

CHAPTER XIII

WINNING LEADERSHIP OF THE FIRST PARTY

Chautauqua Tours traveled two kinds of parties - Economy Tours and De Luxe. Grandfather conducted Economy Tours and much preferred them to the De Luxe. Economy Tours were made up of teachers and other professional people who usually were making the trip at a sacrifice, did not expect much in line of physical comforts, but who were eager to learn. De Luxe was made up of people who first of all "wished to be comfortable." Many grumbled at the slightest hardship and some could not rise one half hour earlier to see any sight. They expected a conductor to cater to their comfort rather than to their education. Grandfather had no patience with this type, but got real pleasure in working hard for people willing to sacrifice both money and comfort to learn.

As a matter of fact, the comfort of the one cabin boats and the moderate priced hotels and the liberal use of carriages (automobiles had not yet won their way) furnished more comfort than the members of Economy Tours expected and more than most of them had at home. The real problem with these groups was to win intellectual leadership. That leadership could not be won with authority; it could only be won by knowing more than did those who for years had been studying in preparation for their one and only trip abroad. The real crisis for Grandfather came with the start of his first party.

It was the most intellectual of all the parties he had - a preacher had lectured for years on Egyptology and the Battle of Waterloo; a teacher had been educated in a convent school and knew all the stories of the Saints; another teacher had studied Art - in fact, had earned the money for

her trip by painting in vacation times; another teacher had specialized in Latin and in Roman history; still another of German descent had a good knowledge of German history; a banker had considerable knowledge of business conditions; a couple of lads just graduated from college felt well posted in several lines and one man who was making his eighth trip to Europe felt he knew all about travel.

Grandfather listened attentively for several days, as his party competed among themselves for intellectual leadership. Then Grandfather surprised the preacher and all by announcing that at two o'clock he would give a talk on Egypt. It was a bold stroke, but Grandfather was satisfied that the preacher's knowledge of Egyptian history was spotty and not well organized. It worked - the preacher was pleased to have his pet subject thrown into the foreground - the others were both surprised and amused by Grandfather's nerve and his apparent knowledge of his subject.

So far - so well - the final test would come in Pompeii. This was one of the first places in the schedule and the most difficult from a conductor's standpoint. It was very hot - the ruins are scattered over a large area - there is little to distinguish one street from another. To find one's way around with certainty and at the same time to reconstruct the ancient city in imagination for a party is not easy.

Grandfather once had visited the ruins and had been piloted around by his college friend, Prof. Schlicher; but one learns location better when with a guide book he pilots himself around. He had, however, studied plans carefully and thought by a last minute review he might succeed.

Meanwhile, Mr. Rosebush had married a lovely and wealthy girl and was combining his honeymoon with conducting a party. While I do not recommend this to you, yet it turned out to be a lot of fun for them and for their party.

We had in our charge a steerage passenger who was to be put on a midnight train at Naples and when Mr. Rosebush suggested on our arrival that if Grandfather would put the ward on a midnight train, he would combine the two parties and show them through Pompeii, Grandfather was greatly relieved and gave Pompeii no further thought.

Next day, however, just as the train was pulling into Pompeii, Mr. Rosebush said he had decided to go on ahead with his bride to make arrangements for the parties at Amalfi and Grandfather should take charge of both parties. Oh, boy! if he had only taken a last minute look at his maps. But it was too late, and he boldly led both parties into the excavation and began to lecture on Roman houses. A couple of men deserted an Italian guide and asked how much it would cost to join us. Grandfather told them they were welcome and it would cost them nothing. "That's a jolly", whispered one to the other, "but he's the only one who seems to know and we had better stand for it."

By dint of much previous patient study and also of good fortune, there was no misstep. More and more stragglers joined our ranks and by the time we returned to the exit Grandfather was lecturing to quite a "caravana". The original two strangers and several others rather insistently offered money and seemed "flabbergasted" when told decisively that it was utterly impossible for any of them to pay anything. They had all been welcome guests of the Chautauqua Tours Company. Unlike many conductors, Grandfather always felt it good advertising to allow strangers to listen in.

Mr. Rosebush's party gave generous words of appreciation to Mr. Rosebush. Grandfather's party thereafter placed child-like faith in his leadership. The job had been "licked".