

Away back yonder when we lived in the great pine forest, it was a common thing to see a group of negro people following some path through the woods in the night. Their leader would be holding high a blazing torch that illumined their path and cast grotesque shadows as they walked.

So humanity has been doing through its long upward history. In the darkness men have looked to fire for light and safety and comfort. We do not know when or where men began to use fire but, animal though he may be, he still is the only living creature that understands or appreciates or uses fire.

Perhaps it did indeed come down from heaven, not stolen, but the gift of God, not mentioned in the story of creation but thrust upon us in a blinding flash of lightening and a thunderous voice of God that made man run to hide himself from the voice of God. When he crept out of his cave he found the dry tree with a strange light about it and giving off heat that made him stand at a distance.

Men have been careful for a long, long time to "keep fire". They were still doing it when I came along. Neighbors borrowed fire and when people moved to a new place, neighbors brought a pan of coals to start the fire. We had been doing that for a million years. Things were just beginning to change when I was a lad lad.

Fire was our first source of light. Open fire. The cave man built his fire in the door of the cave. The back of the fireplace was the whole, hostile outside world. Here was the first family circle which was a half circle. The cave man sat before his fire that gave him light and comfort and protection from wild beasts. He must have loved his own in a human way and seen the firelight play on their faces. Here was the beginning of social life in the firelight.

My father was concerned to have plenty of "firewood". With this supply was "light" wood. Not light in weight but the wood that in burning would give light. We made one word of it and called it "lightwood".

Someone began to light the candles, a little early so people would not be too late getting home. Sometimes the preacher had the only hymn book. He would line out the hymn, two lines at a time and he and the people sang together. They sang:

"By cool Siloam's shady rill,  
How sweet the lily grows".

It took a long time but some of God's children were hungry for it. Then came the break up. The lights were put out and there were voices and farewells and the sound of wagon wheels and the church was left sitting in the darkness under the trees. Soon only the sound of a lone wagon on a country road. The father and the mother on the seat and the children asleep on a quilt in the wagon body. At home at last mother lighted a candle and the children staggered into the house and fell on the first convenient bed. They were rolled from side to side in order to get off their clothes. Some boys and girls about my size never did wake up.

The "early candle light" era merged into that of the lamp lighter. Lamps began in an humble way. Kerosene or lamp oil had come. The humblest of the lamps was a brass lamp shaped like a small oil can. It had a small wheel to raise and lower the round wick but it had no real burner. It was more like a candle. Sometimes it had a little cap to put on the flame to extinguish it.

The standard lamp was of glass about eighteen inches high with burner and chimney. It was the sign of a good housekeeper to have the lamps in proper order and the chimneys clean and bright. There was light in our homes and the fire died out in the fireplace. Sometimes these lamps misbehaved and had to be thrown out the open door. Sometimes they exploded.

Sometimes in the black night there came a great outcry from the children's room. Some little boy was going to be ruined and all the bed clothes. In the hurry to get a light someone dropped the lamp shade and the head of the house walked about barefooted in broken glass to find a light. If the uproar turned into a real block buster, somebody could be trusted to knock

Throughout the Southland this lightwood was furnished by the heart of the yellow pine. A pine knot was a wonderful source of light. The blazing torch the negro man carried was a blazing piece of lightwood.

Those were the days of the big fireplace. There was often a "crane" in this fireplace to which a pot was hung. Before such a fireplace, young Abraham Lincoln lay on the floor and studied by the light of a pine knot. Before such a fireplace my father and mother loved to sit with the children about them. Often there was no other light in the house. The room was aglow with love and the light of the fireplace. I am sure that my father and mother with the spirit that was in them could have bridged the gulf of twenty thousand years that lay between them and the cave man's family. They would have done it before the fireplace.

Till even my day, humanity had depended for light in the darkness on an open fire. I have outlived the world of my fathers and my own childhood and youth. The present day does not know this is a new and different world in which we live. No where is this more evident than in our conquest of darkness.

We first had firelight from the fireplace or a blazing torch. But you could not carry a lighted torch about the house. So men designed a crude oil lamp, a wick lying in a bowl of oil and hanging out of the spout of the vessel. It might have been a very long time but some one fashioned a mould in which a wick was stretched and surrounded with tallow and the candle had come that could be carried about the house in comparative safety. Matches came along and we began to gain our independence of the fireplace. Grandmother did not have to light her pipe with a coal. Strangely enough when she became independent of the fireplace and the coal, she quit smoking!

If we had a night service, the church was lighted with candles. There was a candle on the pulpit and others were set in the windows on either side. So the church was "lighted up". What time did the service begin? "Early candle light" of course. How beautiful and restful. I can see them gathering in the twilight, coming in wagons and carts and buggies.

the lamp off the table and set the house on fire! By that time there was no further need for haste, so we threw a stick of wood on the coals in the fireplace and waited for day!

