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Biography

H. Robb French

Pioneer, Prophet and Prayer Warrior

Compiled By

Anna Talbott McPherson

*“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without
which no man shall see the Lord” Heb 12:14*

Spreading Scriptural Holiness to the World

Wesleyan Heritage Publications

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Prologue

Rufus Alfonzo French, affectionately known and referred to in this book as Father French, was born in a log cabin near Medina, Ohio, August 25, 1852. His parents were very poor and at an early age he worked for neighboring farmers in order that he might help to "keep the wolf from the door."

He told about husking corn during the bitter cold days, beating his hands together, and stamping his feet vigorously to keep them from freezing. When he came in for meals he kept away from the stove lest he would suffer more from the cold when he returned to the field.

As Rufus grew older, his father gave him a small allowance from his wages. He saved this money until he was able to purchase a cook stove for his mother, which made it considerably more convenient for her than cooking over the open fireplace.

One day Rufus was hurriedly summoned to go to the cabin if he wished to see his mother alive. She pushed her emaciated hand from under the covers and took her son's hand in hers. She told him that he had been a good boy and thanked him for being so kind to her. Soon after, she breathed her last.

As the boy walked out of the lonely cabin that night and looked up at the heavens, the tragic thought pierced his heart, You will never have another mother. Go where you will, you will have friends, but no one will take the place of Mother.

Being industrious and frugal, young French succeeded in accumulating a small amount of property. Friends advised him to go West, so he moved to Lawrence, Kansas. His associates, recognizing his ability, urged him to attend the law school of the State University located in Lawrence, which he did. After graduating and being admitted to the bar, he joined with Judge Barker in establishing a law firm. Anxious to follow the westward trek, Father French went to Durango, Colorado, to open another law office. Durango is in the heart of the Rockies and at that time was a rough mining town. Lynch law was rather looked upon as the law of the country.

Mother French (Rebecca Elenor Cowdy) was born near Portadown, Ireland, May, 1854. Her father farmed, ran a small dairy, and bought and sold linen goods. They were very poor and lived in a typical Irish farmhouse with thatched roof and dirt floor. They did not have much spiritual light although her father was a Methodist class leader and her mother a praying woman. The children tell how they listened at the door as she prayed, "O Lord, heaven would not be heaven to me if one of my children is lost." However mistaken she may have been, it showed her intense earnestness.

A terrible scourge of fever swept through that section of Ireland. Her father and mother died within a week of each other and, it is said, were buried in the same grave.

When Robb and Geraldine visited Ireland they sought out the little home in which the children were born and were anxious to find the grave in which Mother French's parents were buried. The cemetery is in the beautiful Kilmore churchyard. It was easy for Robb and Geraldine to visualize the funeral procession coming down the narrow lane to lay in the grave all that seemed dear to those eight orphan children. They thought of the prayers which that devout mother had stored up in the golden vials. It was said by those who watched those orphans that anyone who wronged them in any way suffered divine punishment.

The children all came to the United States in due time. Rebecca and her sister, Fannie, milliners by trade, went to Durango, Colorado, to open a store in that growing western town.

Rufus and Rebecca (Father and Mother French) were married, and Rufus took his bride back to Lawrence, Kansas, where he again began the practice of law. For two terms Father was elected county attorney. During his term of office he brought an injunction against a brewery in Lawrence and confiscated the property. The case was carried to the United States Supreme Court and won by Father. The Frenches bought forty acres near Lawrence and built a beautiful suburban home. Three children were born here George, William, and a daughter Frances. On December 26, 1891, while Father was again practicing law for a short time in Denver and the family were living there, Hamilton Robb was born.

Back once more in the lovely home in Lawrence, Mother was not satisfied. A nice home and the success of her husband were not enough. Her heart was thirsting after the One who said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." Not content to worship in the fashionable church, she found her way down to the humble little Salvation Army Hall. The Salvation Army was severely persecuted in those days. They were often stoned and thrown into prison. As Mother sat in that little hall and looked at the plain lads and lassies whose faces beamed with inward joy, she realized it was not silks and satins, jewelry and fine homes that she wanted. It was Christ. She said later that the young man speaking seemed to assume the visage of Christ, with a halo around his head as he preached the Word. She went forward to the penitent form and was gloriously converted. She soon stripped off her jewelry and arranged her hair in its natural plainness and beauty.

Father had not yet been converted though he was superintendent of the Sunday school and held several other important offices in the North Lawrence Methodist Church. Mother French was praying earnestly for his conversion when Father was sent to Denver, Colorado, to bring suit against a certain company. Before he left, Mother insisted that he go to Brother Peck's mission at least once while in Denver. The story of his conversion is told in detail in the book proper.

Upon Father's return home, a true revival soon began among the members of the North Lawrence Methodist Church. Father began to witness to the experience of sanctification; hungry hearts began to respond. Cottage prayer meetings were in progress where numbers were saved and sanctified. With beaming faces, they testified to having received the sanctifying baptism of the Holy Ghost. On the other hand, severe opposition developed. Soon, the class meetings, which always followed the preaching services, were no longer allowed. Some leaders saw to it that no second blessing songs were sung in the church. Eventually, Father and some forty others were forced to leave the Methodist Church.

It was a heartbreaking and exceedingly trying experience. The severing of existing ties and close friendships of many happy years was not at all easy. But two forces impelled the little group to leave. First, the opposition calculated to drive them from the congregation made it well nigh impossible to stay and be true to their God-given convictions. Second, to remain in the bosom of an apostatizing church would eternally jeopardize their own souls and the souls of their children. Robb has remarked that he will never cease to praise the Lord that his parents led him out of that church. He says, "I fear most of the older people lost out, and their children have long ago denied the faith."

Father, Mother, and the children found a little group of people of like faith and joined with them in worship. Soon after, Father was asked to serve as their pastor. This was a real proof of Father's consecration, for now he left his lucrative practice of law. During the time he served as shepherd of this little flock, it was organized into a Wesleyan Methodist Church in the Kansas Conference.

Sometime later, Judge Barker came to Father and asked him to join him in a lawsuit soon to come up. "You are especially adapted to the work," the judge argued, "and, besides, you will get a good share of the money."

Father agreed to the proposition, but Mother remonstrated. "You know how you always loved the practice of law, and I believe this is a scheme of the enemy to lure you back into the law business."

"Nonsense," said Father, "I intend to take only this one case. Besides, I need the cash it will bring."

But Mother was troubled. She asked Grandma French, Father's step-mother, to join her in praying that the Lord would make Father too sick to work on the case. The whole thing turned out just that way. Father was too sick to go on with the suit, and that ended the law business for him forever.

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Chapter 1

The Lawyer and the Preacher

In the summer of 1897 a homemade prairie schooner drawn by two horses crept along a rough Kansas wagon trail. Father had fashioned the schooner with his own hands, put the bows on the old lumber wagon, and spread the canvas over them. Pots and pans, skillets and buckets dangled from the sides of the wagon and swung from their hooks at its back.

Such of the family's possessions as would be needed on the trip -- dishes, blankets, clothes -- were stuffed inside the vehicle. Between, under, or upon them, two boys and a sister clung, while on the seat out front, at least in nice weather, Father and Mother sat.

Good old Rover -- faithful companion, almost like one of the family, loped along with Father when he walked by the horses' heads. He capered with the children when they spilled out of the wagon to stretch their legs and play. At times, to break up the boredom of the day, he would dash off into the woods, almost improperly (considering his usual seemly decorum), to chase some real or imaginary object, returning to the wagon unabashed that he had brought nothing back to show for his vagabondism. When the wagon stopped, he lay under it, sphinx-like, as its protector, or indulged in a well-earned nap.

On and on the wagon creaked, now bumping over an uneven track as hard as stones, now dragging through mud almost up to its axles. One of the horses pulling the wagon was a strong, faithful, dependable mare named Kit. It had been impossible to find a horse that would team with her satisfactorily, but Kit forged ahead, pulling not only the load, but sometimes the lazy horse, too. Up and down the steep hills she traveled to carry her master's family to their destination. Father, children, and sometimes Mother, walked up the little hills and often helped Kit by pushing the wagon.

Though the journey had its adventure, there were monotonous times also times when bodies grew weary of the thumping and bumping, and bones rebelled against the jostling. No doubt minds went back to the spacious, well-furnished home the family had left behind in Lawrence, Kansas. No murmuring word escaped the lips of the occupants of the wagon, however. Instead, if one listened closely, he could hear above the din and the clatter, the sweet notes of a song lisped by the youngest of the group.

"A tent or a cottage, sang the wee lad of five,

"A tent or a cottage, why should I care?
They're building a palace for me over there.

It was little Robb. He knew what he was singing, and he meant every word of it. Were they not taking this long, long ride for a grand and splendid purpose? He was thrilled to the heart with every mile. Even when they came to meal time and there was no meat to eat? Was he thrilled then? Yes, even then! For when that happened, as it often did, Father and Mother French and all the children would kneel together and ask their Heavenly Father to supply their need. How exciting it was, then, to see God answer, sometimes in very ordinary ways, such as giving Mother wisdom as to how to make what they had go farther and still taste good. It seemed to the child that she would get the skillet, put it on the fire and stir something, and they would have a good supper. At other times God would answer miraculously, sending food to the very fire they had built by faith to cook the supper.

One night Father, Mother, and the youngsters, tired and hungry, gathered round the campfire. Father had tramped most of the day, leading the horses. The boys had alternately ridden and walked. Out in the wind and the weather, parents and children alike developed monstrous appetites. But there was very little to eat except bread. That night they sat around the campfire, waiting for God to answer prayer.

Old Rover had wandered off on one of his vagaries, no one having missed him. Now, through the growing darkness of the night, they could see him trotting down the road pulling something. Evidently the object he dragged was heavy. He pulled along, then stopped and rested, panting. Again, he pulled awhile and panted. Finally, he pulled the thing right into the campfire circle where the family had gathered, then went and lay down, his work finished.

Probably an old bone, everyone thought.

But no, it looked different. Father bent down to see. The children grouped around, and lo, it was a huge piece of dried beef as big as a ham! Dried beef! Who would have believed it! What a treat! Wrapped in burlap, it had been protected from the ground over which it had been dragged. And good old Rover had been so mannerly that he had pulled it along by the string and had not even touched the meat with his teeth.

That piece of meat was so delicious the French family never forgot it. It supplied not only one, but several meals, providing some of the best eating they had ever had. It needed no dressing or salt to doctor it up. It was already flavored. It reminded them of the way Elijah was fed by the brook. And they were sure that when they got to heaven and heard Elijah telling about the ravens feeding him, they would want to tell how a dog brought meat to them.

This is what Father had come to after giving up the lucrative practice of law, after giving up his beautiful, well-furnished home and his bank account. What had made him do it?

It was a long story which started way back with little Miss MacAfee down in Kentucky, a tollgate keeper full of the Spirit of God. People would fuss and quarrel at her as she collected the toll, but never a bitter word escaped her lips. She kept as sweet as though they had smiled at her and given her friendly words. The news of her heavenly spirit spread. People talked about it, marveled at it. Finally a reporter from the Louisville Courier heard of the sanctified tollgate keeper and went out to interview her.

"Yes," she told him, "I gave my heart to God, and He's kept me converted ever since. After He converted me, I gave myself to Him, just abandoned everything to Him, and He cleansed my heart and sanctified me wholly!"

The reporter went back to his office, chuckling to himself. He would have a good time writing this up to make people laugh. He wrote it in burlesque, and the paper gave it front-page prominence with glaring headlines. Folk did laugh, some of them, but there was more to the story. A copy of the paper drifted down into Mississippi and into the hands of a Mr. Hopper, hungry for something he did not know how to obtain. He read about Miss MacAfee and was convinced she had what he wanted.

"Wife," he exclaimed, "I'm going up to see her!"

The next train found him on his way. It was not long until the little tollgate keeper was praying with Mr. Hopper, exhorting him, quoting the promises to him. God met the hunger of his heart and sanctified him wholly.

When he returned to Mississippi, he started preaching holiness, and, as he did so, Dr. Carradine, pastor of the largest church in southern Methodism, but dissatisfied with his own spiritual condition, came under Mr. Hopper's influence. Soon he too rejoiced in sanctification of heart.

According to his own testimony, Dr. Carradine had been ordained after having answered in the affirmative the questions, "Do you expect to be made perfect in love in this life? Are you groaning after it?" "I did groan after it until I got it," he later said laconically. "Then they made me groan because I had it. They turned the fire on me." He was obligated to locate and go out into evangelistic work.

Dr. Carradine's travels once took him as far as Colorado, into a little mission hall in Denver. In the providence of God it so happened that when Dr. Carradine was in Denver, Father was there too, six hundred miles from home, bringing a lawsuit against a company. He would get big money out of the suit, and that was what Father lived for then.

Mother had prayed earnestly for Father's conversion at this time, and before he left on this trip, she insisted that he go to Rev. Peck's mission at least once while he was in Denver. On Sunday evening he was on his way to hear Dr. Robert McIntyre, one of the great orators of the Methodist Church. He decided to go by the mission and listen to the singing. Then he would hurry on to the First Church.

Father was not interested in missions. He was a member of a big church, superintendent of the Sunday school, and a pioneer in the prohibition movement. He had even closed the brewery of the county in which he was county attorney. He confiscated the property and carried the case to the Supreme Court of the United States, winning the case in the interest of prohibition. It was the first case of its kind in the country.

Father had many good qualities, but still he was a proud man, and missions were farthest from his concern. Now, merely because Mother requested it, and because he did enjoy good music, Father stole into the mission, expecting to step out as soon as the singing was over. Then, Dr. Carradine rose to preach. Something about this man, his countenance, his bearing, caught Father's interest.

He thought to himself, "I believe I'll stay just a few minutes longer and see what he's going to talk about." And so he did.

Dr. Carradine began to preach full salvation. This was something Father had always fought. But as the preacher went on and unfolded Bible truth, Father felt that he had never heard the Bible preached before. He saw himself a sinner and a blinded holiness fighter, without God and without hope.

"What a fool I've been!" Father said to himself. "Why couldn't I see that before? Why, it's plain as can be. It's in the Book, Old Testament and New."

Forgetting the humble surroundings of the little mission, the First Church at home with its eloquent preacher, the lawsuit, and the neat little sum which he had hoped would soon fall into his lap, father went to the altar and was converted. Then he went to the altar, seeking to be sanctified.

Now the Lord showed him that he was wrapped up in his business. He enjoyed the practice of law and he was making money -- big money. Covetousness that had always been his trait, and he did not deny it. He knew he was one of the most covetous men on the face of the earth. He was jealous of every banker on Wall Street. He did not want the Fords, the Rockefellers or the J. P. Morgans to have a penny.

"I'll never be satisfied," he had said once, "until I can fence in the whole world and own it."

Kneeling at the altar, Father knew that God was telling him he would have to close up his office and go and preach the Gospel. Preach the Gospel! Father had always felt a preacher was a fool. In college he had told some ministerial students, "You fellows are fools! Why, you'll starve to death!" And now God was calling him to be one of them!

Father could see an awful dark picture. He could see his children growing up without being educated. He could see them wearing old cast-off clothing. He could see their toes sticking out of their shoes. It seemed as though Father's heartstrings were tearing to pieces, but he looked up and said "Yes!"

Father stepped out on the promise, but did not have the witness of the infilling of the Holy Ghost as yet. After he had been seeking for five nights, he went down to the train to go home, got on a Pullman coach, and said to the porter, "I've been up five nights. I'm awfully tired. Please make up my berth in a hurry. I want to go to bed."

Father had no more than rolled over on his back until it seemed to him that the roof of the Pullman coach split, and the glory of the Lord rolled in. Down came a billow of holy fire, enveloping

him completely and surging through his whole being. All night he rolled and tumbled and shouted. No doubt the other passengers thought they had a crazy man on board. No matter. Father had seen the Lord. God had taken the remains of sin and covetousness so completely out of his heart that he now lived for another world. He often testified later, "I got sanctified on a train speeding through the country and I have been on the move ever since."

Father went home to straighten up his old life and make restitutions. It took about all he had. He did not have to worry about what Mother would say, though she knew by sad experience what it was to be poor. Mother had been left an orphan when she was but a young girl, having seen her father and mother buried in the same grave, almost at the same time, after an awful scourge of fever had swept through Ireland. She had gone from pillar to post. Then she had found God. Later, when she had her own family, she had made the consecration to go to the poorhouse if such would make preachers out of her husband and boys. And she meant it. No, Mother would not care if all their worldly goods should disappear. She would shout over it. Father knew this, though he did not know that while he was away, she had walked out on the porch one night, looked up at the stars, and prayed, "Lord, save my husband and send him home a prophet. Give me a sign."

Mother had only a little light as yet, but was as simple as a child in her faith. No sooner had she finished her prayer than a meteor shot across the heavens. "Thank You, Lord," she said, and took that meteor as her sign.

The reunion which took place upon Father's return was a happy one indeed. Father was not only saved and sanctified, but had received a call to preach. Mother was in her glory. Father was reputed to be one of the best hog raisers in Douglas County, Kansas, but now all desire for hogs, fine home, and law, faded out of Father's life.

When Father left the practice of law and started to preach, the family was confronted with many testings of faith. They learned what it meant to be poor. They learned what it meant not to have meat for the table.

One day a fellow preacher and his wife came to dinner. There was no meat in the house and Mother thought it would never do to serve dinner to company with no meat on the table. She had long been in the habit of slipping to the landing of the back stairway to pray during the day. So now she stole in there and prayed, "Oh, Lord, send us meat for dinner." No doubt she reminded the Lord that He must do it quickly, too.

Mother went on preparing what she could for the dinner, not knowing what was going on outside. But about the time she had finished praying, a dog had run through the yard after a rabbit. The children took after the dog and got the rabbit. As if timed by the clock, but rather by divine providence, just then a neighbor came by. He had been fishing in the river near the French home, and gave the children a fish. They ran in and told Mother about the rabbit and the fish. Her face lighted up.

"Hurry, Children, and clean them," she said, "and I will fry them for dinner."

Dinner was quickly prepared, and the preacher and his wife were invited to the table. As soon as the wife saw what was on it, she turned a beaming face to her husband. "Oh, Husband," she said, "we have just what we like. You like rabbit and I like fish." God knows how to furnish just the right menu, Mother thought.

They trusted the Lord for many other things aside from meat. They did not know what it was to go to the medicine closet for a pill when anyone got sick. There was no Vick's salve, no rubbing alcohol, no cough syrup. Neither could they call a doctor, for there was no money. If there had been, they would have had to go many miles to get medical help since they lived so far out in the country. What did they do? They trusted God. And who would want a more blessed experience than that? It was almost fascinating to get into a tight place, they agreed, just to see how the Lord would get them out.

Not always had it been so, however. Time was when Father and Mother had not yet heard anything about holiness, much less about trusting God. Then once, at a time of urgent need, Mother learned her first lesson. Little Willie, just older than Robb, suffered pitifully from epilepsy. The doctor had done all he could.

"He'll die in one of those spasms," the doctor said. "We can give him medicine. We can relieve the force of the shock, but there's no chance, no hope."

Then Mother remembered a Quaker lady who had come to town and who went around praying with the sick. She did not claim any gift of healing, yet often the ones she prayed for recovered.

"Well," thought Mother, "the doctors have given Willie up. I believe we ought to take him to this lady and let her pray."

So Willie was taken to the lady. She knelt down with him and prayed with him -- as simple a prayer as a Sunday school girl would pray.

Willie was disappointed. He had expected many words to be prayed over him. "The doctors have given me up, he said importantly to himself. "It will take more than that to do me any good!"

The woman got up from her knees and, turning to Mother, she warned, "Now, Mrs. French, throw away all medicine. Trust God. If those spasms come back on him, don't lose faith. Hold steady. Tell him to look to Jesus. Believe God and he will be healed."

It was a timely admonition, for, the next morning early, an awful spasm again seized the boy. Little Robb knew at once what was happening. Willie was going into a convulsion.

Mother rushed across the room. "Willie," she cried, "look to Jesus! Look to Jesus!"

The little fellow caught the words, frantic as he was. He lifted his head and looked up. Instantly, he relaxed. The spasm was gone, and in all the years of his life he never had another.

Now that Father had found the Lord, he was just as consecrated as he had been selfish before. Nothing was too precious to give up to answer the call of God to preach the Gospel. Father and Mother dedicated their nice home to the Lord. They first offered it to the conference for a Bible school. But the conference did not feel able at this time to open a school, so it was turned into a rescue home for girls.

Later, Father went up to conference, not caring whether they gave him a church or not. If they didn't, he himself would find a place where he could preach.

"French," they said, "what do you want?"

"Oh, I'm just waiting to see if there's something left over. If there is, I'll take it."

Usually a hard scrabble circuit was left over, and so there was now. Soon after Father returned from conference, Robb found him working on the light lumber wagon.

"What are you doing, Father?" Robb asked.

"We're leaving home, Son, and going out across the country to preach the Gospel," he answered.

Robb told the other children, and from then on they lived in an unreal world, alternately excited with the prospect of adventure and wonder promised by a prairie schooner trip, alternately sad with the thought of leaving the only home they remembered their lovely, beautiful home.

Their home was a part of their very hearts. They loved the spacious house, the broad sloping lawns, the majestic elm trees that shaded the yard. Nearby was the orchard with its wonderful apples and other fruit. A short distance away stood a huge, well-arranged barn. Back of that lay the pasture, the meadows, the fields. Still farther to the south, the Kaw River flowed past the small farm where they had fished, waded, and swum. All this they were leaving because Father was so unselfish he was willing to take any left-over circuit where he might preach the Gospel. But it was not only Father who left it willingly. When they realized that Father would have a chance to preach to needy souls, they all left with such cheerful abandon that even the youngest could sing, "A tent or a cottage, why should I care?"

So that is how it came about that Father and Mother, Frances, Will and Robb had squeezed themselves and their belongings into the crude old covered wagon and turned westward. Since the property in Lawrence had not yet been sold, George stayed back with Grandfather and Grandmother to help look after the house. As they rattled out the front gate, George and Grandmother waved them good-by.

At last, they were bumping their way across two hundred miles of Kansas prairie. Father was going to his first charge -- the Excelsior and Valley churches -- -twelve miles from Lyons. When the winds came at night, as they did every night of that lonely journey, they were somewhat of a trial to Father. His antipathy may have been caused by the fact that his brother had once been sucked out of the house and carried some distance by a tornado. Seven of his ribs were broken and he was so

bruised otherwise that his life was despaired of for a time. Now, the winds often swept across the plains almost like young tornadoes. The canvas flapped and the bows swayed from side to side until it looked as though all would be swept away. In the moaning of the wind and the squeaking of the bows, the Lord seemed to say, "You promised Me to go all the way. Do you mean it now? Do you mean you'll go with Me no matter what? Do you mean it?"

"Yes!" Father gladly answered back, as unflinching as ever. "Yes, praise God! I mean it. And I'm on my way!"

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Chapter 2

In Balaam's Footsteps

"A tent or a cottage, why should I care?
They're building a palace for me over there."

It was good that little Robb's song voiced the deep consecration of all the French family, and that it was not just the ephemeral fancy of a passing moment. For in the years that followed, they found themselves living in old, tumble-down houses -- once in a log cabin, and once in a shack that was turned into a cowshed after they moved out.

