

The Poorhouse Waif and His Divine Teacher

Isabel C. Byrum

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THE POORHOUSE WAIF
and
HIS DIVINE TEACHER
A True Story

CHAPTER I. THE DESERTED CHILD

In this wide world the fondest and the best
Are the most tried, most troubled, and distressed.

—Crabbe.

“Why, woman, you are not thinking of leaving that child in this place for us to look after, I hope! Our hands are more than full already. You say that the child is scarcely a month old. How do you suppose that we could give it a mother's care? More than this, the board that governs the affairs of this institution has given us orders to accept no children under seven months of age whose mothers are not with them. So if we should take the child, as you say we must, you would be obliged to remain for that length of time, at least, to help us care for it.”

It was August Engler, steward of the county poorhouse in one of the eastern counties of Pennsylvania during the sixties, that spoke these words, and the circumstance that called forth the language was the appearance and request of Mrs. Fischer, a well-dressed young widow. The latter had come to the poorhouse with the intention of leaving her infant child. To this plan Mr. Engler had objected unless she was willing to comply with the rules of the place.

Mrs. Fischer, the mother of three little children, had recently heard that her husband, a soldier in the Civil War, had been killed in battle, and immediately she had gone into deep mourning as far as her dress was concerned. The care of her family, however, she felt was too great a responsibility to assume alone, and she had decided that the best thing for her to do was to give her three small children away and that the sooner it was done the better it would be. It was not hard to find homes for the girl and the boy, but with baby Edwin it was different. He was so young that nobody cared to be bothered with him, and although she had tried hard, she had not succeeded in finding him a home.

In her perplexity she rushed to the infirmary. So confident had she been that it would be the duty of this institution to help her out that she had not thought of asking the privilege of leaving her baby as a favor.

As steward and matron of the poorhouse, Mr. and Mrs. Engler did what they could to keep things going smoothly and in order, but the work was too large for them to handle it properly. At that early date no special place except the poor farm had been provided for the simple and the insane; so it was necessary to have several buildings, both large and small, to provide for the needs of the people.

In the building that was known as the poorhouse proper was the main office. It was here that Mrs. Fischer appeared. Several other rooms of importance were also in this building, such as the dining-room and some living-apartments, but the bakery and the kitchen were in a building just a short distance away. And there was still another building, a large brick structure close to the main building. This was used for the confinement of such persons as the insane and the unmanageable, and the doors and windows, as well as the transoms, on both the inside and the outside were secured by iron bars. From these dark prison walls many strange and hideous sounds could be heard at any hour of the night or day.

In the entire establishment the furnishings were scant and poor, and in every way things were vastly different from what we find them in the poorhouse of our modern times. In the main office, where Mr. Engler transacted his business affairs and entertained strangers, there was simply a rude desk, a homemade couch without springs or mattress, and a few rush-bottomed chairs. For years the walls had been growing darker because of the constant use of tobacco by those who frequented the place.

Had it not been that the steward and the matron of this home for the poor were capable persons and able to get considerable help out of the inmates, they could not have managed to keep up the place at all. To conceal the fact that the poorhouse was a miserable place to stay would have been an impossibility.

To the selfish mother it mattered not that the office within which she was standing was an index to the entire building. Regardless of consequences, she cared only to be freed from her burdens and responsibilities as a mother. So the answer that Mr. Engler gave her only stirred within her evil heart the anger and cruelty already there, and with a fiendish glare of derision toward the one who was endeavoring to do his duty, she took a step toward the hard couch and threw, rather than laid, the bundle she held in her arms upon it. An instant later she disappeared through the open doorway. When Mr. Engler recovered from his surprize and went to look for her, he

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saw her running up the road as fast as her feet would carry her.

Realizing in part the seriousness of the situation, Mr. Engler went at once to notify his wife, and, leaving her in charge of the little one, he, with others, set out to find the runaway mother. The task proved to be difficult. Owing to the fact that the woman was a stranger in the community and had gotten the advantage of her pursuers, it took some time to find her, but at last she was returned to the infirmary and was given orders by the authorities not to repeat the offense of deserting her baby.

As the feeble-minded people at the almshouse sometimes caused trouble by running off, large balls of iron had been provided to be chained to the feet of such persons. Thus their progress would be hindered and their escape be less probable. Still they could take a part in the work that had been assigned them about the place. It was thought best to use this method of securing Mrs. Fischer. When the chains were fastened about her ankles, one of the authorities who had helped in capturing her remarked, "I guess now you'll not raise your feet for a while as nimbly as you have been doing of late."