One night a neighbor grew tired of the quiet life and started out. While the night was still young he came back to the doctor's house. He had gathered to himself in the territory of some enemy a four inch opening in his personal scalp. The doctor decided to take care of him on the front porch where it was cool. He called on a neighbor boy to help him by holding the lamp. The boy sat on the balustrade and all went well till the boy fainted from the sight of blood and fell into the yard carrying with him the lamp!

Electricity and the gasoline motor have changed the world. In my childhood all the electricity we knew anything about was connected with thunder and lightning. I am sure that no bond issue that had to do with either of those disturbers would have carried in our country. There was plenty of reasons to think electricity could not be domesticated!

The first electric light I ever saw was the headlight of a locomotive. It surely lighted up the country and must have been an unmixed blessing to the engineer. It was years before power and light began to come to our towns and villages. Our land was dark. One could travel for miles and not see a light. You did not go to the city to see the bright lights. They were not there. Window shopping at night waited on the electric light. In recent years the whole world has burst into light and electricity has invaded every field to make a new world.

Who can imagine what will be in the next era? I am already left far behind. Soon I shall be seeing the friends of the "Early Candle Light" and they will say: "You have come back to us from a strange and tremendous world. Were'nt you afraid?"

In time the very last and least of the boys will grow up and come to man's estate. It was so with the boys with whom I loved to play. A long time ago I looked about and there was not a boy left of all I had known. My own boyhood was gone and the prison house was closing about me. There was a growing realization that I must fit myself for some responsible and worth while place in life. But what place?

Some men are born with some sort of silver spoon in the mouth of place or fortune or business responsibility. Their life work is cut out for them. They only have to pray to God for wisdom to care for what has been handed down to them. I do not know whether this is good fortune or not.

It was my good fortune to be born poor and to have to strive for education and all that I desired. My place was not made clear to me by birth or thrust upon me by circumstances. So every door of opportunity was mine if I had the ability or willingness to enter! Such an opportunity faces every poor boy. The fulness of life is before him. What a mistake to settle for the job that pays the most money!

A young man needs help in finding his proper place. Amazing thought that he may have that help from the Great God. My choice was made and influenced by religion. Indeed my philosophy is that life is a religious thing and every choice should be a religious choice. God made us for himself and for his ends and purposes. I base my life and hope on the greatness of God. He is so great that there is nothing little or insignificant before Him. Every question of individuality that may arise here is solved in the greatness and the goodness of God. He is responsible for our existance. He has made each one of us to be different. Because we are made different, God expects and purposes that we shall fill our 'special and particular place in the world. I have a place designed for me. No one else can fill it and only God knows what that place is. Surely I must inquire what his will is for me.

It seems to me that the first step in finding ones place in life is to find the way to God. I am very sure that there have been many people, some of them great men of the ages, who have carried out the purposes of God and yet have not known Him. Many of them denied His very existance and still unknown to them, did His will in the world. Some of my neighbors and friends in life have seemed to do very well without God and have even been envied but not by me.

I am sure that one can find his way to God through and by Jesus Christ. There may be some other way by which men come into communication with the Great God but I do not know of it. Men have always believed in some Higher Power but He was the Unknown. All efforts to reach Him have been unsatisfactory. As I believe, God himself came to our help and provided the way. God came to us in Jesus Christ, His Son, who came from Glory and became the Godman among us. He humanized God for us. He personalized Him and so brought God near to us and made Him real for us and drew us to Him. We come to God through the Christ who has given His Spirit to us to be with us forever.

This is God's way of bridging the great gulf and bringing us into fellowship with Him.

To know this is not enough. To believe it is true is not enough. To enter into the fellowship of God, one has to make the great decision to surrender all to the Christ and make God's will to be **his** forever. I do not believe one drifts into being a Christian. It does not begin that way. Having made the great surrender and having died to yourself you begin to live to and for God and you begin most naturally to ask a very great Saviour, "What is it you wish me to do?"

As a thirteen year old boy I **made** my decision for God in Christ. I did not know then all the implications of my decision. I do not yet know but I do know that I was making a decision for Christ. It was not easy for me to make that decision. It was not easy to stand up before my associates. It was with many doubts as to my unworthiness to take such a stand. No one told me that such a stand was going to set

the joy bells ringing in my soul. I was not expecting anything of the kind. My very heart was filled with gladness that grew on me as I went away from that place. The world seemed to be brighter, like a spring morning and the birds sang more happily. I have been happy since over some good fortune as when the little ones came into my home, but there was an element in the happiness of that day that has not since been mine. It was an attitude of love and goodwill toward all mankind. Astonishing thing that such an experience should have come to a poor little unimaginative boy.