Mother had seemed to have a vision of the house they were to move into on this new Excelsior-Valley charge. Valley had a church building, but no parsonage, and the Excelsior congregation had neither church nor parsonage building, but worshipped in the schoolhouse. The Frenches moved into a shabby house on the bleak prairie which corresponded well with Mother's vision. The furniture had not yet arrived, so Mother spread a tablecloth on the floor, and all of them gathered around to eat in primitive fashion.

The French children were a bit puzzled by some of the privations that befell them that first winter in their new home. Why did Father not go to town and buy Christmas presents for them as he had done back in Lawrence?

"Why, Father ...?" little Robb finally was courageous enough to ask. "Why don't you go to town for presents anymore?"

Father smiled and reached into his pocket. He pulled out two pennies. "This is all I have, Son. This is why."

When Christmas came, Will and Robb each received a pair of trousers which their aunt had made from some old clothes. For Frances there was only the broken piece of an old tablet and a sweet potato. A tear slipped down her cheek in the first shock of her disappointment, but she quickly brushed it away, for she knew that Father and Mother had done the best they could.

In some ways the self-denial and doing without brought a family togetherness that might not have been effected otherwise, for not only the children suffered the lack of seeming necessities, but so did Father and Mother. Once while Father was holding a meeting in a certain place and staying in a very poor home, the lady of the house apologized as she handed him a broken piece of mirror so he could see to shave.

"You don't need to apologize," Father told her kindly. "I have been shaving by looking into a shiny buckle on my suitcase."

The place where the French family now found themselves had its compensations. Though bleak in winter, the broad wheatfields looked like a carpet of beautiful green in the springtime. In the early summer, the wheat, grown to full height and waving in the breeze, reminded one of the ocean. Later, when it turned brown, it made a charming sight.

Added to the joys of summertime was the excitement of having George with them again. The children were very happy. Now, when Father and Mother were away and the wolves and coyotes cried in the sand hills not far away, Will and Frances and Robb could go to sleep feeling much safer because George was with them.

Father preached faithfully in the little old schoolhouse, and God gave some gracious services. Some time later, the people built a nice parsonage, then, in due time, a church building.

Things did not go so well at the Valley church. It was a holiness-fighting church, Father discovered.

"I'll just use tact," he decided, "and lead them gently into the light."

So, in his preaching, he studiously avoided using the terms "sanctification" or "holiness." He spoke of "perfect love" and "the victorious life" instead. The people sat with tear-stained faces and drank in the messages readily.

"We have one of the greatest preachers we have ever had," they said to one another.

But Mother was distressed. She came from the closet of prayer one day with deep concern. "Papa," she said, "God has shown me you are right in Balaam's place."

"That's right," Father agreed, "God has been telling me the same thing. I even had a dream that my main artery was cut and that I was bleeding to death."

The next Sunday when Father preached, every little while he used the terms "holiness" and "sanctification." It was like he was preaching to a different congregation. The people twisted in their seats, whispered to one another, looked daggers at the preacher. Before the next appointment, they called a meeting to vote out the pastor. When Father, Mother, and the children drew near the church for service, they could hear someone screaming. It was Sister Willard, a member of the church who had been gloriously sanctified under Father's ministry. Now, while the rest voted, she walked the aisles crying, "You are crucifying Christ! You are crucifying Christ!"

When it was all over, Father got up and preached. The next night when the French family went for service, the church building was locked. Father preached on the church steps. That year the Conference turned the church out, the doors were soon closed, and the building moved away. The people had not welcomed God's visitation.

These were days when even the smallest necessities were all prayed in. It was as simple and natural as breathing air.

"Now, Children, let us pray," Father would say, and he would start- "Give us this day our daily bread."

It was no idle prayer. They all meant it. They would have no bread unless God sent it. And when He did, it was bread to be remembered, more delicious than the bread of future, more plenteous days would ever be.

Mother never forgot the experience at the Valley church, and in her gratitude to God that Father had not given in, her consecration went deeper and deeper. She let nothing swerve her from a conviction once she was sure it had come from the Lord. She had always been that way.

One instance of this was in the case of Mother's shouting. She knew her shouting embarrassed Father (this before he was saved), but she had kept on shouting. Father persecuted her so severely that she felt she might have to leave home, but she stood her ground.

One morning Father said to Mother, "Nellie, I'm going to take you out for a ride tonight. We may meet some of the judges of the court and some of the lawyers I know so well. I don't want you looking like this. I want you to curl your hair and fix up like you used to." Then he left.

Mother thought it over. "Well, maybe I'd better keep peace in the family," she reasoned with herself.

That was way back in the days when she did not have the light that she had later -- way back when they did not have a holiness church in the town. Mother stepped to the mirror then, and when she did so, God stepped between her and the glass and said, "God or Baal."

Mother turned white. Was it as serious as that? "O God," she promised, trembling, "I'll never bow my knee to Baal."

She met Father at the door that evening, looking the same as she had when he left in the morning except that she was pale and wide-eyed.

"O Papa," she pled with him, "please don't ever say anything to me again about curling my hair. I nearly lost my soul!"

Father looked at her a minute and then admitted, "I really believe you look better this way, anyhow, Nellie."

So it was that Mother had stepped out practically alone at first, had taken the lead in spiritual things, had suffered persecution. But it paid off a thousand-fold when Father got saved, when he came to believe as she did, when he became willing to suffer the loss of all his worldly goods to preach the Gospel.

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Chapter 3
A Hiding Place

In the years when Robb and Will and Frances and George were growing up, their home life revolved around the family altar, whether their home was the spacious home of a lawyer, a tumble-down shack, or a log cabin. For Mother had resolved at the outset that if everything else went to pieces, they were going to have family prayer morning and evening.

Once when the house caught fire during morning devotions, it looked as though everything else might go to pieces, but while the others threw on water, Mother prayed. Perhaps she did more to put out the fire than did those who threw on the water, they later decided. At any rate, she was going to have family prayer if the house burned down over her head.

Mother also determined that family prayers would not be an old grind.

"Papa, Children," she said, "we're not going to have old, dry family prayers here. We're going to have holy fire burning on this family altar."

And they did. If things were dull and dry at first, they waited until the glory came. Mother knew if they had the glory, prayer time would not be a grind, but a joy.

Even the smallest of the children learned that the family prayer hour was a hallowed time. Aunt Jennie had helped Mother to plant this feeling in their little hearts. She was visiting Mother. While prayer was going on and everyone else knelt reverently, George, then only two years old, toddled around, pulling out drawers, scattering papers, and having a good time.

When the older ones got up from their knees, Aunt Jennie turned to Mother. "Nellie," she said, "you're doing a terrible thing."

"What -- what is that?" Mother asked, startled.

"Why, letting this boy be irreverent while you're having family prayer."

"Irreverent? Why, Jennie, what are you talking about? He's only two years old. He doesn't know what he is doing."

"He does know what he is doing," Aunt Jennie persisted. "Nellie, I went to hear a missionary from the Fiji Islands. She said, 'If we get the children two years old and under, we never lose them. We're sure of them. We don't understand it, but there's something about those formative two years that is

all important. If we get them when they are over two, we're never sure of them. They're likely to go back to their heathen gods.' George knows what he is doing. He needs to be taught reverence.

Mother never forgot that, and from then on, even the babies were trained to be quiet while the family prayed.

It was at the family altar that little Robb, four years of age, was saved. Mother set the chairs around in a circle as she always did, and then she said, "Children, talk to Jesus now just like you talk to Mother."

Robb had a burden on his little-boy heart this morning a burden that he did not know what to do with, but, as young as he was, he could understand those words, "Talk to Jesus just like you talk to Mother."

Kneeling at an old-fashioned, solid-bottomed chair, sobbing as though his heart would break, he told Jesus all about his troubles and his heavy heart. When he got up from his knees, there was a puddle of tears on the chair, but Robb was happier than he had ever been before. He went out on the back steps and sat in the glow of the evening sun all by himself. Everything looked so changed and beautiful that he thought he was in a new world. The trees had a different loveliness, the birds sang in a different note. Jesus had come into his heart!

Just as Mother jealously guarded the family altar and the soul interests of her children, so she earnestly instructed her little ones and faithfully took them to church.

On Saturday she would say, "Today is a busy day, Children. Put away your toys. Polish your shoes. Tomorrow is the Lord's Day. We're going to worship God tomorrow. We're going to remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy."

When Sunday came and they neared the church, Mother would say, "Now, Children, we're going in to worship. This is God's house. We don't want to be irreverent. If you want a drink, get it before you go in. We're not going to leave unless we absolutely have to."

Though revival meetings in the little church often lasted five or six weeks, the French family attended every night. In all kinds of weather, Father hitched up Kit and away they went in a little, old buggy with the cracker-box on the back. Father and Mother and George sat on the seat up front, the other three children in the cracker-box behind them.

On winter nights they would start out on their journey nice and warm, and then sometimes before they knew it, a Kansas blizzard would sweep across the plain, blowing snow in their faces, stinging their cheeks, buffeting them, blinding them, almost freezing them. Then again, the night might be pleasant, mild, starry, when they made their way to meeting, only to play a trick on them and pelt them with a freezing rain on the way home. Icicles would hang from Father's mustache. On one such occasion, Father's overcoat, having been soaked with rain and then frozen stiff, was able to stand on the kitchen floor by itself when he finally took it off after unhitching for the night.

It was a full five miles from the French home to the church, and it seemed more like twenty-five when the weather became unruly; but for all that, not one of the children would have missed a night of the meeting for anything. Even little Robb, six years of age, was so thrilled and stirred at his first glimpse of the church lights that he felt like turning somersaults. The rapturous singing and stirring messages were something he would never forget.

True, after about the third week of going night after night, he would be getting tired. In that event, he would curl up on the church seat during service and go to sleep. However, when the altar call was made, up he would be again, wide awake. There was something about penitents going down the aisle, the saints gathering around and praying them through that thrilled his little heart beyond expression. The family returned to their little cottage feeling almost as though they had been to heaven and back.

Mother kept a close eye on her family even after they had all found the Lord. At the family altar, Father kneeling over there, Mother over here, the children in kind of a circle between, she would say, "Robb, your testimonies don't ring like they used to; I'm afraid you're losing out. George, I've been watching you. I've been bothered about you; I've been burdened for you; I feel like you're slipping, George."

By that time they would all be weeping and sobbing. Then Father would put his arms around them, pray with them, and point them to Jesus. The first thing they knew they were having a real, old-fashioned, hallelujah time. God would come down; the Holy Ghost would melt their hearts; they would all pray through and touch God afresh. It would turn out to be a genuine revival around the family altar.

The years went on. So did the family altar. And the fire on the altar burned brighter and more brighter as Father and Mother and the children continued to honor the Lord.

It was not uncommon for the fire to fall on Father or Mother, but one morning it fell on Robb, so timid, so backward and reticent it was almost pitiful. Robb -- in the teenage stage when he seemed somehow to outgrow himself, when he couldn't even be around without upsetting the gravy at the table, or knocking over the milk, or stumbling over the stove or the coal bucket. He was so awkward and self-conscious that his life was almost a burden to him. But that morning, all the innate reserve was gone. There he was, shouting, rejoicing in the Lord! Brothers and sisters stared at him, open-mouthed. What could have happened to Robb? There was only one answer. God had come down their souls to greet, and glory crowned the mercy seat.

Mother's prayers did much to supply the fuel for the fire on the family altar. They formed a bulwark around her children and her little home. The children found their way piled up so high with her prayers and fastings that it seemed they were helpless to climb over them to get to hell. Saturday night never found Mother in bed. That night every week she prayed all night long on her callused knees. Through the wee hours of the morning she grappled with the powers of darkness, building a wall of fire around her family.

The children did not know why Mother missed so many meals. They did not know why her eyes would sink in their sockets, why the carpet would be sopping wet with tears where she had prayed all night. Mother would sigh when she was under a burden -- the sort of sigh that sounded like a wail. A tear would steal down her face. The sigh would break out into a cry. There would be a heave and then another sigh that sounded like eternity. It seemed that no one could pray like Mother. Mother's prayers and faithfulness bore fruit. Her children loved the things of God.

In later life, Robb remarked, "Moses' mother said Moses was a proper child. That's a mother for you. He may be as freckled as a turkey, knock-kneed, or half-witted, but he is a proper child. The mother of Moses hid him. Where can we hide our children? About the best place I know is behind the family altar. That's where Mother hid us -- in the secret place of prayer."

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Chapter 4 **Through the Storm**

After two years on the Excelsior-Valley charge, Father was given the church at Wilson, Kansas. Again the French family climbed into the old covered wagon and set off for new parts. This time a donkey had been added to their equipment. Many years later Robb remarked that as he read about the ass Balaam rode on his memorable journey, he was favorably inclined toward the beast, but as he thought of their own impish burro he could remember nothing about him that would have suggested anything pious. He had the habit of running fast, then stopping abruptly, putting his head down while the rider slid over his head to the ground. Many had tried, but none had been able to stay on the donkey's back, even with a saddle.

On this trip, Robb was riding the animal some distance behind the wagon when the beast performed this stunt. The first thing he knew, Robb was lying on the stony road, wounded, bruised and screaming. Finally, his absence from the company was discovered and he was rescued.

At Wilson, the Frenches found a good parsonage, a nice church building, and some fine church members. However, it was a very wicked town. In the course of time, God visited the place with a wonderful revival. It broke out in the public school, and a number of students were converted. So strong was the wicked element, however, that these converts were taken out, thrown to the ground, and beaten. Many of them fell away after this, but not without Mother's warning which she gave in no uncertain way, and which they doubtless never forgot.

(Years later, it was at the Wilson church that Robb held his first series of evangelistic services. The meeting was held during the Christmas holidays. Robb had with him a band of students, and the Lord gave them a gracious time.)

The Frenches had carried a burden for a Bible school for some time. During their stay at Wilson, the burden intensified. Father talked the matter over with others until interest sprang up all over the conference. Some of the officials wanted Father to travel the conference, hold quarterly meetings, and stir up additional interest in the school among preachers and laymen. This Father agreed to do. So, back to the lovely home in Lawrence went the French family. The children were delighted though they knew their stay could be only temporary.

While Father was traveling, William Trusler of Eskridge, Kansas, offered a two-story stone building for the school. This the conference accepted, so the French home in Lawrence was sold, and the family once more crowded into the little prairie schooner, setting out this time for Eskridge.

It was wintertime -- December of 1900. A blizzard had been raging, but now Father thought the storm was moderating, so the wagon started on its journey. It was not long, however, until it became

apparent that the blast was not over. Blizzard snows and winds swooped down across the plains upon the unsheltered wagon, buffeting fiercely the little family out on the prairie alone. Heavy though it was, the little schooner rocked and swayed beneath such fury. Its joints groaned and creaked and growled. Snow sifted in when the wind caught the canvas, almost tearing it from its ropes. When night came, the temperature dropped from twelve degrees to zero. The horses were traveling over frozen ground and their hoofs were bleeding.

Father was solicitous for his poor, suffering horses. If they could only make it to town, perhaps there would be a livery barn there which could take care of them. On they crawled, when Father noticed lights -- a farmhouse. He went up to the door to inquire about the nearest livery barn. The door opened, and who should be standing in the light of the lamp but one of Father's old friends in politics. Father was encouraged. If there is no livery barn near, he thought, it may be I can drive behind one of this man's large buildings where, at least, we will be sheltered from the force of the wind.

But the man spoke very coolly. Evidently he did not recognize Father. And no wonder. The old kerosene heater in the schooner had smoked so badly that before they had gone very far from home, the occupants were black and greasy looking from head to toe. Glancing once more longingly into the home that looked so comfortable and at the fire that was so cheery and warm, but which extended no kind welcome, Father turned his face again to the howling blizzard. On his way to the wagon, a voice sounding suspiciously like that of the tempter suggested, "It's pretty tough, isn't it, the way you are treated?"

Father, fearing seriously how the night might turn out, was able to say against the sob of the wind, "Oh, but bless God, I am still on the way. Yes, I am still on the way.

They camped that night beside the road. Mother and Will and Frances and Robb pulled the blankets and heavy quilts over their heads and snuggled down, cozy and warm on the big bed in the back of the wagon. Father and George did not fare so well. The little space in front which was theirs was too short for them to stretch out on and too cold to let them sleep. After relaxing a bit in their small quarters, they got out of the wagon, walked the frozen ground, beating their hands against their bodies, and stamping their feet to keep from freezing. All night they alternated these procedures, until at last another day dawned, biting cold, and they were on their way again.

They arrived in Eskridge Saturday night. The furniture had been shipped earlier, and friends had hauled it to the house, piling it almost to the ceiling. Father lighted a fire, and they all began to thaw out. Since their lunch had frozen en route, they had eaten very little on the way. Now, they were too weary to care whether they ate or not. It was so good to be in a house again, even though they had to sleep on the floor that night.

Sunday, Father conducted a little service all for themselves. They were so thankful to be together, alive and warm, that, even though the house was bare and disorderly, their hearts rejoiced and their lips sang glad praises to God.

Monday was a rushed day. Everyone scurried here and there, putting down carpets, moving furniture, putting things to rights. In the midst of all the muddle, two little girls, Geraldine Trusler and Hildred Williams, came to visit Mother let them in and asked their names. As Robb was passing through the room to get a mop, Mother stopped him. "Robb," she said, "these little girls are Geraldine Trusler and Hildred Williams, neighbor girls."

The girls were giggling, and Robb, sorely embarrassed, hoped they would soon leave or that he could somehow get away. He did not know then that, through the years, charming little Geraldine with the big, brown eyes, would hold a very special place in his heart and life. Hildred was the daughter of the pastor, and what a pastor he proved to be! No one, it seemed, could listen to his stirring sermons and be subjected to one of his rugged tests without feeling almost as though he had been before the Judgment Seat of Christ. The best of saints often wiped the perspiration from their faces and pled the blood of the Saviour as he spoke.

Eskridge was to be the scene of some of the greatest experiences and fondest memories of the French family. The school opened in the spring of 1904 with nine scholars, who sat on kitchen chairs around a kitchen table. Hildred, Glen and Melvin Williams, Golden and Geraldine Trusler, and George, Frances, Will, and Robb French made up the student body. The nine were not to be the only ones for long. Young people soon began to pour in from far and near. God's approval rested on the effort from the start. There seemed to be little or no need for recreation, so manifest was the presence of the Holy Spirit in the schoolrooms and in the public services. At one time, teachers and students met in one of the rooms to pray. Around and around they prayed, from the oldest to the youngest taking turns, until the Spirit fell. The glory of that hour was indescribable.

From the very first, it seemed, there was an understanding between the small, tow-headed French boy and the wee, brown-haired Trusler girl just a year younger than he. Notes passed in the schoolroom written in a scrawly, little-boy hand, and found their way to where she sat. "I'll be your sweetheart if you'll be mine," they said. Just what was written in answer has never been told, but when small Robb had a birthday, little Geraldine bought a nice New Testament to give him. What should she write in it a Scripture verse? Which one? She searched and pondered. Ah! Here was a verse that sounded grown-up and good. It said, "My son, remember my law." This she painstakingly copied on a blank page in the front and ended with "Happy Birthday, from Geraldine." She wrapped the precious Book in dainty paper and gave it to Robb. Though in later years he had occasion to smile at the admonition accompanying it, the gift was one he never forgot.

Father's school was carried on prayerfully. Problems were taken by the staff, not to a council room for discussion, but to their knees for presentation to their Heavenly Father. At one time, Miss Reed, the music teacher, became dissatisfied with the policy of the school. She gave notice on this particular day that she was on her way to give her last lesson and then she was going to leave town.

About noon the administration and some students gathered in an upstairs room to fast and pray. So great was the burden for this teacher that sixteen people lay on the floor as dead.

Robb, a barefoot boy of eleven or twelve years, looked on in wonder. This is God! he thought as he stood there awe-stricken. I'm going to see this.

The president of the school lay flat on his back, his arms rigid, his face bloodless. Finally he got up. "I don't believe there's any hope for her," he said. "I couldn't get my burden through. I'm afraid she's crossed the deadline."

One after another arose and said the same thing -- "We couldn't get our burden through."

Now the door opened and in stepped none other than she -- the music teacher. There she stood -- tall, dignified, looking scorn at the whole group.

"What does this mean?" she demanded in words as cold as icicles.

"This means we've been under a burden for your soul," Father said. "Probably the last opportunity you'll have."

If anything, Father's words had the effect of only deepening her scorn. She looked mad enough to pick up a stove poker and beat him over the head. Finally, she took a chair and placed it in front of the door. Then she sat down, looking hostile and defiant at the crowd. Whether she placed the chair where she did, purposely, so that no one could go in or out, nobody knew; but it served that purpose. Robb saw that it would be impossible to get out, but he did not want out. I'm going to see this through, he resolved again.

For breathless moments, the teacher sat glaring. Only a smothered sob here and there could be heard in the deathlike stillness. Then old Mrs. Bates groaned as though she were dying. Only now did the others see that Mrs. Bates had not risen from the floor. People had confidence in Mrs. Bates. Mother French joined hands with Geraldine's mother. "It looks like a hopeless case," one of them said, "but here's Mrs. Bates. She's still under the burden."

Down they went on their knees in a covenant to hold on until victory should come. They wept. They prayed. "Lord, the lights are out, they cried. "It's dark -- oh-h, so dark. But You taught us the parable of the man that kept knocking even after the lights were out. It looks as though it's hopeless, Lord, but we're knocking. We're going to hold on till You give us what we want."

Robb's head was bowed, but he saw his mother and Mrs. Trusler in their agony. How would the music teacher take this? He glanced at her. The defiant head tipped slightly -- ever so slightly. Would she give in? Would she break? Robb watched her still more closely. Then he saw the lips begin to move. "Thank God! " he said, almost aloud. "Looks like she's praying!"

In another moment down went the teacher in a heap by the chair -- weeping, sobbing. All afternoon and night she struggled and prayed. It seemed to Robb that it was like a bloodstained battlefield. The forces of light would charge and the devil would retreat. Then the devil would charge and the saints would be forced to retreat. Back and forth the battle raged. But at 4:15 in the morning, the victory was gained. It was a victory worth celebrating, so teachers and prayers, including Robb, celebrated until a quarter past six. They had been there a total of some eighteen hours. Miss Reed went out from that place to become a successful evangelist.

"You couldn't buy that picture from my memory wall for all the money in the state," Robb said many years later. "I'm glad I lived in a generation when God manifested Himself and when souls travailed. People aren't going to get saved unless someone gets under a burden for them."

There were other severe battles and tests while the French family served God in Eskridge. One cold night it looked as though Will would choke to death with diphtheria. With every struggle to catch a breath, it seemed he would die. Father slipped out into the kitchen, cold and frosty, and prayed.

"Lord," he said, "I gave my children to Thee, and it seems as though now since I dedicated them to Thee and Thy service, Thou art going to take them out.

"Haven't I a right to do with Mine own what I will?" his Heavenly Father gently asked.

Father acquiesced, never once going back on his consecration. It wasn't long until Will recovered.

