

## “I Will Sing of My Redeemer” ~ Philip Bliss

Philip and Lucy Bliss spent the Christmas holidays of 1876 with his mother and sister at Towanda and Rome, Pennsylvania. Their two small sons were also with them -- Philip Paul (age: 1) and George (age: 4). After Christmas he wired a telegram to D. L. Moody, "Tickets for Chicago, via Buffalo and Lake Shore Railroad. Baggage checked through. Shall be in Chicago Friday night. God bless you all forever." Deciding at the last minute to leave the two small boys with his mother, as Philip and Lucy would be quite busy with the large event upcoming, they boarded the train for Chicago on December 29, 1876. There was a huge snow storm taking place that day, with drifts piled high. It was later reported by passengers that the train never was able to gain any significant speed during the journey. There were eleven coaches pulled by two engines, with about 160 people aboard. In that number were Philip and Lucy Bliss. At eight o'clock that evening, while crossing a ravine that was 75' deep, the bridge gave way and the entire train, except for the first engine, plunged into the depths below. This was just outside the town of Ashtabula, Ohio.

Five minutes after the train fell, fire broke out and, fanned by gale force winds, quickly consumed the wreckage. Two out of every three passengers aboard that train perished in the fall and the fire. According to a dispatch to the *Chicago Tribune* the next day, "When morning came, all that remained of the Pacific Express was a row of car wheels, axles, brake-irons, truck-frames and twisted rails lying in a black pool at the bottom of the gorge. There are no remains that can ever be identified. . . .

According to an eye-witness (who happened to be one of the surviving passengers), who was in the car next to the one containing Philip and Lucy Bliss, "When the train fell, Mr. Bliss succeeded in crawling through a window, supposing he could pull his wife after him. But she was jammed fast and every effort of his was unavailing. The car was all jammed up, and the lady was caught in the ironwork of the seats. Finding that he could not save her, he stayed there with her and died." Simons wrote, in 1877, "He would not escape by deserting his noble wife, and they went Home together, in a baptism of fire."

Major D. W. Whittle, who went immediately to the scene of this great tragedy, and who remained there for three days searching for any sign of personal effects, later wrote, "We found nothing. They have gone, as absolutely and completely gone as if translated like Enoch."

When the baggage that had been sent ahead arrived, the words of a newly penned hymn by P. P. Bliss was found among his belongings. It was the last hymn he ever wrote. The words are a fitting tribute to this great man, who walked by faith, not by sight!

*I will sing of my Redeemer,  
And His wondrous love to me;  
On the cruel cross He suffered,  
From the curse to set me free.*

*Refrain*

*Sing, oh sing, of my Redeemer,  
With His blood, He purchased me.  
On the cross, He sealed my pardon,  
Paid the debt, and made me free.*

*I will tell the wondrous story,  
How my lost estate to save,  
In His boundless love and mercy,  
He the ransom freely gave.*

*Refrain*

*I will praise my dear Redeemer,  
His triumphant power I'll tell,  
How the victory He giveth  
Over sin, and death, and hell.*

*Refrain*

*I will sing of my Redeemer,  
And His heav'nly love to me;  
He from death to life hath brought me,  
Son of God with Him to be.*

*Refrain*

After observing a congregation where he was once called to minister, Bliss *really* laid into the older members when he wrote of the "woefully apparent hypocrisy" of "church members turning leaves or idly gazing about the room while singing *Nearer, My God, To Thee*"