was to see his sister again. My heart leaped with joy to hear this for I knew with his sister (a devoted Christian in America) he would be in good hands.

After traveling with myself and some friends for several days in Germany (during which time he conversed freely with me about his mother, regretting that he had refused to see her before her death, and expressing a desire to see her in heaven), he left for America, where he met his sister on Monday afternoon, August 15th. That meeting can be better imagined than described, for they had not met before for nearly fourteen years. On the following Friday, my son begged his sister to accompany him to their mother's grave. My daughter wrote me that same night that her brother's heart nearly broke while

standing at his mother's grave, and she concluded her letter: 'Dear father, I thank God my brother is under deep conviction of sin; he fully realizes how he has neglected his duty in the past towards his father, mother, and sister. I am constantly praying for him, so is my husband, and many Christian friends here are praying for his conversion.'

"On Friday, August 19th, he again visited his mother's grave (but this time alone), and while there God, in His mercy, for Christ's sake, pardoned his sins and converted his soul. He went home, told his sister the good news, and then wrote to me that same night. Unknown to her brother my daughter also wrote to me, and both letters reached me by the same post, making that day to me indeed a day of good tidings, and granting me some recompense for the many years of sorrow I had endured, causing me to exclaim with our Psalmist: 'Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.'

"And now, in conclusion, I pray that God may spare my life that I may be permitted to hear my only son preach the Gospel of that dear Saviour whom he had so long rejected, but who is now his all in all; for in his last letter he informs me that he is now preparing himself for evangelistic work."

Writing on September 13, 1892, Dr. Rossvally says: "In regard to my son I can tell you this. He is **devoting his whole time to the Lord's work**. He has no church of his own, as he prefers to do evangelistic work. He is engaged in the same way that I was a few years ago, before my health was so impaired; that is, going from place-to-place helping poor, struggling churches and missions. I am thankful to say that the Lord has abundantly blessed his labors. He also publishes my tracts for free distribution in America."

Shortly after his conversion to God, Dr. Rossvally **resigned his commission** in the United States Army and opened a Mission for the conversion of his Jewish brethren. He met with much opposition at first, but persevered, and finally had the joy of seeing quite a number--rich and poor, old and young Jews and Jewesses--exclaim, with one of old: "We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, **THE CHRIST**" (**John 1:41B**).

He afterwards made a prolonged evangelistic tour, and visited many cities in Europe, America, Canada, Germany, and many other lands, preaching the glad tidings of a free and full salvation in his forceful way to large audiences, his ministry being owned of God in leading not a few--Gentiles as well as Jews--out of darkness into light and from the power of Satan unto God.

A few years of happy service, a few months of severe suffering, and M. L. Rossvally was called to the higher service of heaven in October, 1892.

"He being dead yet speaketh," for several millions of *"Charlie Coulson, the Drummer Boy,"* and some of his other tracts, have been scattered over America, Britain, India, Australia and New Zealand, France, Germany, Switzerland, Russia, and other lands, leading many to "know Him whom to know is life everlasting."

Surely this true and touching narrative of real life in our own day re-affirms the words of the most noted Jewish convert--Saul of Tarsus--who said: *"For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek"* (**Rom. 1:16**).

Notice it is not the Gospel of Christianity or Judaism, the gospel of any church, creed, or party, but **the Gospel of Christ**, the Gospel concerning the peerless Person of THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, Who *"...died for our sins according to the Scriptures;...was buried, and...rose again the third day according to the Scriptures"* (**1 Cor. 15:3-4**). *"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name which is above every name: that at the Name of JESUS every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that JESUS CHRIST IS LORD, to the glory of God the Father"* (**Philippians 2:9-11**).

The great question for each of us to consider is--Have I, like the drummer boy and the doctor, as an individual, realized my lost condition as *"dead in trespasses and in sins"* (**Eph. 2:1**), and accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as my own personal Saviour? – and do I know that *"God for Christ's sake has pardoned my sins?"* If not, why not, like Jew and Gentile recorded herein, **put the matter to the test?** *"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world"* (**John 1:29**), and you will be able to say, *"He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed"* (**Isaiah 53:5**).

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (**John 3:16**).

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (**John 5:24**).

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (**Romans 10:9-10**).

**Whosoever heareth, shout, shout the sound,
Send the blessed tidings all the world around:
Spread the joyful news wherever man is found,
Whosoever will may come.**

**Whosoever will, whosoever will,
Send the proclamation over vale and hill;
'Tis a loving Father calls the wanderer home;
'Whosoever will may come.'**

**Whosoever cometh need not delay;
Now the door is open, enter while ye may;
Jesus is the true, the only Living Way;
Whosoever will may come.'**

**Whosoever will, the promise is secure;
Whosoever will, for ever shall endure;
Whosoever will, 'tis life for evermore;
Whosoever will may come.**

Having been frequently asked whether all the details of this story are strictly true, I take this opportunity of stating that every particular incident occurred exactly as related. --M.L.R.