When Robb was still just a young lad of perhaps fourteen or fifteen years, he had a dream. He thought that Jesus was coming that night, and he thought everyone knew it. They all talked about it among themselves. Yes, no doubt about it. He was coming that night. Little handfuls of people were standing everywhere, and that was what they were talking about. They were all excited. Yes, He's coming tonight, better be prepared.

And so they were waiting for Jesus to come. They were expecting a light to shine in the East and reflect in the West. As they looked, sure enough a light slipped over the horizon and began to scintillate there in the eastern sky. Yes, He was coming! They were on tiptoe in suspense, waiting for His face to appear!

But I don't feel anything pulling me upward, Robb thought to himself. I wonder if there's anything in my heart that would keep me from going. I wonder if I'm ready. Oh, have I failed somewhere?

The suffering Robb went through that night was indescribable. When he awakened and found it was only a dream, his heart started aching. He got out of bed and, sinking to his knees, said, "Oh, Lord, don't let that be a reality. When Thou dost come, I want to know that everything is in the clear. I don't want to be careless and drifting, and doing things I wouldn't have done a few years ago. Keep me ready!"

Robb and four others -- still just boys -- went out from the school to hold a meeting in the country near Ames, Kansas. They pitched a tent. It was a hard community, but the boys were on fire for the Lord, and they wanted to see something go. Robb, Will and their two cousins would go out in the woods and pray and groan and cry. Finally, they got down in the meeting-house and one cousin prayed, "O God, stir this community. Waken folk up. Send a cyclone if necessary."

Lo and behold, a day or two later, an awful cyclone struck. Nobody was killed, but it mowed a swath through that community, tearing down churches, houses and barns. It ripped through buildings as though they were cornstalks.

Some strangers had just come to town. When they heard about the prayer, they said, "Those boys ought to be strung up to a pole. Why do they allow that?"

A big sinner walked out and said, "You'd better keep your hands off those boys. They had enough religion to pray a cyclone on this town. They may pray a cyclone down on you."

The boys had things going their way.

In later years Robb sometimes likened the wrath of God to the storms in Kansas. He once said, "We used to have awful drouths in Kansas, followed by storms." Sometimes it would cloud up and the thunders would roll and the lightings flash, and then, all of a sudden, it would get still. Not a leaf seemed to move. Even the animals the cows in the pasture seemed restless about something. Stillness! What was it? The lull before the storm. Do you know what we're in? We're just in the lull before the blast of the trumpet when God turns loose his unmitigated wrath on people who have trampled His Son under their feet. I have a fear of God -- a reverential fear. Our God is a consuming fire. O if we knew the storm, the lurid lightning, the roll of distant thunder that is about to break! O America, thou art a godless nation!"

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Chapter 5

Pioneering In Alabama

After some years the Eskridge school was moved to Wakefield, and then to Miltonvale, Kansas. When this took place, the local people felt that their school at Eskridge should continue at least until their own children could finish their education. Thus Eskridge Bible School was maintained for some time longer. Father again became president and held this office until Raymond Young, a graduate of Peniel University, was secured to take his place.

As the work was prospering, Father French felt free to turn his attention to a desire he had long entertained of establishing an industrial school where poor students could work their way through school. His brother, an officer in the Salvation Army, had charge of opening up Army Industrial Homes in the South. He wrote to Father about the cheap land near Birmingham, Alabama. Mr. Kewish and Father French went down and bought a 500-acre farm near Eden, later incorporated into Pell City.

Mother was rather averse to the idea because of her deep interest in the work at Eskridge. But one night as she knelt in prayer, the Lord definitely spoke to her and said, "I want you in Alabama."

Things began to move rapidly after that. Two freight cars were chartered. Stock and other belongings were stored in the respective cars, and with William French in one car and Harry Kewish in the other, they left for Alabama. The remaining members of the families followed on the passenger train. It was quite a reunion when they arrived at Eden, Alabama, and joined those who had gone on before.

Everything was new -- both country and people. However, the newcomers soon fell deeply in love with the southern people and were ever afterwards to count themselves as real southerners.

Soon after arriving, the Frenches settled on the farm. A small building was erected in which a grade school was conducted and church services were held.

The Frenches and Kewishes had not been in Alabama long when Mr. Kewish decided to take the entire 500-acre farm. Father French rather took it as a divine providence. Mother never was enthusiastic about the farm venture for fear they would all be engulfed in too much materialism. Father then bought a tent and the family launched out into pioneer evangelism, with Father and Robb alternating in preaching, Will leading the singing, Frances playing the organ and Mother praying and exhorting.

They pitched the tent first at Eden. God blessed graciously. From there they moved the tent to Pell City. Two young ladies, Dora Walker and Frances Compton, had prayed that a revival might come

to Pell City. Others painted a discouraging picture of the prospects. They said there was so much drunkenness and fighting on the streets that it was dangerous to be out at night. Still others declared that many people in Pell City would not attend religious services. However, the tent was pitched.

For about two and a half weeks very little seemed to be accomplished. About that time, Tom Miller, a very likable man, but a terrible drunkard, was saved. This was used of God to stir the people for miles around. The crowds increased until they were almost unwieldy, and for some thirteen weeks the meeting ran on. The picture show closed; the poolroom closed; the dance pavilion closed. The Spirit of the Lord came mightily on the place. Noted drunkards, gamblers and criminals were saved. At times the tent served only as a center for the great crowds assembled on the common. Men were saved who worked in the mill. They shouted the victory to such an extent that the manager shut down the mill. He feared they would be caught in the machinery in the midst of their rejoicing.

Frances Compton and Dora Walker were in their glory. God, and only God, was answering their prayers. Frances claimed the conversion of her brother. He had been drunk as early as six years of age. He was uneducated and inclined to be wild and uncouth. Later in life he told how he used to eat peanuts, hulls and all, and drink anything that had alcohol in it. Will French fairly ran him down and led him to the altar. The Lord wonderfully saved Virgil Compton, and he became quite an able preacher.

Boss Phillips was doubtless one of the most notorious drunkards and criminals in the state. Frequently he was in the penitentiary and in jail. He came to the tent one hot August night, drunk and wearing a stolen overcoat. The next night during the altar call he came down the aisle weeping and fell at the altar. A young man hurried to the platform.

"That man kneeling there is the leader of the underworld," he told Robb. "You better pray for him. If he gets converted, it will shake the whole country."

But Boss Phillips was doing such a good job praying he did not seem to need much help. Soon he bounded to his feet, praising the Lord and shaking hands with everyone, the tears running down his face. People looked on dumfounded as though they could not believe their eyes.

Numbers of other very wicked people were converted. The Frenches did not count converts. But one of the gentlemen who, with his wife, took deep interest in the tent meeting, estimated that 750 people were converted. A good church was organized with ninety members.

Many memorable experiences attended the evangelistic labors of the French family. Father, Mother, Will, Robb and Frances started out one time from Tuscaloosa in a Model T Ford, planning to go to Birmingham and on to Pell City. At first the little car had good power. It was taking its occupants along at a steady clip, and they were getting along fine. Then, almost imperceptibly at first, the engine started to wheeze. The noise increased, the farther they went.

"What's the matter with this car?" Robb wanted to know. "Sounds like it has asthma or something. Wonder if anything could be wrong with the radiator?" (Robb never professed to be a mechanic.)

Finally the machinery developed an ominous rattle and could hardly make the hills. But they kept on. They would drive down a hill as fast as they safely could to get all the momentum possible, then go up the next one as far as the car would take them. When it chugged down, all but the driver would jump out and push it over the hill to get a good start down the other side. The noise kept getting worse and worse, until it was nothing but a clatter. Finally, Robb stopped, climbed out, and looked in the radiator. At this juncture a man came along.

"What's your trouble?" he asked good-naturedly.

That, of course, was what Robb wanted to know. The man reached for the crank and turned the engine over.

"Why, you're out of oil, that's what."

"Oh -- "

The Ford did have a little glass gauge to show how much oil the engine had, but that had been broken, and the oil had gradually leaked out. Fortunately, the man had some oil. He put it in, and the Model T got the party to their destination. Damage had been done, however, and some repairs were necessary.

My, my! thought Robb. Sometimes we try to have revivals and fail to make sure we have plenty of oil. Oil. Prayer is to the church, to the home, to every part of life what oil is to machinery. No wonder we clatter around, and revivals chug down. We need the oil of prayer.

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Chapter 6
A Deed of Kindness

Robb was twenty-one now. He and Will decided to enter Trevecca College, Nashville, Tennessee, and work their way through. Their cousin, Ward Folsom, was with them. Their two years at Trevecca before graduating in 1915 was more than an experience in book learning. It was an experience in self-denial and hardship, proving the Lord faithful withal.

The boys secured rooms in a rat-infested house and batched. They cooked soup bones until there was no more soup to be extracted. They made many meals out of day-old bread bought from a German bakery. The proprietress evidently learned that they were students and never turned them down. Cinnamon rolls at half price made a delightful meal. They tried to find a dark room hidden away so as not to be seen when they ate. Many of the students were sick that year, but the boys escaped with scarcely any sickness at all. Evidently their diet and their long walks to school in the cold kept them healthy.

One day when the boys went to the basement to eat their cinnamon rolls, Robb said he believed that the bakery woman had given them an extra dozen. Ward took them and unwrapped them, exclaiming, "Boys, there is just a dozen apiece."

At that moment a prominent man in the institution passed by, stuck his head in the door and said, "Boys, if you eat all those you won't be able to study today."

Ward was red with embarrassment. He was a popular young man in the school and was keeping company with the president's niece. He was sure now that his reputation was ruined. Will and Robb, having nothing to lose, broke out in hearty laughter!

Most of the dishes the boys used were tin cans. However, they had saved coupons and secured one beautiful dish -- a platter. One night Will thought he heard rats on the table. He took the broom and came down "wham" on the table. Underneath the blow was their beautiful platter shattered to smithereens.

After the Frenches left Eskridge, Geraldine Trusler attended Washburn College in Topeka, Kansas, and then went to teach in Kingswood, Kentucky. During the time Will and Robb were at Trevecca, she entered Beason School at Meridian, Mississippi, for training in music.

One Christmas-time, arrangements were made for Geraldine to spend vacation time with Robb. Robb and Will were conducting a meeting in Greensboro, Alabama, and Robb planned to go in the Model T Ford to meet the train -- the Alabama Great Southern.

"That Model T is an off car," someone had told Robb. And it was not hard for him to believe. "At least it never got on while we had it," Robb was heard to remark later. The boys never could tell when it might go to pieces, and Robb would not have been surprised if it had blown up at any time.

It was a cold, dark day when Robb set out in his car to meet the train. As he had gotten a late start, he was driving along as briskly as he dared to meet his girl on time. Presently, he came up to a Negro walking along the roadside. The black man's head was down. His thin coat was pulled up around his ears. He looked cold.

Shall I stop and take him in? Robb deliberated. No, I don't have time, he decided. I might miss my train and that would be terrible. Might breakup our courtship. Still, I ought to take him in, his better self prompted. So at last he stopped, and the grateful man crawled into the back seat. Robb put the car into gear once more. I must make up for lost time, he thought. Away they went, speeding over the rough, frozen roads, stung by the cutting wind that hit them full force in their open-top vehicle.

Suddenly, Robb heard the Negro calling. "Boss, hey Boss," he cried, "I done lost my hat!"

Robb glanced back. Sure enough, there was the Negro sitting bareheaded behind him, the hat lying in the road an eighth of a mile back. Robb slammed on the brakes. "You'd better get your hat," he said. The Negro jumped out and started running.

Well, I'll drive on, Robb decided. I've helped him a little. But no, he couldn't bring himself to leave the poor fellow. There in the middle of the road he waited until the Negro was again in the car. Once more they sped away, Robb nearly jolting the jalopy to pieces in his haste to meet the train on time. When finally he did make it to the Station, it was to be told that the train would be two hours late. Well, anyway, I didn't lose anything by being kind, he thought.

When at last Robb and Geraldine were ready to leave the station, it was pitch dark. Robb heated some water at the fireplace of a nearby home, poured it on the carburetor and got the Model T started. Off they went, but of the two roads leading to Greensboro, they mistakenly took the wrong one -- the mountain road. Since in this type of Ford, gasoline was drawn into the carburetor only by gravity, the first long mountain climb was too much for the Model T. Halfway up the grade it stopped. What should they do? There they sat in the cloudy, rainy, black night, not knowing where they were or where to find help.

Someone, however, must have heard the chug of their engine die, for out of the darkness came voices, then dark forms. The Ford had stopped in a Negro section, and now these black people had turned out to push it over the hill. With great hilarity and triumph, they shoved it to the top. Robb and Geraldine went rolling down the other side and part way up the next grade. Again the Negroes turned out and pushed them over. No one had asked them to. They were just volunteers.

"Isn't that something!" Robb laughed. "'Cast your bread upon the waters for you'll find it after many days.' We'd never have made it through, I suppose. I don't know what we'd have done. But I helped an old Negro man, and here these big, sturdy Negroes pushed us to the top of the mountain

and we rolled down the other side. And then another crowd or perhaps some of the first group followed us up and pushed us across the next one! Thank God! I didn't know my bread would come back so quick!"

In recalling this incident in after years, Robb remarked, "Just a little act of kindness. In this world of rivalry and hatred and war, to see someone that's kind is such a rare and blessed thing! 'Love is kind.' If we have the love of God, we'll be kind. Are we kind?"

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Chapter 7
Street Meetings

The next summer, Ward Folsom, a cousin of Robb and Will, accompanied Will home from Trevecca College. Will, Ward and Robb then started out on a pioneer trek through Southern Alabama. Their plan was to hold street meetings to start with, and then to enter any door the Lord would open. They started in at Anniston, holding some good street meetings. But no door seemed to open. They decided to spend Sunday in the country if possible. Scanning the map, they saw Silver Run a few miles from Anniston.

They boarded the train for Silver Run, but when they got off the train, lo and behold, there was only a post with the name Silver Run on it no stores or dwellings near.

Robb and Ward were distressed, but Will came to the rescue. He looked up a family and made inquiry. They told him there was a schoolhouse two miles out where services were sometimes held. The boys walked the two miles and finally found a member of the school board. After some delay they were granted permission to hold services on Sunday afternoon.

The next problem was to find a place to stay over Sunday. They tried home after home throughout the countryside. The people either put the price too high or else refused to take them. Ward and Robb decided they had better go on to the next city, but Will said, "I will try one more place, and if they turn us down, we will take it that the Lord does not want us here."

Will was older than either Ward or Robb, and his advice was invaluable to them. He seemed to have the faculty of quickly evaluating a situation and knowing what to do. When the others followed his instruction, they generally came out well. When they overruled him, they usually regretted it.

The man at the last house finally agreed that the young men could stay. After supper they all gathered in the front room and sang. They found the man of the house a great lover of singing. Ward had a wonderful bass voice, Will sang tenor, and Robb soprano. They had practiced together often, and singing was their forte. Their host was electrified. He had a good voice and joined with them. Before retiring Saturday night, the young men had prayer with the family. The three of them prayed around, when to their surprise, the man of the house burst into weeping and praying. He confessed his backsliding and arose a happy man. Sunday morning he was up bright and early and went up and down the roads urging people to come to service and hear the young men sing.

There was a good crowd at the schoolhouse -- an embarrassed crowd, however. When they discovered who the singers were to be, they came one after another and apologized to them for the way they had treated them. The youths had more invitations to meals than they could accept. There were services at the schoolhouse again that night.

The three went on, conducting a few services at Childersburg, and then made their way to Talladega. They were informed that there was a country inn along the way, and it was here that they planned to spend the night. When they arrived at the place, however, all was dark, so they concluded the inn keepers had retired. There was a small hay barn near the road where they decided to sleep that night. Ward said he was hungry and didn't feel he could sleep till he had something to eat. They saw a light in the distance and went in that direction. They found a small Negro home. They told the old Negro that they would pay if he would give them a lunch. His wife was rather out of sorts. The biscuits she baked were soggy, and the molasses was sour. Nevertheless, it was something to eat.

The boys slept in the barn that night, but cautioned each other to awaken early lest the people find them in the barn and, suspecting that they were smokers, would be displeased. Accordingly, they were on their way before break of day.

That day was a rainy one. The youths had one umbrella which kept their heads dry, but the two outside fellows became pretty well watered down. Spattered with mud from the road they traveled, they were rough-looking customers, indeed.

At last they came to a large and, as they learned later, famous colonial mansion owned by General Whiting. Ward at once insisted that he had wanted to see a colonial mansion for so long that they all must see this one. Will and Robb argued that they were in no condition to see a man of such wealth and position as was the general. However, they finally agreed to stop at a tenant house and clean up and shave.

Mr. Whiting came down the walk to meet them, bowed graciously and invited them to be seated on the porch. The general was very hard of hearing and when Will suggested to him that they sing a song, he talked as though he was too deaf to appreciate singing. Will was quite a determined personal worker and was watching for an opportunity to speak to him about his soul. He finally said, "General, you have a nice home here. I trust you have a home in heaven."

"I'll see to that," the general answered very curtly.

As the young men walked down the muddy road with the rain descending upon them, Will was heavy-hearted. He finally said, "Let us kneel here by this bush and ask God to forgive us if we did not say enough to Mr. Whiting, and to bless the few words we did speak."

The day the youths arrived in Talladega, they were walking down the street when a large black man jumped in front of them and shouted, "You are the fellows! Come in the store!"

Their fright was indescribable, but they followed him into the store. The manager of the store said that General Whiting had called and said that three young men came to his place. He did not know who they were or where they were going, but wanted the merchant to give them some money.

The three had told no one of their needs, so they felt that this gift was an evidence that God had in some way dealt with the general.

While still on the road to Talladega, the boys rejoiced that the rain had finally ceased and the sun had come out. They were near the Coosa River, so they sought it out and washed all their clothing but their shoes, hats and suits. They hung their garments on the bushes and took baths in the river.

A man who had sometime previously heard the young men sing on the streets of Talladega wanted them to sing for his sick wife if they ever came back. He called the leader of the Junior Endeavor of the First Presbyterian Church and arranged for them to sing on Sunday night. They were then requested to sing for the Senior Endeavor. The pastor of the church insisted that they sing in the choir with its pipe organ accompaniment.

After service, a lady came to them and said, "Boys, you are going home with me."

It was an aristocratic family. She took them into a front bedroom and said, "This is your home as long as you stay in Talladega."

From a hay barn to a lovely spotless bedroom was quite a promotion. "I find if we are faithful through the tests that God allows to come for our good," Robb said later, "He will give us some happy surprises."

The lady announced to the youths that she was having a dinner the next day and inviting some of the rich and fashionable ladies of the city that the boys might sing and speak to them. If ever they testified to a hungry crowd, it was this one. The women acted like young robins devouring the simple messages the young men brought.

After leaving this place and speaking at the orphanage, the boys made their way homeward.

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Chapter 8
The Power of God

On their way back to college the next autumn, the boys stopped off in a little community on Lookout Mountain in Alabama where there was no holiness church. There were perhaps only five or six people who knew anything at all about holiness.

Robb and Will pitched a tent not far from a former pleasure resort -- a lake with a race track around it. Here they started a meeting. They had had only a service or two when the weather turned chilly and rainy. Everything appeared to be against them. There was no great conviction on sinners nor much burden on the part of the saints. If the community had been indifferent to spiritual things before, it was even more so now. The young people became immoderately frivolous and careless, the older people woefully apathetic. Never had there been such an inauspicious time for a meeting, it seemed. But the boys struggled along.

Then something happened which threatened to terminate the meeting in downright ignominy and defeat. While Robb was preaching one Sunday night, a commotion arose in the back of the tent. At first Robb thought one of their improvised, plank seats had given way. But the next thing the boys knew, men were carrying someone out. Somebody's fainted, Robb concluded.

Then a lady near the front jumped to her feet. "Praise God!" she shouted. "God's talking to this community!"

"Well, praise the Lord!" Robb thought, "I've seen such things as this before, but I didn't expect to see it here, so small has been my faith."

He went on with the service and when it was over he and Will went out. There was a man's body on the ground where he had been laid. It was Frank Green. Friends were bathing his face with cold water, trying to bend his muscles, working to revive him, but he lay there stiff and rigid just as though he were dead. The Methodist preacher stood over him.

"That man is paralyzed," he concluded. "He'll be dead in two hours."

The doctor came. "Nervous prostration," he said, professionally, but under his breath he muttered, "Those boys are hypnotizing folk here. That man's under a spell."

Men carried the afflicted one to an old house on the lake front, and the preacher boys went home.

The next day when Robb and Will arrived at the tent for morning service, no one was there but a Baptist deacon. He was crying.

"We're in a terrible fix here, boys. Do you know that?" he began. "These people are mad enough to string you boys up to a pole. They think you put a spell on that fellow and they're mad. What do you think about it?"

"Joe," Robb said, "I believe it's the power of God. And I believe if we'll just pray and not fear, he'll come out all right."

"Well, if this is the power of God, I hope you pray that God will bring it out so clear everybody will have to acknowledge it," Joe urged, "because I'm telling you they're mad here."

A few folk straggled in for the morning service and advised the boys to go over to the house. When they did so, they found a hostile crowd. The stricken man was lying on the bed, his muscles as stiff and rigid as ever. Hale Howie was kneeling by his bedside, trying to get him to bend even so much as his little finger to show some sign of coming to life, but he lay there seemingly as lifeless as a plank of wood.

"Now, Frank, just bend a finger here," Hale kept repeating.

Again Robb spoke. "Folk, I still believe this is the power of God, and I feel sure if we just let him alone and pray, he'll come out all right."

Hale waited till Robb's back was turned. Then he muttered under his breath, "If that's the power of God, I'll stamp my hat!"

Just then the doctor came back. "You'd better get him away from the tent," he ordered. "Get him as far away from this influence as you can."

The doctor's anxiety corroborated the fears of many. "I wouldn't shake hands with those boys for anything in the world," a wide-eyed bystander declared.

"Nor I," echoed another. "It's dangerous even to be this near to them."

They carried Frank to his own house two miles away. Most of the community knew nothing about holiness. They were tobacco-chewing church members. But they were interested in Frank now and what the holiness tent meeting had done to him. One could take the telephone receiver down anytime day or night, and that was the topic of conversation.

"Frank Green," one would say, "he's still in that condition."

People came from everywhere. They came up from the valley. They came even from Georgia. They filed in to see Frank Green like they would to see a body lying in state.

"What do you think about it all?" they asked one another.

"I don't know," was the only answer.

They stood around and cried awhile and then went home. While they were leaving, others came. Frank Green's condition was the talk everywhere.

Frank lay stone-like all day Monday and all Monday night. Tuesday noon he began to talk.

"Friends," he groaned, "I'm burdened for four men." He named the most wicked men in all that section of the country--bootleggers, drinkers. "Unless they get saved, I feel like I can't hold out much longer. I'll die!"

The deacons and all those who were standing over Frank weeping backed away in astonishment. Frank Green was a man everyone had confidence in. He was a clean fellow, with no bad habits, and had been genuinely converted. And for him to say that -- well, they knew someone had better move.

Two of the men Frank had named were in the room then, standing by his bedside. Fellows started out on mule and horseback to find the other two. When they finally got the four men together, they said, "Now, men, we don't understand this, but Frank's been in this condition long enough. He says he's burdened for you four men, and unless you get saved, he's going to die. Now, you'd better get busy."