I have come to understand that this was no unusual sort of thing. One night down near the Rio Grand river I stopped in the midst of a sermon and asked, "If there is one person here tonight who had any new experience of joy when he confessed the Lord, will he stand". Almost the whole congregation arose as one man. Not long ago I received a boy into the church and baptized him. Some days afterward the boy's mother said to me, "My son said to me when we were home from the service, "Mother, I did not know there was a boy in the world who could be as happy as I am today". I said, "I know what the boy was talking about. It happened to me just that way a long time ago."

If you are asking to know God's will for you in life, be sure that you have signed on the dotted line for him and that you have taken the oath of allegiance to Him. I am sure that God is as concerned to have you in His place for you as you are to find it. Be sure that in finding your place you are finding yourself and your own happiness.

We may be some time in finding ourselves and so our place. It waits on maturity and the information we gain through education and experience. God does not show us the way by letters in the heavens or by visions and dreams but by the cultivation and development of our own spirits. While you are seeking, continue your education. Information opens many a door that otherwise would be unknown. Let us not despise our trial runs and tests. These things help us to know what we like and dislike. A man was not made to be happy in everything. We may find

ourselves in a dead end road. It is not a shame to change the mind and one's way in life. Better make a radical change than live a frustrated life.

These trial runs and tests are not lost. They may show us where we do not want to go but they may also have a very definite purpose in the mind of God. While I was looking about trying to find myself, a good friend proposed that we go into the furniture manufacturing business. It seemed a good opening. He would furnish the money and I was to learn the business. I went to High Point, North Carolina, a furniture town and got a job and began to learn the business. I did very well but after some months I knew that we could not run a factory in our country because of lack of suitable timber. I went back to the University. Was this time in High Point lost? By no means. I did not know then that my work would be in the ministry, but I am sure that God knew. I was a Presbyterian and went to my church and Sunday school in the morning. But there was in the town a big wholesome sort of man who was pastor of the Baptist church. He was the best Bible reader for an ordinary congregation I have ever known. I went to the Baptist church each Sunday night to hear this man read the Bible. I do not remember the man's name but he was God's man for me and the explanation of my trial run in his town for he taught me how to read the Bible for the people.

It seems to me that in seeking to find our place, we ought to inform ourselves. Sit at the feet of teachers and make the most of the privilege. Follow up faithfully what seems to appeal to us but keep our windows open toward heaven. Refuse to enter into what is displeasing to God and be wary of that which is doubtful or will not be a help to us in our walk with God. We may be some time in finding our place but I am sure we will find it for we are working with God.

I had great respect for my father. He had given his whole life to the work of turning men to God. When he was gone who would carry on



that work? Would the Kingdom of God fail because there was no one willing to accept the task from failing hands? I told the Lord and my own soul that so long as I was here the work would go on. A young man said to me recently that he was going into a certain calling, for, said he, "I can get into it more quickly and make more money than any thing else I know". I am sure that the money side of the matter was not considered at all by me. If I had been thinking of money I would not have considered the ministry.

So for nearly fifty eight years I have known what was God's place for me. I have doubted many things and sometimes wondered if a real Christian could come so far short, but I have never doubted that God intended me to do what I have been about all these years. I cannot imagine myself being anything else than what I have been.

MY FATHER

I suppose that a really good father is rarely fully appreciated while he is still alive. Children have to come to a great degree of maturity before they are aware of the wisdom of a parent. They must be parents themselves and struggle with its problems and only after years do they come to understanding.

My father was a godly man. He believed in the First Commandment. He believed in the Second Commandment. He believed in the Third Commandment. He believed in the Fourth Commandment. If you came to our house on Saturday you would have found out we were getting ready for the Sabbath day. Mother rested on Sunday.

He believed in the Fifth Commandment. Let me tell you how he made sure that a proper foundation was laid for respect and honor for parents. He never allowed any of us to call him anything but Father. He never allowed any of us to call our mother anything but Mother. In all this mother agreed. She so spoke of her parents. When we spoke of this to father he said that father and mother were our own English words and we did not need to look to France or Italy for words that for us did not carry the same significance. There are no other words that carry the same significance. Some may think there is more of affection and comradie in some other words, but there is more downright love and affection and respect and honor in these two words than any other the world has ever known. Every boy and girl needs a father and a mother and not something else. Back yonder I did not realize my father's wisdom, but the Bible and the Court House and the Forum and the big volumes of History in the library use only his words and always with respect.