That evening Mr. Engler said to his wife: "It's the strangest case I ever heard tell of. Surely that woman has made the future of her infant son dark and uncertain. It doesn't seem possible that any mother could treat her child in such a shameful manner. I'm sure if that woman could get loose this minute she'd run away again, and we'll have to watch her closely while she's here."

"Did you see the baby's large brown eyes?" Mrs. Engler asked, as her husband ceased speaking. "He's certainly a nice child, and it's a shame to see him grow up among all these paupers; but if his mother doesn't care, I don't know who will."

"Well, I don't know that it's any of our business, either, except to see that she takes care of him while she's here, and after that I guess we can manage some way as we always have," Mr. Engler replied. "You've got too much to do to take any of her responsibilities on your shoulders, and you must not try. If people will force their children on the charity of the community, they must take the consequences."

The constant work and worry incident to caring for so many poor, disheartened people was indeed great, and Mr. Engler was right when he told his wife that she already had too much work to do; but it was very hard for her to think of the neglect that the poor little child would undergo even while its mother was there, for such a heartless woman could not be expected to do her duty. As the days and weeks glided by, it was as Mrs. Engler had feared, and the cruel manner in which the babe was handled was pitiful to behold. But scolding and criticizing the mother did neither the mother nor the child any good, and Mrs. Engler endeavored to forget about the matter and to let the baby get along as well as it could.

When at last the seven months had expired and the day for the departure of Mrs. Fischer had arrived, the woman who had so disgraced the name of motherhood was glad. The pretty costume of black was faded and worn, and the glossy hair was tangled and unkempt, but within the eye the light of evil was shining brighter than ever. It was indeed a glad moment for her when she heard the chains about her ankles clanking heavily upon the floor and she knew that she was once more a free woman and could go and do as she pleased. And without a thought for the comfort or a plan for the future of her helpless child, she left him to the generosity of the people.

It truly might seem that the young life was blighted, but there was One far better than mother, brother, or sister who cared and was ready to lend a helping hand.

"The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Prov. 15:3).

"Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?" (Luke 12:24).

CHAPTER II. LIFE IN THE ALMSHOUSE

Few save the poor feel for the poor:
The rich know not how hard
It is to be of needful rest
And needful food debarred;
They know not of the scanty meal,
With small, pale faces round;
No fire upon the cold, damp hearth
When snow is on the ground.
—Miss Landon.

Mrs. Engler had long since given the care and feeding of the children over into the hands of inexperienced women, who might have utterly ruined the delicate digestive organs had it not been that the food allowed was wholesome and the quantities too small for them to overfeed. The children, after being provided with pewter spoons, were seated in groups around large pans and were allowed to dip as they chose into the mixture that the pan contained. For a time after his mother's departure baby Edwin was fed from a cup, but as soon as he was able to handle the spoon and to toddle about the floor, he had to take his place with the others. Thus, table manners and politeness were unknown, and the earliest picture stamped upon the mind of little Edwin that he could in after-years remember was a group of boys and girls, of all ages and of whom he numbered one, hovering about a large dishpan, each eagerly watching for an opportunity to "dip" for his or her share of the food.

With the picture came a desire to be good and kind to all. Perhaps some Christian friend of the family had offered just such a prayer for him, and God, knowing the evil surroundings that would have a tendency to make him selfish or unkind, protected and shielded him with this very wall of kindness. At least God saw and understood, and he cared enough to help the poor little innocent, untaught boy as he matured from babyhood not only to be unselfish but to avoid doing many things that might have provoked others to anger. In short, God became his teacher, and many times while Edwin was still very young, when he discovered his playmates doing that which was evil, there was something within his heart that said it was wrong and that he ought not to do as they were doing. His ideas in regard to the right and wrong of different things he for a time expressed quite freely among the children; but, finding that he was only ridiculed for his pious thoughts, he learned to keep his views to himself. Although he was silent, he endeavored to keep as far away as possible from the scenes that troubled his finer nature.