Two of the unsaved men sneaked up the stairs; two slunk to the woods. And, as God would have it, all four prayed through at about the same time. When they did, Frank Green rose from his bed as normal as any man.

"I'm hungry," he told them. "I'd like to have something to eat."

Just as people had filed in to look at Frank as he lay on the bed, so now people came to the same room to kneel and pray through. When each struck victory, he hustled out to make room for another.

All this time, Robb and Will were two miles away from where the real revival was going on. So one of the new converts called them on the phone.

"We're coming to the tent tonight," the person announced, "and we want you to turn the meeting over to us."

The boys agreed.

"It's the first time I've turned a meeting over to holiness fighters," Robb commented to Will, "but I tell you this crowd has changed."

Long before time for service to begin, the boys heard them coming -- coming from every direction, some on horses coming through the woods, some on foot, some in carriages. When all had assembled, the sun had set. The old gasoline torches gave little more than enough light to draw the bugs, but a halo hung over the service that night from the very first.

"Now, friends," Robb addressed the people, "we've had a remarkable demonstration of God's power and we're going to have an informal service -- we're just going to turn everybody loose. Everybody, obey God."

The first to step out of the crowd that night was Tom Jones. He was an elderly man. His six-foot-four frame towered over the audience impressively. His long arms gesticulated appropriately to his words. "Neighbors and friends," he addressed them, "you know me and I know you. I've lived in this community practically all my life. When Frank Green fell there, I was scared and I was mad, and I stayed that way till he came out of it. One of the men he was burdened for was my boy, and he's here tonight to testify. Neighbors, we haven't believed what these boys have preached. We've opposed them, but we'll have to go back on ourselves. Everybody that knows anything about this will have to acknowledge this is the power of God."

"That's what we prayed for," commented the boys.

The second man to step out was Hale Howie. He went to the front, stepped up on the altar and began, "Ladies and gentlemen, you know me and I know you. I'm a man of my word. When Mr. French said over in Frank's room that it was the power of God, it made me mad, and I said, 'If this is the power of God, I'll stamp my hat.' Well, I'm going to stamp it right here tonight. I'm a man of my word."

Down went Hale's hat He stamped it hard with his foot and declared, "No man can deny that this is the power of God. Look what's happened here. Look at these souls that have been saved." On he went. Hale was quite a talker.

When Hale sat down, the next man up was Frank's father, old Brother Green. He was so wrought upon that he was trembling. "Neighbors and friends," he sobbed, "I can say the same thing. I know you and you know me. I'm the father of Frank. I love my boy and I've stood by him. I said, 'If he's going to die, I'm going to be by his side when he breathes his last' I watched this thing from the beginning and, neighbors and friends, we'll all have to stack our arms. These boys have been preaching the truth and we'll have to acknowledge this is the power of God."

The climax of the meeting came when the four men were called to testify. Horace Jones was the first. "Friends," he said, "I got so hard that nothing moved me. I was cold and God knew it. Nothing short of this would ever have reached my heart. I love Frank Green and when he was laid out, I said, 'I'm going to quit work. I'm going to stay by his side. If he's going to die, I'm going to be there when he passes away.' When I found out he was burdened for me, it tore me all to pieces. I couldn't do anything else but surrender and yield to the Lord. Something began to tell me it wasn't right to use tobacco. I don't know. I'm going to pray about it. If it's the Lord, I'm going to quit it. I'm going to find out and I'll report later on."

The rest of the four men testified and the service broke loose. There was no need for the boys to plead with people to come to the altar. They didn't have to coax or sing another verse. The people just came.

In a night or two, Horace Jones stood again to speak. "Well, boys," he reported concerning his tobacco-chewing problem, "I can't use 'er. God won't let me chew 'er and I've quit. Bless God!"

Later, Robb told Will, "That's worth a dozen sermons on tobacco here where it's nothing at all for people to come to church chewing it, spitting tobacco juice everywhere. Just to hear a fellow right out of the crowd get up and say, 'God won't let me chew it any longer,' is the best argument against it I know of."

Just as the theme song of the lake community had formerly been called, "Moon Lake," now the theme song for the rest of the meeting was, "Moon Lake for Christ" It looked for all the world as though the whole community would get saved, as though the song would be a reality.

Robb approached Frank one day. "Frank," he said, "I know such things are sacred, and I'm almost afraid to ask you any questions because people generally don't like to talk about things so intimate. If you don't mind, would you tell me about your experience? If you do mind, just don't say anything."

"Mr. French," Frank began, "you know how I am. I can't talk. I've no talents, no ability, nothing that God can use. But I was coming to church that night and I said, 'O God, if you could use me to win a soul!' I drove on around the old race track on the opposite side of the lake, got out of my buggy, knelt down and prayed, 'O God, here I am.' I hadn't the least thought of anything like what happened -- but the Holy Ghost just put those four men on my heart."

Frank Green nearly died in the whole procedure, but everyone, even Frank, agreed heartily that it was worth it all. A holiness church emerged from the Lord's marvelous dealings in that meeting, and for years following, people would take a newcomer and show him just where Frank Green had lain, just where it had all happened.

"God picked out the right man," Robb often said to Will. "If it had been one of us, they probably would have said, 'That's just one of the pranks the holiness crowd plays.' But when it happened to one of their own crowd! Brother, it was like taking the heart right out of the whole bunch! I knew it was all God's doings."

Neither at that time nor in all the years afterward did Robb and Will take any credit for the souls that were saved.

The boys had spent nearly everything they had in pitching the tent and getting the meeting started. Now, it looked discouraging indeed to think of entering school without any money. They said nothing about their financial condition, but God began to touch the hearts of the people, and money commenced to come in. A young lady said, "I quit paying my tithe. God wants me to give my back tithe to you." She gave Robb the largest check he had ever received up to that time.

Father and Mother Shigley and family were holiness people and old timers in the community. Brother Shigley was in his glory seeing his neighbors getting into the Kingdom. He said to Robb one day, "I thought you and Will were foolish to sing, 'Moon Lake for Christ' I thought such a thing couldn't be, but it looks like this whole country is getting saved."

The boys had to leave. They took down the tent, but the meeting went on. Folk would write telling of the gracious work still continuing in that place. Sister Frances joined the boys in Nashville. They rented rooms and batched. The people of Lookout Mountain sent them barrels of apples, chickens, canned fruit and vegetables. They lived on the fat of the land.

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Chapter 9
Mother Trusler

As Robb and Will labored together through the years, their responsibilities repeatedly took them on long journeys, often negotiated under quite difficult circumstances.

One of the coldest nights they ever experienced in Alabama, the brothers and Frances set out on a hundred-mile trip from Birmingham to Lookout Mountain to perform a wedding ceremony. The roads were not paved, not even graveled. The mud had been all chewed up by sliding, struggling vehicles and then frozen. Some enterprising fellow had tried to improve on the boys' car by replacing the original acetylene lights with electric ones. These now failed to work, so the 1914 Model T Ford -- "Model Z," Will called it -- ran along with no lights at all except two little kerosene lamps near the windshield. Will was driving, depending on moonlight to show him where he was going. They were bumping over those hard, rutty roads when Will saw a smooth place a little to the side.

"That looks better than the road," he said.

He turned off to take advantage of it, but no sooner had he done so than car and boys began to sink, and to their terror, water came up around the car!

"Water!" they gasped at once. "A pond of water!"

Out they scrambled, and in mud and slush up to their knees, pushed and lifted and pulled and tugged until, close to two o'clock in the morning, bedraggled and faint, they hauled their old soggy "Z" out of the pond.

"That's the last I want to run by moonlight," Robb spoke decidedly. "I want good headlights on my car. I want to see where I'm going."

He thought of that experience many times in later years, and it made him appreciate all the light God could give him on his journey to the Celestial City.

"We must have good headlights on this journey," he often said. "We want good headlights. Let's thank God for the light He gives and then walk in it!"

The summer following, the French family were in a tent meeting at West Blocton, Alabama. Rev. J. A. Wood was the good pastor of a thriving church in this mining town. God gave a wonderful meeting there. It did not reach the proportions of the Pell City meeting, but large crowds attended, and night after night the whole front of the tent became an altar. There was a tremendous moving

among the young people. As in all meetings of this character, there was a falling away. Even so, some are still standing and some have made it through to the City.

Next, they were in a tent revival at Tuscaloosa. This meeting, it seemed, eclipsed the West Blocton revival. In all these meetings, by far most of the converts were altogether outsiders, some of them notorious drunkards. The conversion of Maleus Howard was outstanding. He could neither read nor write and declared he was demon possessed. When he was on a spree, the policemen were afraid of him. At one time, it is said, three of them tried to arrest him, but he threw them around as though they were little boys. His life was thoroughly transformed. The Lord taught him to read the Bible, and, it is believed, he could read nothing else but God's Word. He would ask Robb to open the Bible and he would quote chapter after chapter, not verbatim, but giving the subject matter of the entire chapter.

He worked in a place that employed both men and women. It was called the nearest place to hell in town, but Maleus kept clean and lived a victorious life. When Robb became pastor of this place, he felt that it kept him hustling to keep up with this convert. His godly influence made a great impression on the people of Tuscaloosa.

Many of those who attended the meeting worked in the hosiery mill. At one time the mill had nearly closed down due to the fact that so much of the goods had been stolen by employees. Now, of course, restitutions were made. One man asked his employer to take ten dollars out of his wages to pay for stolen socks. The owner of the mill was a Jew. He sent ten dollars to the Frenches. The tent meeting was helping his business.

A Wesleyan Methodist Church was organized at Pell City. Father took the pastorate there. Sometime later, the West Blocton Church was without a pastor, and Will was called to that place. God used him as a shepherd of the flock there and he had a successful pastorate. Will was always devout and energetic. When he undertook a task, he trusted God and went into it with all his might.

Robb took the pastorate at Tuscaloosa. Before long they built a new church. After two enjoyable years at this place, Robb went back into evangelistic work and traveled the conference part time, holding quarterly meetings.

On June 23, 1919, Robb was married to Geraldine Trusler. They had grown up together, and now it was the Lord who brought them together in matrimony. Geraldine was to be a wonderful helpmeet indeed, sharing the burdens of both their pastoral and evangelistic ministry.

As God had favored Robb with a rich family heritage, thus, too, had he honored Geraldine.

Geraldine was born December 21, 1892. When she was only a babe in arms, a man came to Eskridge, Kansas, where the Trusler family lived, and pitched a tent across the railroad tracks. A few stragglers found their way to his meetings, but interest was poor, indeed. Mother Trusler was sitting on her porch one evening when she caught some of the preacher's words. "Holiness without which no man shall see the Lord," she understood him to say.

What's he trying to preach? she thought That isn't in my Bible.

She went into the house, picked up her Bible and searched the concordance. It was in her Bible!

The more she thought about it, the more she wanted to hear what the preacher was saying about that scripture. She wished she could go to the tent meeting. But what would her society friends think?

Finally, the desire became so irresistible that she stole in to a service and sat down on the back seat. She had put on a coat with a big collar and had turned the collar up high so that if anyone saw her, they would not know her.

The preacher was anything but imposing to look at -- an oddity indeed. Evidently he did not have a heavy suit and, since it was the fall of the year, he wore three seersucker coats to keep off the chill.

Oddity or not, the man's message lodged in the heart of Mother Trusler so that she never got away from what she heard that night. No doubt the evangelist pulled stakes and left town thinking his meeting was a miserable failure, but Mother Trusler prayed and sought the Lord in her home until she was wonderfully saved. After this the things of the world became as an empty shell. The Lord showed her how simply she must comb her hair and how plainly she must dress, and she quickly acquiesced.

Mother Trusler was superintendent of the Sunday school in the Methodist Church. She joined herself to the little band of holiness women who had prayer meetings in their homes and would take her turn in having them meet in her home. God blessed the little band in a wonderful way and it was the common thing for them to pray loudly and to shout.

Father Trusler was a man of some influence in town -- a merchant. The other merchants would come into his store and poke fun at him about Mother's prayer meetings, assuring him that they would not allow such as that in their homes.

One day Father came home and gave his ultimatum. "Carrie," he said, "we will not have any more of those prayer meetings in this house. If you do, I'll come and put you all out"

Mother did not say much, but when her turn came again to have a meeting, she went on as usual. Of course, the praying caught the ears of some of the merchants and they could not resist going to William Trusler's store.

"Trusler," they said, "do you hear that racket up at your house? We wouldn't stand for it!"

"And I'm not going to," he responded with determination.

Eskridge had wooden sidewalks in those days. "I could hear him coming," Mother Trusler related afterward, "digging, as it were, his heels into the very wood. He came up on the side porch, opened the door, went through the dining room, out through the kitchen, around the house and back

downtown without doing a thing. That evening when he came for supper, he was as calm as a June morning."

Four years later, Father Trusler was gloriously saved.

He had four store buildings in Eskridge -- a grocery, a dry goods store, a harness shop, and an implement shed. He would have been a rich man had he not sold so much on credit, for which he never received payment.

It seemed that an unusual number of fires hit the town of Eskridge, and there being no fire department to call, devastation usually ensued. One roaring fire burned all the way up to Father's hardware store. But there it stopped. It burned nearly to his harness shop and stopped again. A conflagration on the other side of the street burned from the corner up to his implement shed, but no farther. It got to be a common saying about town, "You can't burn Trusler out."

The secret lay in the fact that Mother Trusler was on hand each time pleading the blood and the promises of God against the fire.

It paid Mother all the way to take her stand for Jesus. Later, when marvelously sanctified and making her complete consecration, she laid her two baby girls -- Golden and Geraldine -- on the bed and said, "Lord, I give them to Thee. If they should grow up and live for the devil, take them now."

But they both lived -- Geraldine to become Robb's wife, and Golden to become the wife of Raymond Young, a devout, able preacher and also a teacher in the Eskridge Bible School, as well as its president for a time. The Youngs traveled in evangelistic work and taught, not only in the Bible School at Eskridge, but also in Miltonvale College.

At the close of a pioneer tent meeting which he had been holding, Raymond endeavored to move the tent and was killed by a falling pole. Though the shock was unspeakable, Golden felt she must continue the work they had begun under God. The Lord wonderfully sustained her, and she traveled far and near as a singing evangelist, one of the most successful in the field for a number of years.

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Chapter 10

Preaching in the West

Will and Mother's sisters insisted on Robb and Geraldine going West for a visit and to hold some meetings. After praying earnestly about it and making considerable preparation, six of them left in a Star car and traveled across the desert to Washington, Oregon and California. Father, Mother, Will, Frances, Geraldine and Robb made up the company. Some of the national highways of the West at that time were only two small trails with sage brush on either side and in the center. The Frenches' first stops were at Denver and Colorado Springs.

Traveling through Idaho, the little evangelistic party found that a flash flood had left the road like stair steps climbing over big rocks. On such stretches, and sometimes there were many, all except the driver got out and pushed and lifted until they passed over the rough places. On another such trip in a Model T, the group made only eighty miles a day, plowing through mud nearly all the way. (A fellow traveler had made only twenty-five. He cranked his car by lying on the hood and reaching down for the crank.)

One day the Frenches went through a river bottom flooded with water part of the way. They tied a rope on the axle, and while Mother and the driver stayed in the car, the rest helped to pull with the rope. It was not too unusual for the party to be out all night trying to get to their destination a short distance away. In later years as Robb and Geraldine traveled over four- and six-lane throughways, it seemed almost as though they were in another world.

The Frenches' first meeting was in Seattle, Washington. A cousin, Rev. William Folsom, was the pastor. A delightful time ensued, joined as they were with relatives and friends.

Their next stop put them in Portland, Oregon, where Rev. D. B. Hampe was the good pastor. His was the only Wesleyan Methodist Church in Oregon at that time. As Rev. Hampe felt that his work there was finished, the people persuaded Father French to accept the pastorate. He did so and spent five wonderful years in Portland.

Rev. T. P. Baker, then missionary secretary of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection, insisted that Will do home missionary work in order to establish new churches in Oregon. Will felt that he should be near Father and Mother who were then well along in years. Thus, he consented to enter upon this work. Will was one of the most successful missionary evangelists in the field. He seemed to have a special anointing for that type of ministry. He was at home meeting new people and winning their confidence. It has never been easy to do pioneer or any other kind of spiritual work on the West Coast, but God undertook, and it was not long before other churches were added to the conference.

In the spring of 1925, Will went back to Birmingham, Alabama, and was married to Miss Annie Katherine Cathey, who had been in Central College, Central, South Carolina, for some time. She proved to be a wonderful helpmeet and entered into the work in Oregon with characteristic vigor and faith.

Will said to his young wife, "I hate to depend on the parent board so much. Why not just trust the Lord?"

Their life of faith and trust in God would fill many volumes, perhaps. At one time night had come and Annie Kate (or Katherine, as she was known) reminded her husband that there was no milk for the babies. Before bedtime, without telling anyone of their need, they had the milk and money besides.

Will used to say, "You can run a car without gas, provided you have no money but have faith." Doubtless there were times when he actually ran their car without gas. "Why should it be thought incredible with you?" Robb felt that it was because man does not live in the realm of the supernatural that his faith grows weak and inoperative.

After their ministry in Oregon, Robb and Geraldine and Frances made their way to California. They held a meeting for their brother George, who was pastor of the Free Methodist Church in San Bernardino. They then began their long trek back to Alabama.

Winter was coming on. They had only a homemade, leaky tent to protect them. The snow was flying when they arrived in Telluride, Colorado. They built a bonfire and warmed some stones, then spread their bed on the ground. This they did many nights along the way.

Robb said, "If anyone thinks we really suffered, let me tell this: We stopped at Geraldine's mother's place in Topeka, Kansas. That night we slept on good beds in warm rooms. The next morning we got up feeling sick. We decided it was the first night we had slept in a house for some time and that we were suffering for want of fresh air."

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Chapter 11

Revival at Birmingham

Father, and then Will, had been president of the Alabama conference in the past, and all the Frenches were interested in starting a church in Birmingham. Robb and Geraldine felt that they should risk everything if necessary to accomplish this. The conference gave them a tent and also thirty dollars to help with expenses. Other holiness denominations had started churches, but they had located so far out that it was difficult for the people to reach them, having to transfer as they did from one street car to another to reach the suburbs. Thus, the Frenches felt the necessity of pitching the tent in a central downtown section. Of course, what seemed to be the insurmountable difficulty was to get a permit to pitch the tent near the heart of the city.

"No," the city councilman said, "you can't pitch a tent here. This is a fire-restricted district."

But the Frenches still went ahead making plans and praying all the while.

The fire inspector, the city commissioner and other officials kept insisting, "Don't you know that it's useless to think of such a thing? You can't do that. It's a city ordinance. You can't put a tent here."

Still the Frenches prayed, knowing that God was bigger than the city council.

Finally one day, a councilman said, "Well, come up and see the head councilman."

Robb went, shining in his boots. "I just don't have the faith I ought to have," he said to himself.

Presently, the Commissioner of Public Safety addressed him. "What do you want?" he began.

"I want permission to pitch a tent on that lot," Robb answered.

"Let me have that petition," the commissioner said. And he stuck it in his pocket as he wrote Robb an order to put the tent there.

Folk were amazed to see the tent pitched on this restricted lot. Prominent people came around and said, "How did you do it? How did you get this here? They wouldn't have let me do it."

"We didn't do it," Robb insisted. "God did it. To God belongs all the praise and glory."

From the start God's blessing rested upon this effort. Good crowds attended the revivals. Regular services were held under the tent for three years. The Frenches heated the place in winter, first with

charcoal burners and later with coal stoves. Numbers of holiness people lined up with them, and new members united with the church.

Once a young man with his wife came to the tent He said to Robb, "I want to subscribe \$100 for this work and we want to join the church." This was Hershel Tillman and his good wife. They were earnest, faithful, and deeply spiritual. He was a wonderful personal worker. Charles Pickel was another young man who was powerfully converted in the tent meeting. He too became a devout and diligent worker for the Lord. Together, these two men made a wonderful team. Evangelists who helped in meetings would say, "When Brother Tillman and Brother Pickel kneel beside a seeker, we notice the penitent almost always comes through."

The Frenches and their people conducted four street meetings, four shop meetings, and four prayer meetings a week. The young converts did not need to be entertained; they were too busy for the Lord. In addition to this regular schedule, there were cottage prayer meetings, house-to-house visitation, and tract distribution.

When finally, after about two years, officials tried to put the tent off the lot, a big, burly sinner came to Robb and said, "Hey, here, I understand they're trying to put you off the lot."

"Well," Robb said, "they served us notice to leave."

The notice had come from the state -- the State of Alabama! And the State of Alabama looked like a giant.

The man said, "Leave it to me.

That "big, old bluff of a sinner" went up to the courthouse and said, "Now, look here. You're trying to put a Protestant Church off that lot down there. And I want you to know if you run a Protestant Church off that lot, there's going to be a holy war right here in this town, and we'll mop up on you."

Had the truth been known, there was not a thing on earth to it. It was all a bluff. But that fellow came down the street with a yellow paper in his pocket and said, "Hey, I got a lease for that lot, a free lease, for as long as you want it."

It was a time of rejoicing for the Frenches and their little flock. Said Robb, "That's one time the Lord harnessed up the devil to whip the devil!"

They thought that now they were getting on their feet, but it was not long until Robb felt as though his feet were again being knocked out from under him. He went to a meeting one night in a large church of the town. The preacher arose and said, "Now the Church Federation of this city is solidly united against a false doctrine which is being preached here -- holiness. We are here as a church federation to stamp it out.

Robb felt himself getting smaller all the time. "You talk about feeling like a grasshopper," he told someone. "I was smaller than a grasshopper. I thought, Church Federation! Why, they wouldn't leave a grease spot if they'd start in on us. But, you know, when I went out of that church and started down the steps, the Lord said to me, 'I'll make you the head, not the tail. Thou shalt be from above and not from beneath.' I don't believe we ought to let the devil run roughshod over us. We've got some mighty weapons. They're not carnal weapons, but they're mighty to the pulling down of the strongholds of Satan."

Eventually the congregation bought a two-story, roomy, brick house with somewhat of a church-front appearance. Not one of the forty members in the church at this time owned his own home free of debt. A \$15,000 debt was a big mountain in those days. People said, "You're going to have a white elephant on your hands."

Robb hated debt, but he was willing to be reckless when it was for the Lord. They did not have suppers or fairs. They just trusted God and people tithed. Some said to Robb, "If you'll join the Masons and play up to the lodges, they'll pay this debt for you." But Robb said, "No, we're not interested."

This is how they got their money. One day a little girl came down the aisle with a tin box and handed it to Robb. She said, "Brother French, I've been saving this for a long time."

The box was rather heavy, and Robb was interested in knowing how much it held. He thought that perhaps there was a little money in there, but was greatly surprised to find that it was practically full of pennies, nickels, and dimes. When some of them counted it, they found that it amounted to over five dollars -- quite a sum at that time.

When the little girl's mother heard about it, she said, "Where did Myrtle get that money? [They were very poor people and the father was a drunkard.] Myrtle is too honest to steal, but where could she get it? Did she steal it?"