My father was the oldest son of a widowed mother. She was a great woman and he loved her with a love that was akin to reverence. I saw her but once and that as a little child. I remember that her lap and arms were plenteously ample and satisfying. We have but one picture

of her. It shows a sweet faced old lady with silvery white hair crowned by a white lace cap. At the bottom of the picture, in my father's flowing hand is written the one word Mother. The word is followed by a decided exclamation point. Why should a man follow his mother's name with a sign that signifies surprise and maybe astonishment? I wonder.

When my father was a few days old he was taken by his parents to the Big Rockfish Presbyterian church and dedicated to God and baptized. Not only dedicated but to a specific thing. He was given to God for the Presbyterian ministry. However he knew nothing of this till he had finished his course of study and came back to preach his first sermon in that same church. That day his mother, by then a widow, told him what they had done. I have often heard him say that he never knew the day he did not expect to be a minister.

Graduating from the University of North Carolina, he rode away to have his part in the War Between the States. He was a cavalryman under General J.E.B. Stuart and was captured shortly after the battle of Gettysburg. He was a prisoner of war on Johnson's Island in Lake Erie for almost two years. It seemed to him that he should make use of this time in preparing for his life work but he had no books and no money. He found that there were some other young men who were like minded. He was appointed by the group to write to the Presbyterian Board of Publication in Philadelphia and state what they wished to do and ask for any help the Board might be willing to give. I suppose that never did a board have a more unusual request and never was a request more heartily and gladly answered. The needed supplies were sent and individuals, who were leaders in the church in that day, sent books from their private libraries. Some of these books are still with me after ninety five years. These men loved the Union but they loved something they saw was going to be needed after the Union had been preserved.

The class in Theology was organized in 1864 and was taught by Rev. John L. Girardeau, himself a prisoner of war and afterward a

notable minister and theologian in the church in the South. Dr.

Charles H. Hodges sent books on religious subjects. Dr. W. E. Schenck sent John Calvin's Institutes. Dr. W. I. R. Taylor. "a fine Bible by mail". Dr. Wm. S. Plumer, money and books and Dr. W. H. Green a Hebrew Grammar.

There were a number of people sent money for the use of the class. I have the address of only one, Thomas W, Turpine of Columbia, Tenn. There was Judge Samuel Hepburn and Samuel Jr., who first and last sent \$200, and lastly "a little boy," Wm. H. Haller who sent a pocketbook and two Dollars.

In addition to the gifts of money and books from men there were boxes of food and wearing apparel that came from women. These men were suffering in retaliation for what Federal prisoners were suffering in the South. There seems to have been no ill will on the part of guards or officials. They were carrying out orders, but the men were on starvation rations. hungry and cold and ragged and in prison in the midst of frozen Lake Erie. One can imagine how welcome was a pair of flannel drawers and a box of home cooked food. Everything a man could use they sent. Let me tell you what Mrs. A. W. Emly sent: "coat, pants, socks, shoes, paper, stamps, two bottles of brandy for diarrhea, bottles of medicine, hat, silk handkerchief, suspenders, thread, needles, thimble and a pair of scissors". My father notes that they did not get the brandy. Some properly prefixed Yankee got that for his own "oft infirmity".

All this is written down in a sort of diary, autograph and account book kept by my father. He seems to have been the receiving agent for the class. These Confederate soldiers were absolute strangers in that far from home land. How could even the name of my father been known to these people if the Board in Philadelphia had not made it known in some way that there was this group of young men in the prison who were preparing for the Presbyterian ministry.

These women were not Southern Sympathizers. My supposition is that ~~these~~ they really represented groups of women in Presbyterian churches

maybe in Western New York.

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Where did Miss M. C. Douglass live who sent among other things, "a Presbyterian Psalmodist and two other song books and a pin cushion"? Where did Miss Fannie Tonbert live who sent overshirts and undershirts and drawers and a church history? Where did Miss Clara D. Chamberlain live who four times sent good things to eat and wear? Among other things too numerous to mention was a large paper of pins and fifty pounds of flour! Miss Fannie V. Eberts sent ten Dollars, overshirts, a pair of flannel drawers and a tooth brush!

I am not here giving a full account of all these people did for these young men so long ago who, under most difficult circumstances were preparing for the ministry. I am wondering if such a thing ever happened anywhere else in the world?

The men in this class with their teacher came out of the prison and with their teacher, lived to a noble purpose. Some of them came to be leaders and men of great influence in the church.

My father came home to a devastated land. He completed his studies and lived a long life in the ministry. He married and I have reason to believe that he dedicated his first born son to the ministry as he had been. It did not turn out as he hoped and why, I think, always was a question with him. He loved children and was glad to have me, his youngest son, to go with him on his trips and visits. It may be that as he thought on his first born and sighed, he did not realize that the little boy with him in the buggy was being trained by him to take up his work. He was a good hand at looking for the sheep that was lost and I was often with him. We visited together great houses and very humble ones. We slept together in strange beds. We made long journeys together and crossed swollen streams, once swimming our horse, but the old cavalryman was not afraid and so I was not. I often heard him reading the Bible and praying with the people in their homes. I did not know I was learning and little did he realize that the child he had with him

would read the Bible in more homes than he and would serve <sup>42</sup> many years longer. I have been more influenced by him than I realize.