But not all the days were dark for Edwin. There were times when the children were taken for long walks out in the fields or woods, where the flowers grew and where the birds sang their sweet songs. Upon such occasions Edwin's heart would be so filled with gladness that he would be almost beside himself. Not only the brown and yellow butterflies gliding hither and thither, lighting now and then upon some pretty blossom, only to soar away again high above his head as they discovered him approaching, attracted his attention; but their cousins, the little black crickets and the green and brown grasshoppers, springing about him in the meadowlands, made him shout aloud with delight. Not knowing the true names of the lively little fellows in the grass, he called them "jumper-men." Sometimes he would catch them in his hands, but he never thought of hurting them just for fun. And the turnip-patch! What a treat it was for all the children to pull the pretty white balls from the earth and to eat them, dirt and all, for it must be remembered that none of the children had been taught by their overseers to be clean and neat. It was too great an undertaking for Mrs. Engler to attend to such minor points. So the turnip just out of the ground was more of a luxury to Edwin in his half-starved condition than candy could have been, and candy at the poorhouse was practically unknown.

Once there was a kind old lady who came to stay for a short time in the home. From the first she seemed interested in Edwin, and, seeing his great desire to do the right, she endeavored to help and to encourage him. She had a son of her own, who once had been small like Edwin, and she could understand how very hard some things were for Edwin to bear.

Among the things that the lady taught him to do was to kneel down and with his little hands folded and in her

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lap, repeat after her the little prayer, "Now I lay me down to sleep." But she failed to tell him that it was praying or what it meant to pray. Neither did she explain that there was a great God over all, to whom he could tell all his troubles. But although Edwin did not know the meaning of prayer, there was something about the words and the repeating of them that he enjoyed, and long after the dear old lady had gone away from the almshouse, the words seemed to bring a real comfort and satisfaction to his poor little hungry soul.

Until the sixth year of Edwin's life he never heard that he had ever had a father, a mother, or a home other than the place in which he was then living. He knew only that he existed, and that from day to day there were many things happening about him, some of which he enjoyed, but a great many of which were distasteful to him. But all that took place he quietly endured, thinking that it was the best that there was in life for him. The fact that some were more favored than he was caused him no jealous or covetous feelings. He reasoned that it was all right for them, but for himself it could not be.

During the play-hours when the children were allowed to amuse themselves outside of the building, Edwin soon discovered that "a soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger" (Prov. 15:1). God must surely have taught Edwin the meaning of this proverb; for the old lady did not mention it in any of her talks, and there was no one else in that wretched place to tell him.

Many times the childish games were interrupted by the screaming and the swearing of the people in the insane-apartment. The timid children would cry out and tremble, but those who were older often tried to repeat the profane language. All these things, like many others, made deep impressions upon the sensitive nature of Edwin, and although he was not afraid, he often pondered them in his heart. Sometimes seated in a secluded corner he would watch the poor demented creatures with a pitying gaze, wondering why they talked and acted so strangely, but whether he could or could not understand them, he studied the sane and the mad alike, and what he felt was right in the conduct of either he made his pattern, but the wrong he rejected.

At times during the play-hours the children, overcome by hunger, would slip around to the large window that opened into the bakery and there stand gazing wistfully down upon the loaves of fresh bread as they were taken from the large oven. Sometimes some crusts or stale biscuits were given them, and with these they would scamper away to the pump to moisten the bread before dividing it. It sometimes happened that there was not sufficient bread for each child to have even a bit, and when it happened thus, Edwin always gave his share to some one else. And when asked if he would like some certain thing, his answer was always, "If no one else wants it."

Because of his thoughtfulness he was often obliged, because of the selfishness of others, to eat foods that had been rejected as refuse, but in his heart he never complained nor felt that he had not acted wisely. Thus, the Golden Rule, although in words unknown to him, became a governing principle in his life.

When the days were pleasant and warm during the summer months, groups of men and women often gathered about upon the large platform that surrounded the pump, or under the shade of an apple-tree, to prepare the vegetables for the table or the fruits for the coming winter's use. As little was known at that time about home canning, the fruits were usually dried in the sun or in the large ovens after the baking was done. The children loved to gather about the groups at work to keep close watch for stray bunches of berries or raw potatoes and turnips, that might be carelessly dropped. In this they were now and then successful, but the rounds of Mrs. Engler were frequent, and for several reasons the workers were particular that nothing be lost or wasted.

Instead of horses, heavy teams of oxen were used for all farming purposes. These animals, although faithful and trusty under ordinary circumstances, did not like to have children playing about their feet; and as there was no one to pay especial attention to the little ones, it sometimes happened that a child was either crippled or killed by the hoofs or horns of the powerful animals. On one occasion Edwin saw one of his playmates bruised and trampled in this way.