She probed Myrtle. The little girl did not want to tell, but finally, she explained that instead of spending the nickel or dime her mother gave her occasionally to buy her meal at school, she would fast and put the money in that little box to help pay off the debt on the church.

At first Robb and Geraldine had moved into a room in an old dilapidated rooming house. The plaster was falling from the ceiling, while roaches and their kindred had set up shop in large numbers. After cleaning, scrubbing, and fumigating, the Frenches moved in some furniture. Besides a bed, they had one orange crate for a washstand and a little stove, which Robb could lift with one finger, for a cooking and heating stove. On their way from the tent to their room -- about five or six blocks -- they gathered broken boards and boxes, which had dropped from trucks, for fuel. Many happy days were spent in these headquarters, praying, believing, and watching the wonderful movings of the Spirit.

Sometime after the purchase of the two-story brick building, Robb and Geraldine moved into a couple of its rooms and took charge of renting out the rest of the rooms. This helped greatly in paying for the property.

The Frenches had an interesting neighbor while here. They never knew his correct name, but the children called him "Grump." He threw his garbage over into the Frenches' yard, built fires on their side, tore down two fences and was in the process of tearing down another when Robb felt that he had had enough. He got down on his knees and cried, "Lord, move Grumpy over to be neighbor to someone else."

But the Lord said, "No, you let him stay right there. You need him."

Once, in recalling this incident, Robb said to an audience, "God will let you know whether you're sanctified or not He'll send a mean neighbor to live by you."

Occasionally Robb would be confronted with a discouraged husband who would complain, "Brother French, you don't know my wife. The angel Gabriel couldn't live with her."

Remembering what God had told him regarding Grumpy, Robb would reply, "God doesn't want the angel Gabriel to live with her. He wants you to live with her. You got her on your hands. That's one reason the Book of Daniel was written -- to show us the Lord can keep us in a lion's den."

The Lord enabled the Frenches to have a number of strong evangelists in Birmingham to help in revivals and weekend meetings. These included Jesse Whitecotton, Bud Robinson, the Zike-Meyers party, George Ridout, E. E. Shelhamer, W. L. Surbrook, W. L. Thompson and many others. Will was president of the conference about this time and he held quarterly meetings and other special services for them. His counsel and messages were a great blessing.

After the building was remodeled and services were being held in it, the Lord gave an outstanding revival. The evangelist bore down on the truth of II Chronicles 7:14, "If my people which are called by my name shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

He insisted that the revival must begin in the hearts of God's people, and that the channel through which the Holy Ghost seeks to operate must be clear. All gossiping, evil speaking, bitterness, strife, and sins of every kind must be properly and thoroughly confessed to God and to our fellowman, insofar as we have wronged them, and restitution made before the Holy Ghost will give true revival.

Through two protracted meetings and for some weeks, the best of the congregation went down in heart searching, earnest prayer, and confession. Five and a half weeks were spent just cleaning house. At one time the meeting got tight. A spirit of heaviness pressed in. The preacher could hardly preach. The singers could hardly sing. Finally, one night, when they were all gathered around the altar, a woman began to confess.

"I want you all to forgive me," she said. "I've been critical. I haven't said much with my lips, but I've had criticism in my heart. I want you to put the blame all on me.

In speaking of it, Robb said, "You know the atmosphere commenced to get clearer. Praise the Lord! People were going across town at midnight and after to make adjustments, to beg forgiveness, to pay up something. I can see the Sunday school teacher coming down the aisle boo-hooing. She turned and said, 'I got my feelings hurt. I've acted like a baby. I've absented myself from the church just because I couldn't have my way. I want you all to forgive me. I am going to ask God to forgive me.' "

Some serious things came to light, even cases of immorality, and these were repented of. "This was no reflection on the general congregation who were wonderful people," commented Robb, "but it does suggest that many revivals are held up by unsuspected covered sin."

When the last confession was properly made, the sweet, prevailing presence of the Holy Ghost settled down upon the services. For some eight months a mighty revival Spirit pervaded the regular services. "It just ran itself," said Robb. "The Holy Ghost ran it. It's astonishing what can be done when everything's out of the way."

Those days were wonderful days to the Frenches. They seemed to be in another world much of the time. Robb and Geraldine had gone over the city making adjustments and confessing to estranged people. Geraldine was gloriously sanctified. The Lord seemed to give her a spirit of discernment. In a later revival which was going hard, the Lord revealed to her that the treasurer of the church was taking money out of the treasury. She went to him in brokenness of spirit, and, weeping like a child, he confessed that it was all true. The Spirit fell in mighty power, making that a day to be long remembered.

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Chapter 12

Conquering Pike's Peak

Though many of his growing-up years were spent in Kansas, Robb called himself a hillbilly, for he had been born in Denver, among the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, and a fond affinity for the mountains ran in his blood through all the years of his life thereafter. He especially liked to climb mountains.

"Boys," he would say, "let's go up on top of that mountain," gesturing to some great mountain peak above the clouds. "When we get on top of that mountain, we'll be on top of the world."

Off they would go. Then, when they had made their goal and stood on top of the mountain, they would look across the valley and see a higher peak beyond. When they had scaled that mountain, again they could see one higher. Always there was the lure of higher heights afar off.

During their pastorate in Birmingham, the Frenches made a trip West and stopped in Colorado Springs to visit relatives. While there, Robb, Will and Frances decided to climb Pike's Peak.

"How far is it?" they asked a mountaineer.

"Nine miles."

"Nine miles? That's not far. We're going to walk."

The mountaineer shook his head. "It's a man's job," he commented knowingly.

"Nine miles," Robb repeated. "That might be a job for consumptives and women, but not for me."

So off they went with a crowd of others who thought they wanted to walk. The air was balmy, the sun bright. Climbers were laughing and talking, swinging their lunch boxes, souvenirs, umbrellas, and having the time of their lives. They were going up Pike's Peak.

They strode along easily the first half mile. Then the grade began getting steeper, and as it did so, the gait of the hikers slowed perceptibly. The crowd was thinning out. Some were even then turning around and going back. Robb and Will and the rest trudged on. When they reached what was called the "half-way house," they found it to be the terminal Station for most of their comrades on the journey. Everybody sat down and most of them said, "Well, I believe this is all the farther I care to go. I don't believe I'd better try to make it clear to the top. I think I'll have to stop here."

Something stirred in Robb's Irish blood. Go back? Not he! Go back if you want to, I'm going to the top, he thought, almost audibly. I didn't start to go halfway. I started to make it to the peak!

They pushed on again, but they had not gone far when the thinning out was so noticeable the boys began to feel lonely. Will glanced at one young fellow who had kept his stride with them and noticed that he looked rather pale around the gills.

"Say, boy," Will ventured, "what's the matter with you?"

"Well, I guess -- I guess I'm getting sick," the would-be mountain climber faltered.

"Maybe you'd better go back," Will suggested.

It was all the young man needed. Away he went, and the last that was seen of him was his coattail flying around the curve in the mountain trail.

A little farther on, the boys met another fellow. He came running down the mountain as though he had seen a ghost.

"Why, that's dangerous," he gasped. "Why -- why, I got near the top and turned blind and deaf and couldn't talk.

"Well," Robb calmed him, "go on down. I'm going up, blind or no blind."

On they went. The way became steeper and steeper, so that, walking the cog rails as they did, they counted out a decreasing number of ties each time before they stopped to rest. Finally their count dropped down to twelve -- only twelve ties. They could go no farther until they gave their hearts a chance to quiet down. Robb's head swelled, his joints ached, his heart fluttered. Finally, he and Will struggled on and counted twelve again. Sitting on the side of the mountain, Robb looked up at the peak. "I can never make it," he thought, "I'm getting weak, cold snow flying in August." Then he straightened. Yes, I've come too far to go back. I'm going to make it! He pulled himself up off his seat, prodded himself once more, and finally dragged his heavy feet -- they seemed like lead over the brow of that great mountain. The peak was his! He had conquered!

When the climb was over and he was home again, people asked him, "Did it pay?"

"Pay!" He looked at them. "Don't ever ask anyone that! When you stand on the top of that mountain and watch the sun slip over the eastern horizon and fill the valley till it looks like a basin of yellow gold, you're so transported you forget you ever had an aching joint or a fluttering heart or a swelling head."

Many times in later years Robb thought of that climb up Pike's Peak and the question, "Did it pay?" In speaking of it he would liken it to the journey to heaven and would say, "Brother, do you think it paid the Apostle Paul to endure suffering to gain heaven? Suppose we borrow Jacob's ladder and crawl up there. We say to the one at the gate, 'I'd like to speak to the Apostle Paul.' When he

comes out, we say, 'Paul, did it pay you? You sure had a rough old road. You were beaten and put in prison.' I don't know whether he'd answer a silly old question like that or not, but if he did, I imagine he'd say, 'The first glimpse I got of the face of Jesus, I forgot I'd ever been in a dungeon or in prison or that I ever had a beating. Hallelujah!' May God help us. Let's purpose to gain the peak. I'm traveling on!"

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Chapter 13

On Spiritual Tiptoes

The Frenches had been in Birmingham ten years and now felt the call into evangelistic work. Will assumed the pastorate of the Birmingham church. The conference had bought a campground five miles out of Birmingham. Several bought lots to help pay for it. Robb and Geraldine were building a cabin on theirs and were living in it.

One day Robb was on the roof pounding nails and Geraldine was talking to him. Presently Robb said something to her, but nobody answered. He turned to look, and Geraldine was gone. He called to her, but all was silence. He got down from where he was and called again. No answer. He looked everywhere. She couldn't have gotten away that quickly ... Maybe Jesus had come!

Just then Geraldine came around the corner of the building to the side where Robb was. He gave a sigh of relief. "But that's the way it's going to be," he would say whenever he recounted the experience to an audience. "I want to be in the Rapture. It's a passion with me. I want to be ready when Jesus comes. You can have everything the world can lay at your feet if you like. But," he continued with trembling voice, "God grant to me a little place in that sweet company that takes off one of these days on a honeymoon!" With deep feeling he would make his plea. "Friends, I don't understand how people can gamble on the Rapture. That's just what I call it -- gambling. I don't want anything hanging on me to pull me back. Bless God! If He'd come now, wouldn't it be something? A thrill goes through me like a shock when I get to talking about His coming! Friends, if we miss it, it would be better if we had never been born. If we make it, we'll live forever in the Holy City. Don't you want to go there? We'll have to be holy."

The Frenches now set out on an evangelistic trip to Oregon and California. At one of the holiness colleges in California, the Lord gave them an unusual revival. One of the outstanding young lady students fell under the power and lay in soul travail for perhaps ten or twelve hours. The unsaved students began to come into the chapel where she lay -- one, two, or three at a time -- and were saved. The meeting started in the chapel at around 9:00 a.m. and closed between 1:00 and 2:00 a.m. Such praying and carrying of burdens the Frenches had seldom seen. Almost any time, night or day, one could hear a group praying. Needless to say, there was opposition, but only God could send such an awakening and revival.

The Frenches participated in revivals in Shelbyville, Indiana, that spread citywide. At least one time, Robb himself had to maneuver to get into the church, the crowds were so large. On one Sunday morning, a leading member of the church arose and made a humble confession to her pastor, the church and her family. It was like dropping a bomb on the service. When people came to themselves, six persons lay as dead upon the floor. Hardened sinners were weeping like children, and many were streaming to the altar. The meeting ran all day and far into the night.

On an afternoon, once a month, the holiness churches of the city met for a union meeting. This afternoon they came to this church for the special service. The preachers lined up on the platform. Some from the various churches who brought their instruments began playing together. They had not practiced together -- at least but little -- but Robb thought that such beautiful music he might never hear till he should get to the pearly gates. Folk seemed to realize that the Holy Ghost had inspired them to play.

"When He is come, He will reprove." Deep conviction began to fall on the unsaved. One lady entered the church apparently unsaved. She stopped, looked confounded, and whispered, "What is this? I never felt like this before in a church."

Another lady, likewise unsaved, whispered, "This is God. I used to feel this way when, as a child, I went to church with my mother."

H. ROBB FRENCH
Pioneer, Prophet, and Prayer Warrior
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Chapter 14

The Darkest Hour -- and the Brightest

Father and Mother, Will and his wife stayed in Oregon for five more years. Father was then called to the First Church in Los Angeles, California. After pastoring this church for some five years, he accepted pastoral responsibility for a small group in Pasadena for the next three years. The Lord graciously blessed.

George French, who was pastor of the Free Methodist Church in Whittier, California, was the first of the immediate French family to pass away. He and his wife, Florence, had one son, Gerald, who became a career officer in the Air Force.

After George's death, his wife wanted Robb and Geraldine to come and stay with her and her only son. It was one of the hardest things Robb ever tried to do. But he went. Of course, he wanted to be of help to the bereaved sister-in-law, so he put on his brother's overalls, and when need arose, got in his car and ran errands. The feeling that came over him was unutterable. He was driving the same car his brother had driven and was working with the same tools he had used.

One day Robb was mowing the lawn and cleaning up around the premises. The morning was so beautiful, the sky so blue, that every once in a while he would lift his head toward the sky. It seemed that his brother was trying to talk to him.

I know what he wants to say, Robb thought to himself. He wants to say, "Robb, I used to be down in that kind of world where you are. Those things look big to you. Where I am, those things look awfully small. Don't get too much wrapped up in them."

When Robb would tell this experience, he knew his listeners were wanting to ask, "Brother French, if we serve the Lord, will it make us slouchy housekeepers and careless, shiftless workers?" and he would answer the question, "No! That isn't what I'm talking about, but that we'll put first things first. We're so earthly-minded. Things! Things! Things! We're not drunk on corn liquor. We're drunk on food, cars, frigidaires, and things! Oh, may God shake us loose from things!"

Mother French, in her eighty-second year, passed away in October 1935. Her life had been one of constant prayer. Dead to the world, determined only that her family might live to glorify God, her goal was to see all her children in Gospel work. Thus, it was doubtless through her prayers that all four of her children entered Christian service.

After the word of Mother's illness reached Robb, he hastened across the continent from Sandy Lake, Pennsylvania, to Pasadena, California, trying to get to her bedside. Even so, he did not realize how serious she was. Neither did the folk who were with her.

Robb called and asked, "Shall I come by plane?"

"No," came the answer, "but come as quickly as you conveniently can.

Mother had looked out the window wistfully. "I think Robb will be here," she told them.

Now he was speeding across the plains, one day through dismal fog, the next through rain that was coming down in sheets.

When, after many anxious days, the train rolled into the Alhambra station, Robb saw his sister-in-law among the others there to meet him.

He said to himself, "I'm afraid something is wrong. Why should she be here?"

He fairly tumbled down the steps. "How's Mother?" he choked.

"Mother's gone!" she whispered.

Gone! Mother gone! It was the darkest hour Robb had ever known. He staggered into the little station and found a seat. It seemed as though he had no further desire to live, as though the sun had gone down to shine no more. It seemed as though he could never enjoy the flowers anymore. They would never again be so fragrant. And they never were. Why? Not because he was morbid or melancholy, for he looked for a City which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God, but this world would never be the same again with Mother gone.

Robb had spent two or three weeks in the spring with Mother. He thought she must have had a premonition of her death then. She hardly let him out of her sight. She followed him from room to room, caressed him, kissed him, tried to tell him how much he meant to her.

Now, there he sat, and they were telling him about Mother's death.

"Robb," Frances and Father were both talking at once, "Robb, the electric lights in the room seemed dim in comparison to the glory that was scintillating around her bed. She beckoned with her hands and looked over there -- to the land where she was going." Surely, thought Robb, when a saint comes home, the saints already there gather together, and heaven in full array comes to welcome that one.

It seemed Robb's heart was torn to pieces. Then he got to thinking, I'll see my mother again -- on the banks of the River of Life. I'll see Jesus -- the One I want to see first!

The next time Robb was to see Mother, she was in her casket. He walked up and looked at that arm that had enfolded him so tenderly, lying across her breast. Those eyes that had looked so lovingly into his were closed.

"Mother," Robb spoke softly, "thank you for leading the way. Thank you for your prayer life."

It wasn't that she had gotten up in the night and tiptoed to his room to put another blanket on him. It wasn't that she had taken food from her own mouth to give to him. It wasn't that she had sat up in the night when it was dark, when she should have been in bed, to mend his clothes. It was her prayers Robb remembered. Mother, I thank you for your prayers.

Mother had always been so solicitous. Just a little whimper and she had been by his bedside. "What do you want? What's wrong?"

Now they stood by her casket, crying and weeping. But she lay perfectly oblivious.

That isn't like my mother, Robb thought. Why can't she open her lips and eyes and say, "What's wrong, Robb?"

Yes, Robb remembered all her loving ways. He appreciated them all. But now all that was fading away. It was her prayers that had influenced him so profoundly. Mother, I thank you for your prayers!

As they planned the funeral, Robb said to Father, "Father, Mother was an old-fashioned, shouting pilgrim. She didn't believe in ceremony and form. I wish we'd -- let's have an informal service where the preacher can feel free to preach the truth."

"Well, let's pray about it, Robb. Let's pray."

As it turned out, when Rev. Scott arose to preach, he forgot himself and preached as though he were delivering an evangelistic sermon. Finally, he stopped and said, "I almost believe I'll give an altar call."

"Do it, Brother Scott," Robb said. "That's what my mother would want."

They all gathered around the casket and Father led in prayer. What a time they had! Heaven came down. They shouted. They rejoiced. Just then Robb noticed the undertaker in the rear. Doubtless he was anxious to get this funeral over with. They might even have another funeral that same afternoon, and it was already late.

Robb went back to him. "O sir, I'm sorry," he said. "We're presuming on you."

"What do you mean?"

"My, my, we've been here so long."

"Never mind -- never mind," he said. "This is all right. Seldom can we undertakers say we enjoy a funeral, but we're enjoying this. Just carry it along."

When the procession arrived at the cemetery, they had another shouting time. Robb and Geraldine sang a special song. Father got blessed. The sun was going down now, and Robb thought surely the undertaker would be impatient by this time. He slipped over to him.

"Brother, I'm sorry we've been so thoughtless here," Robb apologized. "We've taken so much time."

"Say," the undertaker stopped him, "haven't you got something else you can do? We'd like to stick around here awhile. This is all right."

"Hallelujah!" Robb said to himself. "This old-fashioned salvation works in life or in the cemetery!"

Mother's death brought back a deluge of memories sweeping now across Robb's mind. Many a time he had seen God come upon that woman. From her lips he had heard eloquence he had heard nowhere else. She used language beyond her comprehension. It was the Holy Ghost taking a frail, little woman and breathing out a message.

One of the pastors in a pioneer church in Oregon often had Mother in his audience. One evening he entered his church to find a goodly number assembled. Now, he thought to himself, we've got this place full of outsiders. If Mother French doesn't come and have one of those spells, we're going to have a glorious service tonight, and possibly win some souls to Christ.

"Lord," he prayed, "don't let Mother French come. Don't let her come."

But she came. She came down and took the front seat.

The preacher thought, I know what I'll do. She's kind of hard of hearing. I'll just preach in kind of a whisper. That way she won't hear me and won't have anything to shout about.

But the fire touched Mother's heart and she couldn't keep still. Up she got, and praised the Lord. She shouted and cried. When she sat down, the preacher gave the altar call, and nearly every sinner in that house came to the altar and knelt. Never had he seen such an altar service. They prayed through and popped up like popcorn.

When they all stood up to celebrate the victory, the preacher said, "Now, I want you to tell me what struck your heart. What was it I said?"

They looked at him and he looked at them. Finally, one said, "We hate to tell you, Brother, we did not hear a thing you said, but when Mother French got up there and shouted around, we saw something in her face that made us hungry. Hallelujah!"

In later years, Robb said, "I guess I'm getting old, and I give way to my feelings sometimes, but I want to be like my mother. She was more earnest in her old age than she was when she was young. Even when the weather was bad, she found her way to the house of God. 'O Mother,' we'd say, 'you shouldn't go tonight. It's a rainy night. You have that cough. It's chilly out there.' But she would brush us aside. 'But I've got to go, Robb,' she'd say. 'There's something about it -- when the church bell rings, I've got to go. My candle is burning out. I've got to make these last moments count for God.' Thank God for her memory. I don't want to get careless and blame it on my age or on my sickness.

I want to keep the fire burning brightly on the altar of my heart. I don't want to be surprised and ashamed when the Lord comes.

"Yes, thank you, Mother," Robb said again and again, "that you stepped out and took the lead and suffered persecution. We're all following in your footsteps. We'll meet you on the banks of sweet deliverance."

At one time, John Clement, when introducing Robb French at a camp meeting, referred to the Frenches as a strange outfit "It takes them half the morning to have morning prayer and half the night to have evening prayer."

"That was stretching it a little bit," Robb commented, "but it was true that no matter how long it took, Mother would say, 'We're going to have the fire.' And we did. If you were to ask me, 'Brother French, what was the greatest service you were ever in?' I think I would have to answer, 'Family worship.' That's where I got saved. 'Backward, turn backward, O Time, in your flight. Make me a child again just for tonight.'

"I remember, Mother once had us children gathered together in a little attic room upstairs, and she was sobbing. The tears splashed to the floor. Oh, she was weeping convulsively. 'Children,' she said, 'children, if you're lost, could you blame me? Have I done my best?' There was silence except for Mother's weeping. Finally my brother broke the silence and said, 'No, Mother, we couldn't blame you. You have done your best.'

"When I was a growing boy, I thought I could out-talk my mother. But I tell you, when hot tears fell on me -- that was too much. She'd stand over my bed and weep -- a weeping mother! Thank you, Mother. Thank you."

Some time after Mother's passing, Father, Frances, Will and his family, all returned to Alabama, Father held his last pastorate at Fairview Church, Cottondale, Alabama, when he was eighty-four years of age. When he died in August of 1940, Robb was at his bedside. Kneeling there, Robb's mind went back to Denver, Colorado, where Father said that last "yes" to God. "Praise God!" Robb whispered. "He's going home today to live in a mansion that would make the White House look like a dog house. No comparison. It pays to serve Jesus. It pays to obey Him."

Will and his family entered the evangelistic field. The Lord wonderfully blessed their work and gave them some glorious revivals. Will insisted on taking his entire family with him. It was quite a problem, as for a time he had three and, some time later, four more children, but the wisdom of the plan was evident when at last all his family of four boys and three girls were saved and established in some kind of service for the Lord.

After returning to Alabama and pastoring there for seven years, Will was called to pastor the college church in Central, South Carolina, in 1944. His responsibilities eventually took in the pastoring of four churches in the area. It was here that a heart attack caused his doctor to urge Will to slow down. But Will was energetic and untiring, always busy. It was not easy for him to adapt himself to his limitations.

One day while making improvements around his home, he needed sand. It was February 15, 1953. He took two of his sons, Ward (15) and Larry (10), and went down to a sand bank by the river. In their maneuvering, the car chugged down in the sand and stuck. All three were pushing and working to free it, when Will said, "I believe I'll have to rest awhile." He sat in the car a short time when Ward noticed that he looked rather strange. The lad spoke to his father, but there was no answer. Will was dead.

A life of Spirit-filled ministry was now spent -- a life whose influence, however, lives on in the hearts of the multitudes he led to Jesus, and in the lives of his dedicated family.