When the time came that he should die, he lay quietly on his bed for quite awhile, surrounded by those who loved him. Suddenly he opened his eyes and cried in a surprised and pleased voice, Mother! and was gathered to his people. I wonder.

I had been helping in meetings and holding services for two years before I went west but I had been working with some ordained minister and the responsibility for the sacraments and general direction of the church was with someone else. I had never baptized a convert or held a Communion service. All this devolved immediately upon me on my taking charge of my own church. I was soon to learn that experience teaches many things one cannot get out of books or in the lecture room.

One morning a phone call came to me from the Catholic hospital in the town telling me there was a sick man who wanted to see me. I do not know how the sick man got my name or why I, a new man, was called. I went to the hospital and was shown by one of the Sisters to a room where the wasted wreck of a man lay ready to die. I told him who I was and asked what I could do for him. He said, "I want to know how to be saved". Before I could gather my thoughts he said he wanted to tell me about his life. He wanted me to know what sort of a man was seeking help. I did not realize then that he was confessing his evil life, trying to tell someone how far he had gone astray and wasted his life. He was telling me, without realizing it, that maybe he had never had any real chance in life. He said his name was H- A-. When he was a boy some ten years of age he was sitting on a step in some town playing with a pack of cards. A man came by and asked him if he knew how to play cards. When he said he did not the man said, "Come with me and I will teach you all there is to know". He said he got up and went with the man and learned to be a gambler. He had spent all his life going up and down the west, gambling from town to town. Now, with a terrible intensity, he wanted to know how to be saved.

I was not looking for this and did not have with me even a Testament. I do not know that I would have known what passages to read to him if I had brought one. I did know what I had been taught in the schools but it was largely theoretical with me. This man's eyes were fastened on me. He was

listening with avid hunger to every word I was saying and the death dew already on his forehead. I explained to him as best I could. Maybe I did better than I knew. I hope so. I started to pray for him and he asked that he might say every word after me as I prayed. He wanted to be baptized and die a church member. I heard his confession of his sin and his faith in Jesus Christ. I baptized him with the Catholic Sisters standing about the bed as the only witnesses.

After a little visit with him I turned to go. As I was going out the door I heard the dying gambler crying out to God, "Lord, show me the way, Lord, Show me the way."

After all my studies and training I did not know how to bring peace and assurance to a dying sinner crying out to God. I am sure that I spoke the correct word but it did not carry conviction. It was not apparent to him that I had what he so sorely craved. My religion was correct but it was cold. It had not come to me in reality that I was as much a sinner saved by grace and a brand plucked from the burning as this man. What he hungered for was a saved sinner who could lift him up out of his lost estate and show him the salvation of God. I had been so carefully reared that I did not know how to show the way up out of the depths.

The next morning I phoned to the hospital to know about my man. They told me he had died in the night and his body had been turned over to an undertaker. I phoned to the undertaker and he said the body had been taken to a room in the back of a saloon and the funeral would be at two O'Clock that afternoon.

At the hour I went to the saloon and was shown into a large back room. The body was lying in state in the center of the room and all around the walls were the friends of the dead man. I do not remember if there was a woman present. I did not know in what business these people engaged but I realized this was no gathering of Sunday school workers.



There was nothing that I knew of that indicated I was a minister but the company knew I was an outsider. As they were making ready to go to the cemetery I stepped forward and asked if I might have a word. I said, "Maybe I know something about this man you may not know". They were interested and I told them about his confession and his baptism. When I was through someone came up to me and asked if I would go with them to the cemetery which I did and one more poor wandering sheep had a Christian burial.

The next day a phone call came to me from the hospital to say that the dying man left a letter for me. When I reached the hospital they handed me a letter they said was found under his pillow. In it was a ten Dollar bill, the only money I have ever received for such a service. I could not return it. The man had left it and gone away. I am sure he was not trying to pay me. He was making a last effort to make some amends for a wasted life.

We buried him among the poor folks and I suppose the little marker we placed over his grave has long since been blown away by the dry winds and the shifting sands but it takes a long time to get through being sorry.

## MY FIRST MEETING

A young preacher has to learn much by experience. He so learns much about himself and about his congregation. He finds out a great deal about God the same way. He will soon learn, if he is in earnest about his work, that his people are not nearly so concerned about lost men and a new world as he is. They are not on fire for the Gospel and it is hard to get any fire kindled. So the people will let the preacher have his way about the church and do the work and the worrying.