These scenes, as well as the regular rounds of the chore-boy Jim with his water-yoke upon his shoulders, carrying either water for the home or slop for the pigs, were sights that were common and in many cases interesting to Edwin. But from them he could learn practically nothing of the things that he would need before he could become a useful man in the world. Aside from a few instructions that were given them in hard labor, the poorhouse children were allowed to grow up as a flock of poorly fed chickens or animals. They were given their rations, a place to sleep, and that was about all.

The daily routine of the almshouse from year to year was little changed. Some passed on to their reward in the beyond, but the general order of things remained the same. The steward and his wife were busy from early dawn

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until late at night looking after everything and everybody, but many of the things of vital importance had to be neglected for a lack of sufficient time and strength.

“Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich”
(Prov. 28:6).

CHAPTER III. FROM BAD TO WORSE

“What bliss is born of sorrow!
’Tis never sent in vain—
The heavenly Surgeon maims to save,
He gives no useless pain.”
—Watt.

Something more than six years had passed since the departure of Mrs. Fischer from the county poor-house, but still the place was little changed. Mr. Engler was once more in the office of the institution. This time he was there to interview a stranger concerning the child Edwin. There was still the same strong odor of nicotine in the room, and the furniture and the condition of the walls and the floor still told of much want and wretchedness, as well as of habits that were unclean; but apparently as little heed was given to the fact by the stranger as had been manifested by the selfish mother.

It seems that the word that Mrs. Fischer was receiving generous pensions both for herself and for the support of her children had been carried to the board that governed the affairs of the poorhouse. Finding that none of the amount had been paid into that institution, orders had been issued to the effect that Mrs. Fischer must either pay for the support of her child or take him away from the almshouse. Having received a notice from Mr. Engler of the board's decision, she had decided to have him brought to her own home, and the stranger was no other than the boy's own uncle. He had come with horse and buggy, at the mother's request, he had told Mr. Engler, and he would appreciate having the child brought to him as quickly as possible, as he had no time to lose.

“And so the heartless woman's sent for her child at last, has she?” Mr. Engler said in a tone that might have inferred several things.

“Yes, that was her order,” was the reply, and Mr. Engler left the room at once to bring the fatherless and worse than motherless boy. The steward smiled as he thought of the contrast between Edwin and his uncle. The latter, a large, powerful man, was well-dressed and was apparently of a strong will, and the peculiar light within his eye and the hard lines about his mouth revealed the same characteristics that had been so prominent in the mother. Edwin, on the other hand, was small for his age and hollow-eyed from lack of sufficient food to satisfy his hunger, and his clothes were ragged and soiled. The honest, straightforward expression of the large brown eyes and the marks of refinement around his mouth made up, however, for what he otherwise lacked.

In a room where several other children were playing Edwin was found, but he was taking no part in the games. In fact, many things were done by the children in the poorhouse day after day that he did not enjoy and in which he would take no part. If questioned he could not have explained why he felt as he did about their actions, but he preferred turning to the window, where he could look out upon God's creation. The little birds that had charmed him in his rambles had long been his friends, and as he gazed through an open window, he could see a nest full of small fuzzy heads waiting for the parent birds to bring them a meal of worms. Many times the bills had been raised and the mouths opened wide because of the rustling of the leaves above or below them, and the boy was glad when they could realize that their expected meal was there.

In answer to Mr. Engler's order to come at once to the office, Edwin followed, but before he entered the room, Mrs. Engler saw to it that his clothing was changed, so that he would be a little more respectable to appear in public.

It was evident that, when Edwin, clad in a pair of faded blue overalls and shirt, entered the presence of his uncle, the latter was greatly surprized at the slight figure before him, but he sought to conceal his thoughts and said, “Edwin, I'm your uncle and have come to take you home to your mother.”

Very pleasantly these words fell upon Edwin's ears, but he associated them with his rambles; for he knew nothing at all about his father or mother, not even that any such relation was necessary in life. He therefore was glad, but said nothing, for he knew not what to say. Mistaking the meaning of his silence for timidity, the uncle spoke again.

“Come on now, boy; I am here with a horse and buggy to take you to your mother's home. Will you be glad to see your mother?”

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But again Edwin was at a loss to know what to say, but his thoughts were that the man before him was very large. It was not until his uncle said impatiently, "Come along!" that he understood, and this command he instantly obeyed.

A moment later the two were standing beside a large noble-looking brown horse that was hitched to an open buggy. Next he felt a pair of strong hands placed upon his shoulders, and then he was lifted high in the air to a seat that was so different from the bed of the old ox-wagon that he had to examine and rub his hand over the soft cushion. When his uncle took the seat beside him, everything about him began to move, and he thought of the few times when the children had been taken for rides behind the large team of oxen. But he had never been away from the poorhouse farm, and when they passed from the driveway on to the public highway, he remembered that the children had been forbidden to leave the place, and he wondered what it all meant. He was not troubled, however, for Mr. Engler knew of his going, and he reasoned that since he was not going of his own accord, it must be all right.