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Chapter 15

A Visit to the Holy Land

In January 1929 the Frenches embarked on a journey to the Holy Land. Mingled with the thrill of travel was the anticipation of walking where Jesus walked, of re-living the scenes depicted in Scripture involving the patriarchs, the prophets and the apostles. They had always wanted to see the land of their Saviour's nativity, as well as to visit some mission fields and do what they could to encourage the missionaries. An uncle gave them one hundred dollars for the trip. It seemed to be a favorable token from the Lord. Later, others made contributions which helped and encouraged them. Then, the British ship lines, in order to keep their passenger ships in operation, offered an exceedingly low fare for Mediterranean cruises. Thus did the way open for their going.

Far out at sea one day, the gentle surface wavelets of the vast ocean took on whitecaps. Soon a howling wind had risen and the churning waves became swells that rocked the boat from side to side. The sea writhed angrily under a steady, stiff gale. Robb walked the deck, not wanting to miss seeing the wild play of the elements. The tempest whipped fiercely across the deck, wetting him with spray and almost lifting him from his feet.

Suddenly he realized that no one else was on deck. He was alone. Fear clutched him. Just then, one of the crew pushed his head up out of a manhole.

"Say, what about this?" Robb shouted.

"About what?"

"This wind. Do you think we can make it?"

"Make it! This little zephyr?" rejoined the man.

Robb's fears gave way to relief. It was evident no thought of fear had troubled this experienced seaman. And when Robb was taken down into the hold of the great ocean liner he could see why. There they showed him massive steam engines puffing, groaning, battling the turbulent ocean in a winning struggle.

"Praise God!" Robb exclaimed when he saw them. "Oh, God, put a purpose in my heart that acts like these steam engines, that says, 'Whatever comes or goes, I'm going through!' Hallelujah!"

On they plowed, through winds and rolling waves and breakers, until they neared Haifa on the coast of Palestine. Here the heave and swell of the sea unbalanced a man and he fell overboard.

Quick as thought, an officer of the ship seized a lifesaver and sailed it out over the boiling waters. It landed in the arms of the sinking man and he was saved.

My! thought Robb, that would be a wonderful thing, just to pull a person out of a watery grave.

He paced the deck, marveling at what he had just seen. "But thank God!" he said to Geraldine, "We're doing something more important than that. We've got the lifeline and the right message. We're throwing them to many of the multiplied millions who are sinking into hell. Oh, it's a thrill to win a soul for God -- the greatest thrill one can have. It's a romance to work for God."

At every turn the Frenches found sights in the sacred land to interest them. Going up from Jericho to Jerusalem one day, they saw a shepherd followed by his sheep. Wanting to get a picture of the scene, they halted the car and jumped out. The Bedouin, wondering what it was all about, stopped and looked at them, at the same time speaking a word to his sheep.

"Look," said Geraldine, "every sheep is standing at attention, hardly moving."

They told the shepherd what they were doing, and when he knew no harm was meant, he spoke another little word to his flock. At once, the sheep relaxed and started eating around where the shepherd stood.

"That's a touching sight to me," Robb said with feeling. A shepherd followed by his sheep! The lost sheep told about in Luke's Gospel got so far away he was out of fellowship with the flock. Oh, I love God's people! Lord, help me not to let men or devils separate me from God's people. I want to die where they die. I want to be buried where they're buried. Their God is my God!"

In Jerusalem, the Frenches visited the place where the body of Jesus had lain in the sepulcher hewn out of solid rock. They withdrew a pace, seeing in their thoughts the events of that day so long before. That was one of the beauties of traveling in the Holy Land. One seemed so easily to live over again the precious Bible scenes. Today they were amazingly vivid. In fancy the travelers saw the great stone lying at the mouth of the sepulcher and could almost hear the measured tread of the guards as they paced back and forth. But the grave did not hold the Saviour long, though it was sealed with the Roman seal -- a seal no one dared tamper with. Jesus' triumph there brought life eternal out of death. The thought was breathtaking, glorious!

Later, standing on the shores of Galilee, the sojourners looked through their field glasses at the country of Gadara across the water. Not a house, not a chicken coop, not a pigpen could be seen -- not a child, not a horse, not a cow. Such was the place where Jesus cast the devils out of the demoniac.

"You would think they would have welcomed Jesus for doing that," Robb said. "But no, they besought him to depart. Evidently, he turned right around and did depart, never to return. Saddest thing in the world is to have Jesus depart forever."

Robb thought about it a long time. His imagination wandered. He seemed to see a little woman hurrying down the street of Gadara.

"Where's the great Physician?" she cries. "Where's the Man that cast the demons out? My baby's having convulsions -- dying -- I need Him!"

"Lady, O Lady, quiet yourself," someone says. "You see that little speck in the purple distance? He's on that boat. He'll never come back to this community again. We insulted Him. He's gone!"

"The sorrow of all sorrows," Robb sighed as the picture faded from his mind.

Traveling on, the Frenches were riding down through the plains of Esdraelon when Mount Gilboa was pointed out to them.

"Old Mountain," Robb addressed the peak, "if you could speak, you could tell us of a mighty king fighting his last battle, making his last stand. He's wounded. The blood is spurting from his wound. There he writhes. Jonathan, his own son Jonathan, who at one time won a victory single-handed, lies at his feet, cold in death, his hand relaxed, his sword at his side. Two more lie close by. Three sons dead at Saul's feet. Saul himself wounded. What a picture!" But everyone who is rejecting God and grieving the Holy Ghost is on his way to Gilboa, Robb was reminded. "Saul failed to kill the Amalekites and an Amalekite killed him," Robb said aloud. "If we don't conquer sin, it will kill us!"

Nazareth proved to be another place of poignant interest to the Frenches. What wonder it held! What wonder that Christ should slip away from the courts of glory, where angels and archangels bowed before Him and did His bidding, to be born of a poor, humble virgin, to be wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger, and then to grow up in Nazareth!

Nazareth. The Frenches walked around the place. They heard the braying donkeys and the crying children. They saw the filth and the squalor and the dirt. They went into the little native homes which were much the same as they were in ancient times. The wee dwellings had no windows -- just two openings over the doorway, to let the smoke go out, for there were no chimneys. Neither were there any stoves. The family built a fire in a hole in the center of the place and here they cooked. When the meal was ready, the parents and children all gathered around a common pot. They had no knives, forks or spoons. They broke off their bread, baked hard, and dipped it in the cooking pot. In one part of the room were the cattle, the goats, the chickens. Family and animals all lived under the same roof with no wall between.

The people living in one such hovel changed visage in the minds of the onlookers, and in the place of the eldest of the children was Jesus, the Son of God, King of kings, Lord of lords, sitting there with Joseph and Mary, His brothers and sisters completing the circle -- all partaking of the common meal. What meaning lay in the scene? Why, Jesus left His glory home and came to live in a dark world of discord and bitterness and squalor and sin and war and hatred. What condescension! What love for the souls of mankind!

In Egypt Robb and Geraldine went out to visit the ruins of the school Moses is supposed to have attended, and the ruins of the ancient city of Memphis. They rode little donkeys, and were winding around through palm orchards when they came upon a statue stretched out on the ground, covered somewhat by the sands and the grime of the desert. The scepter had broken from the hand and lay close by.

Robb's little donkey trotted up to the fallen figure, lopped his ears and looked down at it. Robb looked too. It was none other than the image of Rameses II. He was supposed to have been the king when Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt. He had said, "Who's the Lord? I know not the Lord."

Robb shook his head as he remembered how all the glory of the empire of Rameses II had disappeared like a bubble on the ocean. "Old fellow," he said, "I guess you've found out by now who the Lord is."

In Cairo the Frenches had the privilege of joining with a group of Christians in singing, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." How it thrilled their hearts! Way back in the dim past, all the first-born of the Egyptians had died because the blood had not been sprinkled on the lintels and the door-posts of the houses. And here were the Frenches -- travelers of the twentieth century, sitting in a Christian mission in Egypt, hearing some redeemed Egyptian Christians sing, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." They awoke anew to the wonderful truth that there is power in the blood, that it can cleanse the heart and deliver from all sin.

"I tell you I have nothing to boast about. Don't get me wrong," Robb testified later, "but I expect to walk down the streets of heaven with the angel Gabriel who never committed sin. Why? Because I've had a bath in the blood. The past is washed away. The stain is gone!"

What an experience their Holy Land tour was! They were enabled to see the country near the beginning of the great improvements that were being made. All this emphasized to them the scriptures saying, "When the fig tree putteth forth her leaves, ye know that summer is nigh." A Doctor Christie, who was then a missionary in Palestine, lived on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Being an authority on the land of Palestine, he was able to point out to Robb and Geraldine authentic Biblical sites around the sea. Thus, they were able to know of a certainty that they were walking the very footsteps of the Master.

When the sojourners left Palestine and visited Monte Carlo, they understood for the first time why Judas had committed suicide.

Monte Carlo is situated in the Riviera -- a beautiful region with many winter resorts along the Mediterranean Sea on the southeast border of France and the northwest border of Italy. It is known as the gambling capital of the world. People gather from all over the globe to gamble in the great casino. Strange as it may seem, most of the gamblers are women -- grey-haired women. At one time there was a suicide a day in that gambling house. Now, policemen and officers are stationed to curb these violences.

The Frenches looked in upon the proceedings. Here was a woman staking everything she had. It would seem that anyone with reason would not barter everything, Robb mused. Surely she would hold back something. But no. Perhaps she had lost and wanted to gain back. Or perhaps she had won a little and this had intoxicated her so that she wanted to win more. She was down to her last dollar. Her hand clutched a small bottle of poison and a razor. Finally, she staked her last penny, hoping to gain. But she lost. She turned then to take her life. But the policeman restrained her and snatched her weapons from her.

It was in an upstairs room that the millionaires and multimillionaires staked large amounts and, at their losing, committed suicide. One millionaire had lost all his money. Now he was staking his home, his furniture, everything. When he lost it all, he had nothing to live for.

"Have you ever thought about what Judas Iscariot lost?" Robb asked in recounting this scene. "Judas Iscariot? He sold Jesus Christ. He sold his immortal soul. He sold his home in heaven, his mansion, his hope, his crown. He bartered everything away and had nothing more to live for. Somewhere he got a rope and committed suicide. It's easy to see why."

Passing through France, Robb and Geraldine were anxious to attend a service where they could get a "crumb of spiritual food." They came to a "little hole in the wall" designated as the Salvation Army Hall. They entered and were greeted by a lassie who began talking to them in French.

"I ought to be able to understand French," Robb said laughingly, "but I can't."

Then, as the Frenches continued conversing in English, the lassie only stood and stared at them. The Frenches stared at her. Finally, a heavenly smile came over the young woman's face. "Hallelujah!" she exclaimed. Robb and Geraldine smiled back. They fully understood that language.

The same young woman preached the sermon in French, "Hallelujah" being the only word understood by the visitors, but they received a "square meal," got blessed, and, though far from their native land, felt right at home.

In London the sightseers were awed as they stood by John Wesley's grave in the cemetery back of Wesley Chapel. Beside him was Adam Clarke, the great commentator, and on the same tombstone was carved an epitaph for Thomas Oliver. Thomas Oliver had been a wicked old reprobate of a sailor, but he got saved, went all out for the Lord, and had the honor of being buried almost in the same grave with John Wesley. Not having much room in the cemetery, they had to bury people very nearly on top of one another. And there they were -- three men, holy men, so close together in death, so close in spirit and reward.

My, my, Robb thought, wouldn't it be wonderful on the resurrection morning to stand there and see John Wesley and Adam Clarke and Thomas Oliver crawling out of their graves? Wesley isn't dead. His hand is ringing church bells around the world.

Then came a greater thrill. As they were looking around, Robb and Geraldine came upon another famous grave.

"Here it is!" Geraldine exclaimed. And they stood by the grave of Susannah Wesley.

"Since she turned a couple of preachers loose on the world, the devil and the world have never heard the last of it," Robb remarked. "Just a pile of ashes down here, but the fragrance of her life still blesses."

They also visited the grave of John Bunyan. He was a blasphemer and Sabbath desecrator, a wicked man, mending pots and pans for a living. But when Jesus saved him, he started preaching to the common folk. For this, the officers put him in jail. There he wrote Pilgrim's Progress. Ever since, people around the world have been reading his book. As far remote as are the Alpine slopes, Pilgrim's Progress is one of two books the shepherds are found reading there. The other is the Bible. John Bunyan is not dead, thought Robb. He is living on.

Nearby was the grave of Isaac Watts. He wrote, among many others, the song,

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss
And pour contempt on all my pride.

"They're singing that around the world," said Geraldine.

"Where is he?" asked Robb, absorbed in thought. Then he answered his own question. "His body is moldering to dust, but his spirit is rejoicing around the throne and his life is living on. Isn't it a wonderful thing to live in this world and start issues in motion that will lead people to God and heaven long after one is gone?"

Somewhat the same thoughts were aroused in the minds of the Frenches when they stood by the tomb of Mary, Queen of Scots, in Westminster Abbey, for, thinking of her brought to their minds the fearless exploits of John Knox.

In recalling later the incidents surrounding these lives, Robb said, "Think of John Knox matching swords with Mary. She had determined to exterminate Protestantism, and he had determined she would not. At one time he fled from Scotland, but some way he went sneaking back. Protestants in prison cells heard about it. Hope sprang up once more. Their champion had returned. 'John Knox is back!' they jubilantly whispered among themselves. Mary with all her politicians and her armies was still incarcerating the Protestants. And who was John Knox in the face of all this? He did not have a battleship or an army. Who was he, then? A man who had God. Someone looking through a window saw Knox at his table, his eyes staring out the window. He pushed back his books and papers and slipped back to a room in the rear. The watcher heard his knees hit the floor. There was a moment of tense silence and then the cry -- that memorable prayer -- 'Give me Scotland or I die!' There was another moment of silence and again the word's, 'Give me Scotland or I die!' The third time the same cry broke out, 'Give me Scotland or I die!'

"It was twilight now. The watcher said when Knox rose from his knees his face had changed. He knew he had prevailed. In time a messenger came, bringing the news that Bloody Mary was dead. The whole picture of Scotland was changed.

"I stood by the tomb of Bloody Mary in Westminster Abbey," Robb continued, "and I said, 'I don't blame you.' She had said, 'I fear the prayers of John Knox more than the armies of England.'"

Robb could not leave for America until he had gone to the land to visit his mother's old home, her relatives, and the little church she had attended. Mother had left Ireland as an orphan girl, eighteen years of age, and had never been back. No wonder she had been anxious that her son and wife visit her home community. She was concerned, too, that some of her people might hear the message of full salvation.

"Do you know how her family went to church?" Robb asked Geraldine. "There were eight children in the family, but none of them stayed at home. Nowadays, people have quit taking their children to church."

Robb believed in obeying the scripture, "Gather the children." Many times he had heard the excuse, "O Brother French, they have to have their sleep." And he would say, "I know. But I'll tell you how I got my sleep -- on church benches! And I believe that children that have slept on church benches have better health than those that don't." Then, with a twinkle in his eye, he would add, "I think that's the reason I have such good health. Praise the Lord!"

"Well, when they all got to their accustomed pew," Robb went on, "Grandfather would step back, and Grandmother would pass him. Then all the eight children would pass him. After everyone was in, he would sit down."

Robb chuckled. "Do you know how they kept the children quiet?"

"Well, parents now, you know, have to take gum and candy and toys," Geraldine answered and smiled. "Down South they take sweet potatoes to keep the children quiet in church."

"Yes, but do you know what Grandmother did? Took a hat-pin with her. I tell you they behaved!"

The Frenches were often the target of curiosity because of their foreign dress. None of this embarrassed Robb and Geraldine. They themselves had often been amused at baggy trousers, fez caps, and robes that looked more like nightgowns than street wear.

"Just so," said Robb, "we're citizens of heaven. When we walk down the street in America we're different from the followers of Hollywood. But it's nothing to be embarrassed over. We're a separate people."

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Chapter 16
Deception

While holding a meeting in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, in the early thirties, the Frenches were entertained in the home of a member of the Anglican Church. This sister and her brother lived in a nice house left them by their parents. Lillian had taken a fancy to Geraldine and asked the church if she could have the Frenches in her home. She was a hostess of interesting character, and they had a delightful time with her in spite of occasional outbursts of her quick temper.

"Now, I just have a popular religion," she would say. "I'm not saved. I'm just a cold member of the church, and that's all."

Nevertheless, she asked to be excused from her job in the Parliament Building -- a position in which she earned a good salary -- just to attend the meeting both morning and evening. And she was not satisfied just to attend it herself, either. She would go out in her car and gather up a crowd. Canadian Anglicans they were, and she would bring them to the little holiness meeting. The Frenches smiled. Lillian's crowd came in, "blinking their eyes like toads in a hailstorm," as Robb expressed it. They just did not know what to make of it.

"How do you get those folk to come to meeting, Lillian?" Robb asked her.

"Ha! Ha! Brother French, show me somebody I can't bring in."

"I'll bring them. These little anemic, trifling, good-for-nothing church members -- they won't do anything. I'll get you a crowd to preach to."

My, wouldn't she make a soul-winner for Jesus! Robb thought.

One night Lillian called up a lady who was a professing Christian and said, "How about you going to a revival with me this week?"

"Yes, I'd like to go. I've heard about it," was the answer.

"Well, Thursday night -- how'll that be?"

"Fine. That'll be fine."

"All right, we'll come by Thursday evening."

Just after supper Thursday evening, Lillian said, "I'm going to call that woman up and see if she's ready to go.

So she called her. It was evident from the outset that Vesuvius was about to erupt. Lillian's face reddened in anger. What the other woman was saying could not be heard, but Lillian's end of the line was popping. The line was all snap! snap! When Lillian hung up the receiver and walked away it looked as though she would explode any minute, but they all got off to church without her doing so.

After the service, the Frenches, the brother and sister, all gathered in the living room for bedtime prayer and songs. It was the custom of Robb and Geraldine to have a little talk each evening with their host and hostess to try to win them for the Lord. But scarcely had they seated themselves when Lillian's explosion came.

"Brother and Sister French!" she began. "That's the kind of religion they have. That's the way you serve Christ. Do you know what that woman told me?" She paused, curled her lip and spoke with utmost sarcasm. You all claim to be sa-a-ved and sanc-ti-fied. Do you know what she told me? 'I'm too tired. I ironed all day, and I don't think I'll go.'

"Too tired to serve Jesus Christ! That's not the way we serve the devil. We go to the dance till two o'clock in the morning, and the next day we go to work and work all day, and the next night it's a club or lodge or something. That's the way we serve the devil. That's the way you serve your Christ, Brother French!"

Robb and Geraldine sat in silence. Lillian had the floor.

"Here I am, going down to that church. They say I'm on my way to hell. Do they act like it?"

That was shaving God's people pretty close, Robb thought.

She turned to her brother. She adored her brother William. "They say Willie is on his way to a lake of fire. Do they act like it?"

Robb was smitten. He felt like saying, "Sister, if you give an altar call, I'm going forward for prayer."

The Frenches never forgot that sarcastic voice- "That's the way you serve your Christ! Half-hearted and drowsy! Too tired! I've been ironing all day!"

"Oh--oh, help us, Lord," was all Robb could say. It was an unanswerable rebuke to holiness people everywhere.

As for themselves, Robb and Geraldine were strictly conscientious about attending the means of grace whenever the church doors were unlocked. Upon one occasion, they had just returned to their home in Alabama from evangelistic work and were very tired. But it was prayer meeting night, and they wanted to go. Robb was so outdone he could hardly get ready.

Geraldine saw his weariness. "I don't believe you'd better go," she said.

It would have been easy to give in to the flesh, for he was more than tired. He was actually sick. But he got in the car and drove the fifteen miles to church -- to Will's church in Birmingham. He was so weak when he went in that he slumped down in the seat. It felt so good just to sit down.

Presently, Will came in and touched Robb on the shoulder. "You come and lead the prayer meeting tonight. Here's the Bible."

Robb was afraid to say no, but Oh, he thought, if he knew how bad I feel, he wouldn't ask me.

He gathered himself together and started talking to the people. It wasn't long until a little woman got blessed and overflowed with glory.

In telling it, Robb said, "I got the overflow and felt as though I'd had a six-weeks' vacation. I didn't have an ache or a pain. I went home refreshed. Praise God! It paid to go to God's house, give Him my service and forget myself."

"I've often thought," he remarked once, "that I would never deserve a reward when I get to heaven unless it would be for preaching when nobody else will preach and for singing when nobody else will sing. Many times Mrs. French and I get up and grind out something with our cracked voices when all the good singers are on a sit-down strike. I feel maybe I may get a little reward for that. Or, on the last night of a camp when the tide is receding, the people are tired and the preachers are on a similar strike, they pick out an old man who can perhaps help them sleep a little bit or take it easy. I get up and fill in then. For that, there may be some little reward reserved. I don't know."

The Frenches formed many precious acquaintances in their evangelistic travels. One was a little old man out in Phillipsburg, Kansas. He, like the Frenches, had an obsession to be in church whenever a service was being held. Will once conducted a four-weeks' meeting in the dead of winter near where this man lived. The aged gentleman could neither see nor hear much, but he would go down the street with his cane, no matter what the weather. Often the wind was blowing icily. Kansas winters were snow-piled, too.

He would meet his friends on the street, and they would say, "Oh, Mr. Jones, I don't think you had better go tonight. This is an awful stormy night."

But he would answer, "I'm going if I live long enough to get there." And he would walk the seven miles one way in blustering rain as anxious as a child to attend the meeting. And he was a blessing to preach to. His face beamed, and he usually asked for the privilege of testifying before he went home. He would say, "I haven't heard a word that was said tonight. I haven't seen anything much. But, praise God! I got blessed all over. I've been paid a dozen times over for coming tonight."

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Chapter 17

The True and the False

The horror the Frenches always held in their hearts of being deceived by the powers of darkness was intensified after they visited one of Father Divine's meetings in a branch kingdom in Los Angeles.

Later, in recalling his experience, Robb said, "Oh, it scares me. We're going to need a keen sense of discernment. I could have closed my eyes in that meeting and, if I hadn't known where I was, I could have declared, 'This is a red-hot holiness meeting,' -- when actually it was all of the devil."

People were standing to their feet all over the room, testifying.

"I was writing obscene poems and singing obscene songs when I accepted Father Divine," said one. "Now that is all changed."

"I made restitution to my employer and paid him every cent I owed him," said another.

And on they went- "I haven't drunk a drop of liquor ...

One woman walked up and down with her hands in the air and testified, "I was sanctified wholly twenty-three years ago, but this is the best thing I've ever found." Pointing to his picture on the wall with lights playing on it, and to the motto, "Father Divine is God," she said, "I know he's God. The Spirit appeared to my heart and revealed that to me before I ever saw him. If you don't believe he's God, come to my home. I'll show you how he supplies all my needs. I'll show you my frigidaire. I'll show you my pantry. I wouldn't know how to live without him."

When she sat down, Robb turned to Geraldine, "Didn't that woman look like she had the glory of God on her face?"

"She certainly did."

Yes, people were there who were once holiness people. A friend of the Frenches said to a man, "What are you doing here?"