It was so about that first meeting. It turned out that if we were to have any meeting I would have to do the preaching. An old hand would have stopped right there but I was inexperienced. We had no money with which to bring in some soul stirring prophet. My nearest brother minister was three hundred miles away and I was not too sure of his soul stirring ability. But I was there to preach the Gospel and the church was a light house and we were to let our light shine. I believed that and there had been no meeting in our church for a long time and we were not reaching the people. I was going from house to house but we were not bringing in the people. I was willing to light up the little church and hold a weeks meeting and see what could be done. We talked about it with the officers and the people. We prayed over it. It seemed to me we ought to do this thing. The Elders agreed if that was what I wished to do.

I have learned some things through the years about a pastor holding his own meeting. It is a good thing but quite a few get someone else to do the preaching or have no meeting. For one thing, if the meeting is a failure, you can't pass on the blame to some visiting brother. Also there is not the interest of a new voice or personality. Also the visitor can say some hard things about sinners and get away with it. He is a stranger. But if the pastor has some hard things to say, he is taken to be talking about some of his best paying members! Many pastors

conclude to let things rock along. Maybe, he feels he is not too good at calling mourners anyway. I did not know about all this and more. I had much to learn.

A good woman in the church had accused me of being proud. I did not like the charge and did not believe she was right. I had nothing of which to be proud. How could I, of all people, be swelled up with pride? I did not then realize that a man could be proud and at the same time have really nothing of which to be proud. I have come to understand that is the usual situation. Look and see how little some of our strutters have behind them! Maybe the good woman was right and the Lord was going to teach me to be more humble. That, at least, would be one blessing to come out of the meeting.

Well, we started out and did very well on Sunday morning and night. My usual congregation came out but Monday night it was pitiful. Just a handful of people scattered about the church. Old faithfuls who would not turn the Lord down no matter who was up. Two of the Elders were present. The piano was about the only sprightly thing about the music and it was almost alone. I preached the best I knew and gave the invitation just as if the house had been full of non-church people.

Tuesday night was the same or more so. I was not discouraged. I believed God was willing for me to hold that meeting. I was doing my part as best I knew. Wednesday night I had the same experience, only that night one of the Elders, a forthright sort of man, came to me to advise me to close the meeting that night. He said he knew I was doing my best but I was not getting anywhere with it and he suggested, for the good of all, I close the meeting. That pride of mine was taking a licking, but after struggling and denying myself for some nine years in order to get into the ministry I was not the man to lay off at the suggestion of one man. Not after all the prayer and pains I had put into that meeting. I thanked

him but told him we would go on a little longer. It is not easy to be always thankful!

Thursday night there was the same little group. After the service was well under way, three cavalrymen came in and took a back seat. I held the service as usual. When I gave the invitation the three cavalrymen arose and came down. They confessed their sins and gave their lives to God. I do not remember whether they were actually received into the church that night or not. One of them asked me to write a relative back in Kentucky and tell her what he had done.

We never saw any of them again. Very soon they were across the border in pursuit of Pancho Villa. Few if any service men ever attended our church and I have not the least idea how these men came to attend the service that night or how they could have known there was a service going on there.

More than thirty years ago late one summer afternoon I drove into the little county seat town of Pentress County, Tennessee. The village had been quiet a long time but now there seemed to be the stirrings of new life. A railroad had just twisted its way into town. A big new school building of some sort was going up and there were other signs of improvement. I inquired of someone about lodging for the night and was directed to the hotel. As I remember, it was called the Clemons Hotel because it had at one time belonged to some of Mark Twain's people. I made myself known and told the proprietor I was investigating the church and religious situation in that area. He said there was a big meeting going on in the town and I ought not to miss it and that I might find out some of the things I wanted to know there. I assured him that I would attend.

Before long dinner was announced, though it was really "supper", and we went to the dining room. There was one big table, generously supplied with good things, about which we all sat. I was not long in appreciating that this table played an important part in the life of the community. No doubt very important persons came to sit about this table. At times, His Honor, the Judge of the District Court lent his dignity and the Prosecuting Attorney, his fear. From the outside world came attorneys zealous to protect the interests of their clients, or to see that justice be done or undone in the case of some worthy citizen who had been set upon by his neighbors for cause. Sometimes the High Sheriff came to this place leading twelve men good and true and bound by a great oath. These ate and drank and talked about the crops and the last mad dog scare, the new railroad and everything but what was really on their minds. This evening there was present only the mine-run people of the town and one unimportant stranger. The topic of conversation? The meeting, about which was a decided difference of opinion. The one contended that there was a great Spirit led revival going on in the town, the other that there was

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no Holy Spirit to begin with and what was going on was nothing more than emotionalism gone wild.

It seemed that two churches in the village had agreed to hold a union revival meeting. One of the churches was the Methodist. I will not venture to give the exact denominational name of the other. They had arranged for a preacher but the day the meeting was to begin he was taken sick. By chance that day there came through town a Baptist Evangelist and his singer. They had just finished a meeting somewhere. The people asked them to stop over and lead them in their meeting. This they agreed to do. The meeting was being held in the Methodist church.

After dinner I went up to the church. I was early but the people were already gathering. The church would seat several hundred. There was a gallery and a platform across the front with steps going up on either side of the pulpit. The singers were seated on the platform, the women at one end and the men at the other. The Methodist pastor invited me to sit with him on the stage. We compromised by my sitting with the men in the choir.

I asked a man if they had a song leader. He said they had a boy who was helping them. Presently the boy came out. He was a six footer and of considerable dimensions otherwise. After awhile a really big man came up the aisle with a child holding his hand.

I said to my new found friend, "I see we have another "boy" coming to help us".

He said, "That is our big man".

"I see it is", I said.

"Don't you know that man?" he asked.

"No" I replied, "How could I know him?"

The man looked at me in surprise. "That is Sergeant Alvin York".

I was suitably ~~embarrassed~~ ~~embarrassed~~. How could a man live in Tennessee and actually be in Sergeant York's own community and not know him! The fact was that I had been driving all day and did not realize I was in the Sergeants own country.

to meet me and I felt honored to have had a few words with him. I do not know how great a singer he was but I do remember that he knew how to make quite a company sing back yonder. During the preliminaries he was called on and he prayed for all of us.

The preacher was above the average. There was no emotionalism. He was not trying to stir up the people. Quite the contrary. He gave a very simple invitation, that if there were those who were concerned about their soul's salvation to come forward, as a song was being sung, and kneel at the front. Two pews across the front were vacated. There was no pleading but as soon as the song began the people began to come forward and to kneel., maybe a score of them. When the song was over the preacher said: "You people come on down here and help these people to be saved".

There was a stir all over the house and up in the gallery. The choir left the platform. Presently the preacher, Sergeant York and I were the only ones left on the platform. It was not long before people, with whom individuals or groups were working began to realize God's mercy and grace and to tell their neighbors of their new found joy. It was going on all over the house and in the gallery. About that time the preacher turned prophet. He said, "Friends. I want you to look carefully at what is going on here tonight. This is maybe the last Holy Ghost revival you will ever see". I thought, the man was probably right for Sergeant York's college is going to make a change. The people will not have less religion but they may express it differently.

I was exceedingly interested. I knew I was looking at what many philosophers have desired to see, but religious meetings such as what I was looking at are not arranged for critics. I was not a critic or a mere spectator. I was strangely moved myself. I noted that there were some who felt called on to add something to the situation. They were going up and down the aisle, doing what they felt they were supposed to do. I gave them little thought. There were others who, having found something they had long sought for, wept from pure joy. They laughed and cried on the neck of

their friends. There were those that night who came seeking God and found him. The light was in their faces and it could not be mistaken. Before them the little hills rejoiced and all the trees of the field clapped their hands!

I did not notice that the preacher and the Sergeant had left the platform. I did not see them again. Before me was an after-meeting that was reaching into all quarters of the church. On the floor in the front was almost a score of people who had been a long time on their knees. Workers went among them asking, "Don't you feel you are saved?" They did not and so they remained on their knees.

Were people asking how to be saved and I have no interest in what was going on? I felt that I should try to help some of these people. I spoke to one woman. She wanted to be saved but did not feel right. I tried to explain but she gathered I thought she could be saved and not know it and she was not interested in my help. Another woman, she said she worked in the Court House, said she knew she was not a Christian and wanted to be, but she was as good a Christian as the woman just then in the lime-light going up and down the aisle! It was these people on their knees who stayed there who taught me this was not emotionalism. This was conviction and that is of God.

I noted a little girl who had been on her knees a long time. What could a little child add to such a meeting? No one paid any attention to her. I sat down beside her. I said, "You have been on your knees a long time and you must be tired. Sit up and rest yourself!" She did and looked up at me with a tear stained face. I said, "Do you want to be a Christian?" She nodded her head. I said, "Haven't you been praying to Jesus and confessing your sins and asking him to save you?" She said she had. Then I took out a little Testament and read to her from John's First letter, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness." Now, said, "you have been honest praying to Jesus and he is honest and has forgiven you. He is not holding anything against you and so you are saved. You just believe that and not be troubled."



I said, "It is late and time for you to be at home in bed. Just believe what Jesus says and go home and tell your mother what you have done and when you can join the church". The child looked me in eye for a little while and then got up and made her way to the aisle and marched, head up, without looking one way or the other, out of the church.