Without hesitation he answered, "Why, this is light. I've found the light."

"I thought you said you were sanctified."

"I am. I have the Holy Ghost, and He guided me here."

"Can you imagine that?" Robb exclaimed to Geraldine. "A preacher that claims he's God Almighty....

One preacher in the visiting party said, "I'm afraid to go back again. Something gets a hold of you in that place."

At a later time, Robb and Geraldine went to Father Divine's office at his headquarters in New York City to see him, but were told they could not talk with him without an appointment.

"You can see him down in the dining hall sometime between 12:00 and 12:30," his secretary informed them.

Robb and Geraldine hesitated.

Just then a man, well-groomed and looking like the president of a bank, walked up to Robb. "Brother, you'd better take time to see him," he admonished. "This is the most important thing in the world. We know he's God. We have absolute proof he's God Almighty."

So they went down to the dining hall. Presently, Father Divine walked past them and sat down at the transverse section of the table. The crowd went into pandemonium. They fell prostrate. They screamed. Beautiful girls, their eyes fastened on him, clapped their hands, singing, "All to Father I surrender. All to him I freely give."

A sumptuous meal was served, but Father Divine seemed to eat very little. He pushed the food that remained on his plate to a lady sitting across the table. She fell prostrate, but soon rose and ate the food he had left.

When they walked out of there, Robb looked up at the sky and cried, "My God, the Church of Jesus Christ doesn't have a chance."

He had come out of Communist meetings and said the same thing. "They're dead in earnest," he remarked. "We're half asleep. There were 300 packed like sardines in that dining hall with their eyes just riveted on that man. And this wasn't a service, just a dinner. It was astonishing to see so many cultured and refined people who actually believed and worshipped that man as God.

When Robb addressed a holiness meeting in Topeka, Kansas, soon after, he could not help contrasting the two gatherings. Here six churches were united in a service held just once a month. Only thirty-five were present, and some of them went to sleep.

"You see what chance we have to compete with the powers of darkness," Robb lamented.

Two Free Methodist ladies visited one of Father Divine's meetings.

"Brother French," they said, "we'll never go there again. If we hadn't known where we were, we would have thought we were in a spiritual Free Methodist service."

In thinking it all over, Robb knew it could be no other than diabolical. "I don't know how close they can come to the genuine," Robb reflected, "but I know Jannes and Jambres followed Moses and Aaron and performed the very miracles they performed. Oh, the devil can imitate the genuine, all right! He can imitate the witness of the Spirit. Carnal security can become a substitute for the witness of the Spirit. Horrible! That is why so many people can profess holiness and act mean and ugly and talk and gossip and backbite, and yet shout the victory when we talk about second blessing holiness. There are three evidences of an experience of holiness: the Word of God, the witness of the Spirit, and the fruitage of the everyday life. Oh, to know the voice of the Spirit! Lord, give me discernment that belongs to Thy followers!"

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Chapter 18

Keeping Ready for the Rapture

Robb visited a lighthouse in Brunswick, Georgia, when he was in a camp meeting in Hortense. It was the first one he had ever seen. With the keeper he climbed the steep stairway to the place high in the tower where the massive light was.

"Be careful not to touch the lens," warned the keeper. "If anyone should touch the lens, it would take us two hours to polish away the fingerprint."

It started Robb to thinking. There was the light shining out through the stormy night -- through all kinds of weather. There was, no doubt, a vessel out yonder looking for the light. Just a little smudge on the glass would cloud the shining of the light and might cause the ship to lose its way.

A solemn feeling came over him. "Lord," he prayed inwardly, "don't let me do anything, say anything, show an attitude, or act in any way that would dim the light that I'm supposed to let shine out across life's stormy sea."

A careful walk before the Lord was always an obsession with both Robb and Geraldine.

"Before I was married, I kept house a little bit," Robb said. "You wouldn't have known that, I guess," he remarked once when telling about it. "I've had company knock at the door when I wasn't prepared for company. I would be so embarrassed, I'd jump and grab something, pick it up, and straighten up something else before I let the company in."

Then he made application. "Now, when the monster, Death, knocks at your door, if you're prepared and under the blood, you won't be embarrassed and terrified. You'll say, 'Come right on in.' (He'll not wait for an invitation, however.) But you'll be able to say, 'I'm ready for you. I knew you were coming. I'm not scared of you.' That's what Paul said. 'O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?' The sting of death is sin. It's sin that makes one afraid. It's readiness through the blood of Christ that gives one calm."

Route 224 was often traveled by the Frenches when they were passing through Indiana and Ohio. On this highway, just back from the road a little way, lived some friends who pled with Robb and Geraldine to stop by sometime and spend a few days. On a particular trip in September, 1945, Robb was traveling alone, Geraldine having stayed behind to care for her ailing mother.

"I believe I'll stop and spend the night with these folk," Robb decided, as he neared their home.

He pulled into the yard, noticing as he did so that a couple of cars were parked in and near the garage. Well, I guess they're home, he thought. He knew that the daughter had one car and the father another. The family usually came running out; but tonight they did not, so Robb went to the door.

"Anyone at home?" he called.

All he heard was the tick, tick, tick of the clock. The silence of the place seemed to mock him. Then the awful thought stole into his heart, Can it be possible that Jesus has come and these friends have been caught away, and I have missed it?

"Maybe they're out looking at the cows," he said to himself. "They have quite a dairy here."

So he went out. The cows had been milked, and all stood chewing their cud.

"Well, maybe they're at the chicken house."

Robb made his way to the chicken house, but saw no one. He did not know what to make of it. The nearest neighbor lived three-quarters of a mile away. When the family went anywhere -- to church, to town, or to the neighbor's -- they would go in one of the cars. He could not figure out why no one was at home when both cars were there. He returned to the house and walked in. The stillness chilled him to the bone. Fear choked him. Could it be -- could it actually be that the Rapture had taken place and he was left behind? He fell to his knees in merciless heart-searching. Some way, however, he felt that everything was in the clear. Nothing dimmed the witness within. He picked up a paper. It was the county newspaper. In it was the announcement of a revival going on in the community.

"That's it, I guess," he murmured. "They're gone. But how did they get there?"

Later in the evening they all came home -- the evangelist with them. He was staying at their place and had taken them in his car. So that was the explanation.

In relating this incident to an audience some time afterward, Robb commented, "I tell you I wouldn't want to go through that again. You say, 'That's just imagination.' Well, that's bad enough. I wouldn't want to go through the real thing. I appreciate that experience. I appreciate every time the Lord awakens me and stirs me. I tell you, friends, I'm not going to take a chance on it. I don't feel like wrapping my profession around me and saying, 'I think I'll do.' I want to know Jesus Christ is the Bridegroom of my heart. Someday the Rapture is going to be a reality. I am talking to people here who will live to see that, without a single doubt. God have mercy! Oh, ... let's get ready for the coming of the Lord. If you miss everything else, don't miss the Rapture. Oh,... if you lose everything else, don't lose your soul. Don't let anything wean you away from Christ. Get ready to take off."

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Chapter 19
Soul Travail

In the spring of 1951, Robb and Geraldine went to Cuba upon the request of Rev. O. E. Leonard who had a mission there. He wanted Robb to serve on his board and also wanted the Frenches to hold a meeting in Camaguey. Thus, it was not sightseeing motives that took these servants of the Lord to this needy land. They did not stay on tourist trails, but went back, deep into the mountains.

When he had gathered a crowd around him out in the open, the missionary turned to Robb. "This will be the first sermon this crowd has ever heard."

Robb's feelings can scarcely be imagined. Suddenly, the responsibility of giving these people the Gospel message for the first time seemed too great.

"Why don't you preach to them?" he suggested to Mr. Leonard. "You talk in their language and I would have to go through an interpreter."

"Well," the missionary acceded, "I'll talk."

So he spoke, but all the time he did so, Robb's heart was burning. When he could stand it no longer, he said, "Let me say a few words."

Robb arose and faced the crowd. They were standing, listening so eagerly they fairly pulled the message out of his fiery heart.

The Frenches were overwhelmed. "Boys," said Robb, when he recalled the incident later, "we haven't got out of Jerusalem, yet Here is this little pearl in the Caribbean Sea, less than ninety miles from our shore, and yet its people are still in darkness and superstition and slavery. Brother, something's wrong!"

Though many people in that part of rural Cuba were in abject poverty, and how to "keep the wolf from the door" was almost a constant problem, the Frenches found the Christians here and in Jamaica, where they assisted in two conventions, among the happiest people in the world. There were deeply spiritual saints in these missions -- saints who pray long and earnestly and carry a burden for the lost.

"We probably will never hear such shouting again till we reach the New Jerusalem," remarked the Frenches. "It was a great relief from the cold formality of the churches in the States."

In July, 1960, while holding a camp meeting at Wesley Grove Camp in Yardville, New Jersey, the Frenches had the privilege of seeing a tree under which David Brainerd is believed to have knelt many times in prayer. The limbs extend 120 feet, the trunk measures 17 feet in circumference. Roads follow old Indian paths and wind around in the vicinity of the tree.

Brainerd's diary records, "From the time the sun was half an hour high until near dark, I was in agony of soul. My clothes were wet.

Under this tree a revival among the Indians was born.

Robb knelt beneath its branches. "O God," he pled, "let this man's mantle fall on me, some way or another."

It has been the sorrow of both Robb and Geraldine that there is so little soul travail. "I'd give everything I've got," Robb once said, "to see the days of soul travail return once more.

He often told the story of Aunt Rachel. The last time he saw her she was 92 years of age. It was her custom to attend the Fairmount, Indiana, Camp year after year. This year Robb was preaching. They brought Aunt Rachel's chair up close to the platform so she could hear. She would listen and then she would groan awhile. Then she would listen.

After the message she went to Robb, all bent over as though she were in physical agony, as she doubtless was.

"Brother French," she said, "do all Christians feel like this? I'm seldom without a pain in my heart for lost souls."

The light in her eyes was going out, her face was deeply wrinkled, her soul was bowed with the weight of 92 years, but her heart burned for the lost.

Robb did not answer her aloud, but he felt like saying, "No, Aunt Rachel, not all professed Christians feel like that" Oh, for more of a burden for lost souls!

Later, the Frenches knew an old woman at Hobe Sound Camp who often prayed, "Lord, I'd like to be on the Mount of Transfiguration. That would be wonderful. But lead me into the Garden of Gethsemane where I can agonize for souls."

"This is what brings the fire," Robb commented. "There's something about fire that fascinates me. I like to see fire. I've followed the fire trucks around, but I've never followed the ice trucks much. They don't attract me.

Robb and Geraldine had a little cottage in Florida.

"We don't need much," said Robb in commenting on it. "We get along with just a little. We were happy with our little home, but while we were away, the folk remodeled it and put a fireplace in it.

I like that. I like a cheerful fire with those little flames flickering around, dancing, roaring, hot, burning, crackling. Warmth radiates from the fireplace.

"Fire does a lot things. It takes fire to bring purity. It takes fire to attract the unsaved to the church. Dr. Carradine used to say, 'You build a fire in the woods and you'll have a crowd -- possums, coons, skunks, toads, bobcats, jack rabbits. Everything will come out to see the fire. And if you get a church on fire, people will come out to see it.' "

"I remember we were holding a meeting one time in Lafayette, Indiana, when the church caught fire. Flames were leaping from the roof which could be seen all over town. By the time the fire engines arrived, a crowd had gathered. They just piled in. A fireman was holding the hose, squirting water on the fire when a little boy said, 'I heard these people praying that the Lord would set the church afire.'

"The fireman smiled and said, 'Son, I don't think it's this kind of fire. There's more than one kind of fire.'

"If you are looking for a thrill," Robb continued, "wait on the Lord till you get an answer to prayer. That's one of the most wonderful things you can experience. Maybe God is busy making a new galaxy of stars or something, but He pauses to listen to your prayer. It's not the thing we get, so much, as the thought -- He gives me an answer! 'His arm is not shortened that it cannot save.' Oh, what a history that arm has made across the centuries -- the arm of Almighty God!

"When you have the fire, you won't have what my mother called, 'Wheelbarrow religion' -- the kind that makes others have to keep pushing you. My brother used to tell about an old mule that was so lazy they couldn't get him to move, so they built a fire under him. He moved up just far enough that it burned up the wagon. Well, let's get the fire that not only moves ourselves, but, through our soul agony, moves others to God."

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Chapter 20
Hobe Sound

People everywhere have asked the Frenches how it was they came to establish a camp at Hobe Sound, Florida.

Rev. James and Ella Zuch were already in Florida for Rev. Zuch's health. Robb and Geraldine had heard of them when they were pastors in Cincinnati, so now in the early 1940's, the Frenches contacted them with the idea of starting a camp meeting in Florida -- a place where missionaries, preachers, and saints could go and recuperate, soul and body. In this day of drift and compromise and apostasy, they felt that a place was needed where old-time saints all over the country who have been browbeaten and criticized, could encourage and strengthen one another. Many were hearing the other side so much that they were in danger of thinking, "Well, maybe I'm wrong. Maybe I've been too radical. Maybe I ought to have better judgment"

Robb and Geraldine knew of one woman who looked out over a crowd of worldly church members and said, 'I'm the only one in this crowd that's taking this pilgrim way. I can't be a speckled bird. I'll just be like the rest.'

So she went home, got to her mirror, reached for the makeup and the curling iron; but when she did so, the birds quit singing in her heart.

"Folk like these need the encouragement that comes from fellowship with the saints of God and from hearing messages that ring true to the old-time Gospel," the Frenches decided.

"We'll not gather together to throw clubs at anyone else," Robb said. "No, that's not it. Neither will we gather our garments about us and show a 'holier than thou' attitude. That isn't the way we Christians ought to do. We must watch against a bitter spirit. I never felt more like standing foursquare for God in my life, but we must keep honey in the rock. Some people are all rock and some are all honey. But the right combination is honey in the rock -- firm as the Rock of Gibraltar, but as sweet as the best honey that ever flowed out of Canaan."

Robb and Geraldine were in seven camps one summer all the way from the ultra-conservative to the ultra-liberal, an experience which gave them a good perspective of the holiness movement. They came to the conclusion that the country was wide open for a group of people who would stand uncompromisingly, hold the standard high, but who would keep sweet, keep the glory, keep the blessing, and keep the presence of the Holy Ghost.

This is what they envisioned in Florida. But they knew that the group who would gather there would be just as bad as the worldly crowd if they should begin fussing. Robb's heart bled on the

inside as he recalled at least fifteen holiness movements, existent when he was a boy, the doors of which were now closed. These movements had included some of the greatest people that have lived since Pentecost. The school which he and Geraldine attended when they were children, where the glory fell in such waves as to be felt, was now an old folks' home operated by a non-evangelical group. For some years it had been a hotel where men smoked cigars and drank their beer.

How was all this to be accounted for? Robb had the answer. People got to testifying at one another, got to looking at one another out of a critical eye, got to faultfinding. The Holy Ghost left.

"Even in a camp of holiness people, if we're not careful, we'll become religious cannibals," Robb warned. "The Bible says, 'If ye bite and devour one another...' We'll have to watch that we don't get to chewing on one another."

The Zuchs and the Frenches worked hard and long to find a location for the camp. Since Camp Murphy, a military camp, was folding up, they investigated sites close by so that they could easily move buildings and material to their campground. They found what they wanted at Hobe Sound. It was in the middle forties when they took pick and shovel and started to grub out palmetto bushes at Hobe Sound. They slept in their car and cooked in the bushes on an oil stove. Slowly but surely, enough ground was cleared so that considerable material and some buildings were moved from Camp Murphy to their campsite. Later on, a bulldozer cleared some of the ground, making room for more and larger buildings. It had been a back-breaking struggle, but they rejoiced to see how God gave health and strength to undertake the Herculean task.

The grounds were still in a primitive state, when one day, Will, after trying for some time to find Robb and Geraldine, rapped at the door of the cabin into which they had moved. Robb opened the door.

"Did God or the devil tell you to put a camp here?" Will wanted to know.

A little Quaker woman, laughing in her characteristic way, once said, "Did the Lord tell thee to start a camp in this place?"

The merchants of the town said they talked it over and decided Robb was a fool for starting something there. He might have been if God had not been in the undertaking and caused it to prosper. The Frenches always gave God all the credit and glory.

Developments were still in their early stages when, one Sunday afternoon, Geraldine was sitting on a cot in one of the first buildings erected, yet without screens on the doors and with holes in the floor, strumming her guitar and humming a tune.

"That's a pretty good tune," Robb said. "We had better put words to it."

Thus it was that the song, "There's More With Us than be With Them," became somewhat the battle cry of the Camp, as well as of many a campaign throughout the nation and perhaps the world.

As progress continued, the concern for a spiritual camp still weighed upon the hearts of the Frenches. This can be an old bunch of tomcats, fussing and growling and gossiping, Robb thought to himself, or it can be a little heaven on earth.

Brother Will prophesied, "Robb, you know how holiness people are. You'll have a fuss."

"We'll shutdown, then." Robb replied. "I'd rather see Hobe Sound turned into a beer garden or dance hall -- it would do less harm -- than to see it full of fussing holiness people."

God blessed, and the Camp took on such proportions that facilities had to be enlarged from time to time through the years.

As the Camp grew, concern developed for a holiness Bible school. Especially did Rev. S. D. Herron carry on his heart a burden for this sort of venture for the Lord, and, eventually, in consultation with the Frenches, Hobe Sound campground was selected for its location.

Robb and Geraldine held high ideals for a Bible school. They felt that every holiness college in the country should have a prayer chamber, that every teacher should have enough glory and grace and fire and power and understanding to say to every student, "Frequent the prayer room and tarry there until you get the mighty cleansing, energizing, illuminating baptism of the Holy Ghost, or your life will be a frightful failure before God." They were sensitively aware that many Bible college students are graduating with a knowledge of theology, but without a knowledge of God.

The Bible College was opened in the fall of 1960, with seventeen students and two teachers. Both the Camp and the Bible College were exploits beyond the resources of the Frenches, they freely acknowledged. Every once in a while they would come to the end of their string, so to speak.

At such times, they would say, "We'll have to ask heaven. We don't have any big organization to back us, or anybody with money. We'll just have to tell the Lord about it." And it was surprising what the Lord did for them. It became a wonderful thing to trust God. Buildings were erected and paid for, God alone supplying the finances.

When the School was still more or less struggling along, a man who had a farm in the Everglades telephoned and said, "We have some potatoes over here you can use at the School if you care to." So Robb got one of the students, and together they went after the potatoes.

Riding along in the pickup, Robb glanced at the gas gauge. "Say, this registers almost empty," he said to his companion. "We'll have to get some gas in town before we go back."

At the farm, they loaded their potatoes and, forgetting all about the gas, set out on their return journey to the School. Out on the road where there was no gas station for a stretch of more than forty miles, Robb's heart almost stood still. Gas! They had forgotten to get gas!

"And this is prayer meeting night," Robb chided himself. "Here we are. If we get stranded out here, what will we do?"

They began to pray though Robb professed small faith. At times the two held their breath. The truck would chug and almost stop. Finally, when they came in sight of the Chinese farm, Robb thought, Oh, now, if we can find a phone somewhere and call.

But God was better than their faith. They went on, and not only reached the filling station, but sped right on to the School, backed up, unloaded the potatoes, and put the pickup in the garage. They had run forty to forty-five miles after the gauge had registered empty. The tank usually had two gallons left at this point, but with a heavy load, the truck never gave much mileage per gallon. Robb felt that surely an angel from heaven had poured gas into his tank. He did not forget experiences like that quickly. It encouraged him to continue to venture beyond his resources.

H. ROBB FRENCH
Pioneer, Prophet, and Prayer Warrior
Compiled By
Anna Talbott McPherson

Chapter 21
God of Storms

In the case of Robb and Geraldine, full consecration to God had been almost inborn. Mother French had consecrated to go to the poorhouse if only God would call her husband and boys to preach the Gospel. She never went to the poorhouse. Instead, she ended up in heaven -- in a mansion, as Robb said, "that would make Buckingham Palace look like a chicken coop." Mother Trusler had consecrated to go from door to door begging for something to eat rather than fail God. Did she ever have to do it? Never!

Thus, the Frenches consistently set a good example of self-discipline and sacrifice. On their way home from a meeting once, they began to feel somewhat hungry, having traveled most of the day without food. Every once in awhile, they would pass a Dairy Queen.

"Dairy Queen! Dairy Queen!" something down inside Robb cried out.

Hunger pangs became so sharp, and the voice shouted "Dairy Queen" so insistently that Robb became indignant. "Shut up!" he ordered. "You're not going to get one!"

According to his own testimony, his "old, saucy, squalling appetite kept still the rest of the journey," and when they arrived home, there was a good meal prepared for them. They had saved twenty cents for missions.

The truth was, the Frenches gave away so much, it seemed they were always poor. Robb never knew what it was to have good tools. He always worked with a hammer that had a broken handle or broken claws and with a saw that one "almost had to ride," as he said, to make it cut into the wood. Then his cousin gave him a beautiful hammer and a saw -- things he had never had in his life.

He was rather particular about these tools and wanted to "hang on" to them. Later, he got an electric drill. It seemed as though every time he wanted to use the drill, it was gone.

"Where's my electric drill?" he would go around asking.

The answer was usually the same, "Oh, So-and-So's got it out on the campground."

What will it be like with every Tom, Dick and Harry using it? Robb's reasoning objected.

"Believe I'll just lock it up," he said to himself.

But the Lord checked him. "Whose are they? Aren't they Mine?"

"Yes, Lord."

"Haven't I the right to do with Mine own what I will?"

"Yes, Lord, let them go. Let them go."

It was the same way with all the Frenches had -- their car, and even the campground. Some years after the Camp was started, the grounds were struck by a hurricane. Extensive damage resulted.

Robb stood surveying the havoc. "How is this?" he questioned.

And then the Lord spoke. "Well, I just wanted to let you know this is Mine. You told me it was."

"That's right, Lord. Every grain of sand, every building, every tree is Yours."

"If it's Mine, then, if I want to send a little hurricane to jar things up, it will be all right."

Robb thought it over. "When you say 'Yes' to God," he decided, you've got yourself in a fix! The Bible says God rides the wings of the wind. That's the reason I'm not too much interested in insurance. If He wants to ride the wind through my house or the campground, it's all right with me.

On Palm Sunday evening, April 11, 1965, God rode the winds again -- this time through the Frenches' little home in Marion, Indiana. It was only a garage, with eight-foot-cinderblock walls, topped with a frame superstructure divided into tiny living room, kitchen, bedroom, study, and bath. It adjoined the lawn of the Joseph McPherson property on East 47th Street and was only three or four blocks from Geraldine's sister, Golden, who now lived with her daughter, Mrs. Kenneth Knapp and family. One would hardly notice the unpretentious cottage behind the mulberry tree were it not pointed out to him.

A little after sunset on this particular day, with most of the neighborhood people in church, an ominous roar broke into the evening stillness. It increased swiftly in volume and came closer and closer. Then, in all its fury the tornado struck. Violent crashes split the air as windows shattered, houses rocked and some blew away. When the din and blast subsided, ambulance sirens wailed through the eerie blackness of the night.