I suddenly realized I was tired all over. I followed the child out of the church but more slowly. I left people on their knees. Perhaps I ought to have stayed. I went to the hotel and prayed for the little girl and fell asleep in the very bed that some of Huck Finns people may have one time occupied!

At the table next morning there was the same argument as the night before. Both sides had found fuel for their fires. Some contending a good work was going on. Others that there was no Holy Spirit and the whole thing was a fake.

Perhaps there is a fine Christian woman, past forty, living somewhere in the hills of Tennessee, who knows there is a Holy Spirit and that He was present one night long ago.

It was Sergeant York's church that joined with the Methodists in the union meeting. He prayed for his neighbors and for the meeting. My judgment is that God answered his prayer according to the traditions of his people but that "Satan came also among them".

It is not sinful for God's people to be glad or against the law for "the redeemed to say so" and that in their own fashion. The kind of meeting I saw would not be acceptable in any church where orderliness comes first but let it be said that this little community and a little church in it, nourished and brought up a world war here who came back to pray for the success of the neighborhood revival.

Note: The Unconquerable Germans! Sergeant Alvin York, a Fentress County Tennessee boy, on Oct. 8th. 1918, killed fifteen German soldiers and captured one hundred and thirty two, single handed and alone.

I have learned that the "Second Mile" is that part of life's journey that is apt to be most pleasing to the Lord, and in that area he is very often pleased to manifest His presence and favor. I have found that when I have refused some monetary gain because I feared for the good name of my religion that has been the very time I have been led to realize that the Lord knows my monetary needs and obligations. It is when one goes beyond what is expected or required that one realizes the presence and interest of one who here in the flesh lived all his life in that sacrificial and rewarding field. A great soul is one who gives more than is paid for or expected.

In my last regular pastorate I lived in an area where there were three grade schools and a High school. There were some nine hundred or more children in the grade schools. I was often invited to lead a worship service or make a talk in these schools. I realized that there might be a great opportunity to do some good, especially in the grade schools. I offered to go once a week, on Friday morning, and teach a thirty minute Bible lesson in the grade schools. The authorities were glad to have me do this and I carried on this work for several years. I would go to the first school at nine O'Clock. We would have a popular song, then one of the great hymns of the church which we would learn. Then we had a prayer and a Bible lesson for the rest of the time. We had the First graders on the front row and the Eighth on the last seats. It was a delightful experience. We never had any disturbance. We covered most of the Bible stories, the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, and the whole book of Acts. It was astonishing to see that even little children could be interested in such things. I look back on this experience with the children with great pleasure and gratitude. It was something I was doing "beyond the call of duty".

One afternoon I had a call from an undertaker in Rocky Mount in North Carolina. I lived eighteen miles east of that little city. He wanted to know if I could come to the city the next morning and

hold a funeral service. I told him that I supposed I could but I wanted to know who was dead. He said, "A man and his wife". I wanted to know how it came about that a man and his wife were dead at the same time. He told me it was a murder and a suicide.

"Well," I said, "Can't you find any preacher in Rocky Mount who knows how to hold such a service that you have to call on me, eighteen miles out of town?"

"The family has requested that you have the service" he said.

I inquired carefully who the people were and where they had lived. I knew nothing of them and they lived in a community eighteen miles farther west. I protested that I knew nothing of the people but he insisted the family had asked for me, so I said that I would be present and hold the service.

Next morning I was there at the appointed hour. The street about the place was filled with strange people. I went into the chapel and there were the two coffins, side by side. This was a new situation for me and the more I considered it the less I liked it. I did not see any family and there seemed no one in the crowd who had any more than a morbid interest in what was going on.

I looked up the funeral director and told him the more I saw of that funeral the less I liked it and the more I preferred to be somewhere else. He reiterated that the family had asked for me. I said, "I would like to see this family".

He took me into a back room and there were three children, a fourteen year old girl, a boy about twelve and a younger boy. They looked up with mournful, tear stained faces as the undertaker told them who I was. I had never seen any of them to know them. I asked, "Did you children ever go to school in Edgecombe County?"

They said, "Yes". I asked them, "Did you ever see me before?" They all looked up and their eyes brightened, "O yes" they said, "We went to school over there and you came on Fridays and taught us

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songs and told us Bible stories".

Poor little children from a renter's home! Now such home as they had known had been swept away and when the undertaker asked them what preacher they wished to have the final prayer over a dead father and mother, the only preacher they knew was the man who came on Fridays to the school house and told them Bible stories!

With what strange and unexpected coin God sometimes pays his unworthy servants. I knew now why I was called for the service. The tragedy was forgotten and the two coffins faded away as my heart went out to the children who in their day of trouble called out to me for help.