The morning light of the next day revealed that the cinderblock walls of the ground-floor garage or storage space of the Frenches' little dwelling had tumbled. The superstructure had been jerked from its supporting walls, twisted around and set down in a precariously tipped position, one corner of the building having dug itself into the ground on the McPherson lot, while the opposite corner projected itself into the air. The framework was wrenched, its roof now in a swayback condition, and shingles pretty well blown away. Windows were broken, and mud covered everything.

Joseph McPherson, perched on a ladder with hose in one hand and a sponge in the other, was washing mud off his own house when the Frenches, ten days or two weeks after the storm, came driving in to survey the havoc wrought.

"I can remember their eyes being fixed on the wreckage of their home as they came down the street and turned into their drive," Joseph said, in telling the story. "As they got out of the truck and walked toward the house, it seemed that they never took their eyes off of it."

They stood some minutes, stunned into mute bewilderment.

"We remember Robb making some kind of a statement to the effect that he was greatly tempted to light a match to the whole mess," Joseph related.

But there were his books, his papers. The next few days brought almost pitiful sights -- Geraldine back in the field, groping through tangled grass and mud, picking up a paper here, a piece of clothing there, Robb trying to clean up and figure how he could get the little house square on a foundation again, both of them sorting out personal belongings that had been stored in the garage area. Much had been completely destroyed, water damaged, or blown away, and more and more was being parted with and thrown on a pile to be burned.

Geraldine delved into a trunk filled with wedding gifts which she had sentimentally treasured these many years. Most of the contents were soiled by water and mud. The wedding candles were still intact, however. Now they had to be used for emergency lighting, as electrical power was not restored for many days to come.

The former stairway entrance through the floor of the wooden superstructure was now the only passage into and out of the little house. One had to stoop to almost a crawl to enter or exit.

After much deliberation, pro and con, Robb decided to clear away as best he could the cinder blocks and trash that impeded work and then put the frame building on a low foundation made of the salvaged block. He borrowed huge jacks and timbers used by those who move houses and spent much time crawling on knees and stomach under his little dwelling, resting so insecurely above him -- a desperately dangerous undertaking. Even Geraldine was often seen with him under the wreckage. Finally, with the help of neighbors and friends, he accomplished the Herculean task -- a task to which Robb's strength and that of Geraldine was hardly commensurate. In due time helpers repaired windows and put on a new roof.

In spite of all the effort, however, the little house was never the same. Electrical power was not restored, nor running water from their well. During future short stays in their little home, the Frenches plugged an extension cord into an outlet of the McPherson garage, and either carried water in buckets or used a garden hose run from the McPherson house across the side yard to theirs.

Robb and Geraldine later sold their land for a shopping center site and moved the cottage to a lot some two or three hundred yards away across the fields. Because they were gone so much, the little home was the target of vandals who did much damage, smashing windows and destroying contents. The building was then boarded up while entrance was still maintained. At length, the Frenches gave it up entirely, selling house and lot to a neighbor.

The little home was gone, but it was all right, they decided. God had let the tornado come. The house was His. The papers, books, wedding gifts, clothing -- everything was His. Once again the Frenches were cheerfully proving their consecration and their trust in God. "A tent or a cottage..." Robb had sung many years before, and he still meant it.

H. ROBB FRENCH
Pioneer, Prophet, and Prayer Warrior
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Chapter 22
Sunset and Sunrise

The year of 1962 brought with it unexpected and severe testings. Geraldine had suffered for quite some time with pain in her chest before she submitted to consult a doctor. When she did, he told her that surgery would be necessary. This was in June, and summer meetings were planned ahead.

Dear Geraldine -- Robb's constant companion and the sharer of his burdens. What would he do without her at his side? All through the years she had been a perfect helpmeet -- fasting, praying, denying self for the sake of their ministry. Not only had she sung specials with him to the accompaniment of her accordion, but she acted as song leader, in her unassuming, sweet way, reflecting the very glories of heaven on her countenance. Often she filled in capably at the piano and helped wisely and faithfully around the altar. She was as indispensable as his right arm.

It was after the serious and extensive operation was performed that the unthinkable happened. Geraldine quit breathing! Her heart stopped.

"She's gone! She's dead!" the doctor said.

But he did not give up. Quickly massaging outwardly, and administering stimulants, he worked over her until she began a short, labored breathing. Now they called Robb in. The nurses and nurses' aides were trying their best to bring Geraldine back to consciousness. They rubbed her face and pled with her to open her eyes and speak. But the only response was a deep, heavy breathing.

Mrs. Herron stepped up and said, "This is Dorothy, Mrs. French. You know me. Open your eyes and show me that you know who I am."

But there was no sign of consciousness. The nurses appealed to Robb to see if he could rouse her.

Robb walked up to the bed. "Geraldine," he called gently. Instantly her eyes flew open. She gave him a lovely smile and then went back into unconsciousness. This excited the nurses and they wanted Robb to try it again. He did. A second time Geraldine's eyes opened; she smiled and then lapsed into unconsciousness.

"She knew the voice of her lover," Robb fondly remarked, when telling of it later. "It makes me think that when Jesus comes, the saints, dead and alive, will know His voice."

Geraldine recovered nicely and in three weeks was able to accompany Robb to a camp in West Virginia.

Early in the morning of December 8, that same year, there was a knock at the door of the little French cottage at Hobe Sound, and Robb was told that his sister Frances had been killed in a wreck on the highway by a drunken driver. She was accompanying a group of students from the Bible School to Key West. At first it seemed to Robb that every light on earth blinked out. Everything was dark.

"But someone must have prayed through," Robb said as he related the incident. "I came out of that like a butterfly out of a cocoon. The way things are going, I'm glad she's safe inside the City. Praise God! I don't want my sister back, or any of the rest of my family. Bless God! They've made it through the gates of the City. Home with Jesus forever. What more would I want? Life eternal! Christ is there!"

It had long been Robb's ambition to have a French family reunion, but his relatives were scattered, sometimes in foreign countries, sometimes from ocean to ocean, and he gave up the idea as nigh impossible. Now, his heart torn with the news of Frances' death, the thought came, You're nearer a family reunion today than you've ever been.

And it was true. "All my family is on the other side," Robb said. "I believe they're sitting down by the golden sea waiting for me to come on so the family circle will be complete."

Of course, in their much traveling, the Frenches often consulted maps. Even so, occasionally they would miss the road.

"I blame it onto Geraldine," Robb would say, laughingly, "but I guess I'm mainly to blame because I have my hand on the steering wheel."

They were traveling one cloudy day from Michigan into Ohio. Having had a strenuous day, both were extremely weary and were anxious to reach their destination. They came into Michigan City. They knew they were to change to another highway here, one which would cross the one they were traveling. Being so very tired, they failed to take time to look at the map. They couldn't miss it, they thought. Presently, they came to the crossing. Yes, it was the right one.

"Turn to the left, don't we?" Geraldine asked.

"Yes," Robb said, "I think that's right"

So they made the turn. For miles upon miles they drove, but seemed not to be reaching the towns they should.

"What's the matter?" they wondered.

"Ah! I know," Geraldine discovered as the map was consulted. "We're traveling north instead of south!"

And so they were. They had gone out of their way fifty-three miles.

"I feel like threshing myself," Robb moaned. "Why didn't we look at the map? Why didn't we inquire? Why didn't we say, 'Is this the road?' But no, we were tired and just took it for granted."

One hundred six miles for nothing! Gas and time were wasted, just when time was so precious! Retracing their way in silence, feeling dejected because of their blunder, a new thought occurred to Robb. I'm on another journey. Tramp! Tramp! Tramp! While I'm asleep I travel. Everyone does -- everyone of us travels on to our great eternity. Now I'm getting to be an old man. What has become of my time is the biggest problem of my life. Where did it go? Years tumble into eternity like months used to do. Weeks seem like days. No one can interest me in this old world. It's dying. It's perishing. We get our eyes on perishing, wilting, fading things, and forget the things of God. I want to keep well-acquainted with the map that leads me Home!

This has been the obsession of both Robb and Geraldine throughout their busy years, not just for their own eternal interest, but for the interest of that innumerable host to whom they have ministered. And in like manner as they have lived, so they beckon others to live -- wholly unto God.

None will know until the final account is reckoned how many souls Robb and Geraldine have led into the Way Everlasting. Up and down the land and across the years, they have preached salvation from sin and holiness of heart through Jesus and have made nothing of self that Christ might be all. Their unfeigned humility has set a standard of self-effacement for God's children everywhere. Their continual dependence upon God and carefulness to ascribe all glory to Him, as well as their scarcely equaled sacrificial lives, challenge the best of Christ's followers to go and do likewise.

In labors more abundant, in journeyings oft, in services unnumbered, in fastings many, in prayer without ceasing, they were following the right map and were not only witnessing glorious victories to the very end, but were leaving behind a trail of eternal glory that would light the way to heaven for generations to come.

Now, once more, the Frenches were on the road, traveling in their unpretentious coach -- a familiar sight to friends and loved ones -- fashioned to meet the very simplest of living needs. This time they had left New Jersey and were headed for the West. Leaving Geraldine in Marion, Indiana, Robb went to the airport to take a plane to Indianapolis, then another to Kansas City. His camp at this time was to be in Hutchinson, Kansas.

He had been hurrying from one engagement to another until he was bone-weary. He paced the airport platform back and forth, back and forth.

"Why do we have to have such a crowded schedule?" he lamented. "Why don't we have time to rest? Oh, I almost wish somehow this meeting could be canceled."

As he yielded to pitying himself, Robb began to feel very old and worn out. Just then a constellation plane roared down the runway. It caught his attention. Fascinated, he watched it lift itself gracefully into the blue and turn directly into the sunset -- one of the most gorgeous sunsets he had ever seen. It seemed that gold and silver and rubies and diamonds and sapphires had all blended in a flash of color that reminded him of heaven itself. Into all this riot of beauty the plane made her

way, shrinking smaller and smaller, until she looked like a little bird that had groomed her wings for a flight into another world. The sight thrilled Robb. Something new hit him. He forgot that age was creeping up on him. He felt like a sixteen-year-old.

"Praise God! Bless God!" he exclaimed. "I'm headed toward the sunset Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! Sunset in this old world of sin means a sunrise in a world of holiness and purity. Sunset in this world of trouble and war means sunrise in a world of everlasting peace. Sunset in this world of pain and sickness means sunrise in a City where there is no pain, no sorrow, no death. Hallelujah! We're going somewhere!"

Yes, the Frenches were going somewhere and trying to take as many with them as possible. A glorious sunset surrounded them now, but soon a sunrise should be theirs that would transcend the most exquisite beauties they had known in this world below -- a sunrise with Jesus, their beloved Saviour and Lord!

H. ROBB FRENCH
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Supplement

Only three days after their marriage, Will and his new bride, Katherine, set out for Portland, Oregon, where George and his wife pastored a Free Methodist Church. When they arrived in Portland, the conference tent was already erected at Crawfordsville, about 125 miles from Portland. Some of the conference brethren were carrying on the services until Will and his wife arrived. Will took over the preaching and God gave a good meeting. People attended who had not been in a Gospel service for over twenty years. Two churches were organized in that area, one at Crawfordsville and the other at Holly -- both country villages. Church buildings that had been closed and abandoned were opened up and the countryside took on new spiritual life.

Their next meeting was at St. Johns, a suburb of Portland, about fourteen miles from the First Church where Father and Mother French and Frances were pastoring. This was the only Wesleyan Church at that time in the whole state of Oregon. Will was appointed president of the conference by the Home Missionary Board. Having only one church, this meant real pioneering to get others started.

The tent was erected on a corner lot in St. Johns and they started in for a siege of fourteen weeks in the tent. Fall came on and they moved into an empty garage with the understanding that the owner could rent it for garage purposes if opportunity presented itself. After much scrubbing, cleaning, and whitewashing to cover up the dirt and grease, they had a fairly presentable place of worship for Sunday school and church.

But sure enough, not too many weeks after their cleaning spree, the owner had a renter for their garage church, so Will and Katherine had to release it. They moved out into the old Multnomah Theater a few blocks away. They had plenty of space for Sunday school rooms, but this called for another nightmare of cleaning. They had a good revival that winter -- the winter of 1925 -- conducted by Will's brother Robb. Several families were saved and became members of the church and faithful helpers.

In the summer of 1926, the Frenches moved into a vacant house which provided Sunday school class rooms and a small auditorium in the living room. They set up their living quarters in a couple of separate rooms. Early fall found them digging a basement on the corner lot they had purchased for their church. This was a venture of faith, as there was no money in hand or in sight. Will had only five dollars promised by his sister Frances, and she did not have the money yet. One man, a member of Father French's church, who owned a team of big horses and digging equipment, came out to St. Johns, and he and Will dug the basement.

The fall rains had set in. The men would come in at noon, muddy and drenching wet. Katherine would have their dinner ready, which she prepared on a one-lid heater by cooking one thing at a time

and stacking kettles on top of each other to keep the food warm. The men would change to dry work clothes and hang the wet ones back of the heater to dry. They would eat their dinner and go back to work, digging in the mud. Katherine commented, "It was not a very pretty sight or a very orderly -- kept house, but we were building the Second Wesleyan Church in Portland, Oregon!" Besides the inconveniences and handicaps, little Evangeline, around five-months old, was to be taken care of and kept well and happy. But God helped, and the Frenches were happy in their work.

Labor Day came. The men of the First Church had a holiday and, instead of taking off for pleasure, they gathered to help with the church. They poured cement, laid brick, and made themselves useful in many other ways. The church materialized almost like a mushroom growing before their eyes. Within two years of its beginning, the little church at St. Johns was built and dedicated free of debt. Rev. T. P. Baker, Home Missionary Secretary at this time, had the dedicatorial service.

At the invitation of a Sunday School Union representative of that area, the Frenches were invited to pitch the conference tent in The Dalles, Oregon. It had proven to be a hard place from all reports received from former evangelists who had tried to have a spiritual awakening in this Eastern Oregon town. The old gentleman with whom the Frenches had rooms told Will that he didn't believe Jesus Himself could have a revival in The Dalles. Will slapped him on the shoulder and said, "Brother, let's you and I believe God!" God did come in a remarkable way and many were saved, but because of lack of workers, they could not organize in every place they held a tent meeting.

Another place with similar results was Marshfield, Oregon. Some former friends from Alabama were living there and they invited Will and Robb to come for a meeting. This one was held in a big town hall. The Lord blessed and souls were saved, but no church was organized.

After getting the St. Johns work somewhat established, Will appointed one of the conference preachers there as assistant pastor, with Will himself having the general oversight of the work. Will then pitched the tent in a new section on the opposite side of the city. At that time this new section was called "Johnson Acres." After the tent meeting, the Frenches started Sunday school in one of the little "shotgun" houses that were common in that section before the owners were able to build their permanent homes. Will had a little flat trailer that he hitched onto the back of the car, and each Sunday morning he would circle the blocks gathering up Sunday school children. According to Katherine, they looked like chickens on the roost, perched as they were all around the edge of the little trailer. The car was packed full, as well. Finally, a church was organized.

In December of 1929, the Will Frenches left for Alabama to take over the pastorate of Birmingham First Church while Robb and Geraldine took a leave of absence for a trip around the world. Will and Katherine stayed in Birmingham until the early fall of 1930, then started on their way back to California, stopping in Kansas for a revival that ran into November. When they got to California, they held several pioneer meetings -- a tent meeting in Los Angeles where Father French pastored, a tent meeting in Pasadena that resulted in the organization of the Wesleyan Church there, another at El Monte and some at other places where organization did not materialize. They then made their way back to Oregon for more meetings.

In these first five years of their married life, the Frenches had crossed the continent from coast to coast five times. In that time three baby girls had been born to them. Katherine remembers that there was not time to pamper self in those days.

Finally, Will felt the call to general evangelism. They had meetings in Kansas, Minnesota (where they pioneered the church in Albert Lee), in Iowa (where they pioneered the church in Waterloo), and many other places. They were back in Alabama by the early spring of 1937. Here they pastored at Brent and Birmingham and then took the work at College Church, Central, South Carolina. A tent meeting held in Charleston that summer resulted in the organization of the Wesleyan Church in that city.

Seven children graced the French home now, and Evangeline, the eldest, was a senior in high school. In the years to come, all seven graduated from high school, junior college and senior college. "This would have been next to impossible on our salary," says their mother, "had we not lived near enough for them to live at home. We were not able to live 'high,' as some would say, but we always had plenty of food, and clothes that were presentable. In all the children's graduations we have rented twenty-one caps and gowns. Four of the children have done graduate work beyond college; two have finished seminary, one at Asbury, and one earned a Master's degree in Library Science from Peabody. In the group are two preachers, three missionaries, one song evangelist and children's worker, and one a certified public accountant, helping as a layman in his brother's church."

In 1946, Robb and Geraldine French, along with James and Ella Zuch, founded Florida Evangelistic Association which sponsored or assisted in the establishment of Sea Breeze Camp, Hobe Sound Bible College, FEA Missions, Sea Breeze Manor, a Gospel literature ministry, and other auxiliary enterprises which would reach thousands worldwide.

Robb was one of the founders of the Interchurch Holiness Convention and the National Association of Holiness Churches. In his later years he was a member of the Alabama Conference of the Bible Methodist Connection of Churches.

The Frenches also had a concern for the elderly, that they might spend their later years in a spiritual atmosphere. In 1971, Sea Breeze Manor, a retirement home, was established. Both Robb and Geraldine would live out their declining years at the Manor, recipients of the tender loving care they had planned for others.

Geraldine passed away in 1978. In the mid-seventies, Robb experienced failing health. He was bedfast much of the time, but even to the end he was responsive to prayer. On January 24, 1985, after a few hours in the hospital at Jupiter, Florida, he died a peaceful death. His last words to visiting friends were, "Praise the Lord."

At the age of 93, H. Robb French, pioneer, prophet, and prayer warrior, was reunited with his beloved Geraldine and the Christ he adored. The prayers of his father and mother were answered -- the family circle complete.

H. ROBB FRENCH
Pioneer, Prophet, and Prayer Warrior
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Quotes from H. Robb French

It's a death route. You die to self, you die to sin, you die to reputation, you die to people, you die to money, you die to the future, you die to your family, you die to everything. That's consecration! If you've ever been to the altar of consecration, everything you have or ever expect to have is just a pile of ashes.

* * * * *

It's good for us once in a while to plunge out in faith beyond our depth. If Elijah had had a bank account and a pantry full of groceries and a bin full of potatoes, the ravens wouldn't have had to feed him. Wouldn't you just like sometime to have a brook-of-Cherith experience? Here comes a raven down out of heaven giving me my breakfast...

* * * * *

I have to be rigidly systematic in my prayer life. I can preach three times a day and backslide.

* * * * *

People get put out with me and think I wrote the Bible. The Bible says, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." I didn't write that. How much religion will it take to get you to heaven? Just enough to make you feel comfortable in the presence of God.

* * * * *

Dead to this world. Do you know what that word "dead" means in the Greek? It means "dead." Do you know what it means in French? "Dead." When you're dead, you're dead! Dead to self, to position, to future ambitions. How we act under pressure tells whether we're dead or not. How do you act when you can't have your own way? When someone else gets the credit for what you've done?

* * * * *

This blessed experience of full salvation -- it doesn't sour, it doesn't ferment. And God wants to prove it to the world by putting the pressure on.

* * * * *

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A rich man came into a little holiness church and listened to the special music. The Frenches were the singers. "Why, that's wonderful! You've got talent here," the man exclaimed. "If you'd trim the corners and not be so radical, you'd go to town." "But we don't care about going to town," Robb soliloquized, we're going to the City."

* * * * *

There comes a time when the Spirit no longer strives with a soul. If that soul ever gets to God, he will have to act on what he knows whether he has a speck of feeling or not. The prodigal said, "I will arise." He put his will into it. You take the initiative. You take the lead. Draw nigh to God and He'll draw nigh to you.

* * * * *

Why do we have to go the narrow way? We don't have to. There's a broad way. The only trouble is, it ends up in the wrong place.

* * * * *

It's a sad thing that the Church of Jesus Christ has no casualty list. No one today is dying for the cause of Christ.

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In some of our theological institutions they're saying, "Don't stir up opposition." Aren't you glad John the Baptist didn't attend some of our modern theological cemeteries? He lost his head; but, brother, he's wearing a crown. The thing I'm worrying about is whether some of us fellows that keep our heads will get a crown or not.

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We'll have to travel the steep road to Calvary to be qualified to be in the select company who will be going up in the Rapture.

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"Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged." Do you know what the word is there? Overloaded. Did you ever see a great plane roll down the runway and not be able to take off? Too much baggage -- too heavily loaded. Now, if Jesus Christ should come this morning, how many of us would miss it because we're too heavily loaded? How sad if our thoughts should be so full of things and plans and this and that, that we wouldn't be able to get into the air!

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If you're ready to live, you're ready to die; if you're ready to die, you're ready to live.

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I wish they had a museum somewhere with Daniel's backbone in it. I'd go sometimes and see it. When I feel a little wobbly, I'd go and see it.

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Don't you think Jesus Christ can't take an insult! He knows when we stay at home on prayer meeting night.

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You parents won't win your children by compromising. You teach them to kowtow and they'll bow to the anti-Christ.

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We say we're saved and sanctified; but when they touch us, we're touchy, and our light dims.

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Every child of God is a soldier. I wish I could say it with such emphasis it would scorch your very brain and heart. From the least to the greatest, from the youngest to the oldest, from the lowest to the highest, we are soldiers of Jesus Christ.

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Will prayed gas into his carburetor when he didn't have any in the tank. You say, "I don't believe that." Well, you can try it out. You can't do it with money in your pocket, though. I'm not saying anything new. You know my position. We have insurance. We have social security. We have everything provided for us. We have plenty. We don't need to trust God. Faith dries up on our hands. Let's step over into the supernatural!

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I'm a chicken-hearted fellow. I ride through the country and see the corn growing tall. Comes a flood, and I begin to pray, "Lord, stop the flood." See a hurricane coming- "Lord . Maybe I've been praying wrong. America's ripe for the judgments of God. The two things the modern church needs today are poverty and persecution.

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I'm going down the western side of the hill, brother, and I'm interested in getting old. I want to know if this experience of perfect love will keep one when he gets tottery and decrepit. I believe it will! Hallelujah! I don't believe you have to get childish. I don't believe you have to get irritable and cross. I believe you can still have the victory in your heart. (Lord, when I near the sunset, keep the fires of heavenly love burning red-hot in my soul!)

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H. ROBB FRENCH
Pioneer, Prophet, and Prayer Warrior
Compiled By
Anna Talbott McPherson

BACK COVER TEXT

What are the hidden springs behind a life of power? This book reveals the early influences of divine grace working through a godly family.

Saved at the age of six and called to preach in his teens, H. Robb French became a pioneer of new churches, a prophet calling the Body of Christ back to a revival of holiness and power, and an intercessor at the throne of grace. His life theme was "Christ."

He founded Florida Evangelical Association which sponsored or assisted in the establishment of Sea Breeze Camp, Hobe Sound Bible College, FEA Missions, Sea Breeze Manor, a Gospel literature ministry, and other auxiliary enterprises which would reach thousands world wide.

Anna Talbott McPherson gleaned information for this book from sermon tapes, letters and interviews.

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