As there was nothing else for him to do as he and his uncle rode along, he began to look about at the many interesting things. The herds in the large meadow-lands reminded him of the poorhouse cattle, and as he saw the little "jumper-men" skipping about in the tall grass, so many pleasant recollections were brought to his mind that he laughed aloud. They met other horses and buggies similar to their own as well as covered carriages, and passed some horses quite like his uncle's tied to hitching-racks in front of houses or running about in the rich pasturelands.

The musical birds also added much to the boy's enjoyment when he heard them now and then singing in some tree-top or bower, but all that he thought about any of the beautiful things around him was unexpressed and securely fastened within his little mind for future meditation. His small store of knowledge had been gained in this way, but it seemed to be God's method of teaching him the lessons that in later years would be the most useful to him.

Occasionally he turned to look at the "big man" by his side, and each time beneath the poverty-branded garments there throbbed a heart full of the deepest esteem, and his desire to do his very best to win the confidence and friendship of his new companion was strong. This was not a new impulse in Edwin, for he had always endeavored to please every one, and in doing this he had found real pleasure.

The afternoon was rapidly passing away, and as the sun sank in the western horizon, the blue sky above him became streaked with crimson and gold. Then Edwin noticed that the houses were closer together, but he did not know that it was because he was entering a village and was close to his mother's home.

During the entire journey from the poorhouse the uncle had been silent, but suddenly Edwin saw the right line tightening, and in answer to the uncle's command, "Whoa there, Bill!" they stopped close beside a hitching-post.

Without a word of explanation the uncle sprang lightly to the ground and after tying the horse grasped Edwin's shoulders and roughly placed him upon the ground. Again the boy's decision to endeavor to please was strengthened, and when the uncle started toward the pretty brown house just inside the picket fence and repeated the words he had used at the poorhouse, "Come along," Edwin instantly obeyed.

As they passed in through the open gateway, Edwin noticed pretty flower-bushes. His uncle told him that it was his mother's home. As they stepped upon the porch, Edwin could not refrain from sniffing in some of the delicious fragrance of the honey-suckle blossoms dangling so gracefully here and there from the pillars of the porch, but he was hurried on.

When they entered the house, Edwin looked about in amazement, for everything seemed so very beautiful. Then he saw a woman sitting near a window with a piece of sewing in her hands and three children—a boy about his own size, a girl, and a boy younger—playing on the floor.

"This is your mother," he heard his uncle say.

Without rising or giving the child a word of welcome, the unfeeling woman said to the uncle:

"What do you think of him?"

"I don't know what to think," was the uncle's answer. "He hasn't said a word since Engler turned him over into my care, and I certainly tried hard to get something out of him. All he did until I told him to come along was to stare at me with those large brown eyes of his. While we were riding along, though, he seemed to see everything there was to see, and by the way he kept smiling to himself one would have supposed he was looking at a circus."

Ah, could they have known the deep thoughts that had been passing through the childish mind even upon that

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trip, they would have understood better how to encourage him. With no consideration for the manner in which Edwin had been shut away from the better class of society and the proper helps that are usually thrown about the young, they at once gave him a low and degraded place in their estimation and pronounced him dull, stupid, and idiotic. All commands were given in a harsh tone and in such a manner that he could not comprehend them.

Before going farther into the life of Edwin, it might be well to explain that the uncle and his three small children were making their home with Edwin's mother. The house in which they were living, although rented, contained many comforts and even luxuries; for the mother, aside from her pension—money, was being liberally paid by the uncle for keeping him and his family. And Edwin's ignorance, as has already been inferred, was due to his lack of training and to the fact that everything in his mother's house was so new and different from what he had been used to in the poorhouse.

“Go and wash yourself and get ready for supper,” he heard his mother say; but he had not been taught that this was necessary, and because he did not understand and so failed to obey, he was scolded and abused.

“You worthless thing!” his mother said. “I'm sorry I didn't leave you at the poorhouse now and let you grow up with the cattle if you don't know enough to wash before you eat.”

When supper was ready, she ordered Edwin to get around behind the table in a corner where he would be the farthest from her, and added, “Any place in my home is too good for the like of you, and you shall stand while you eat. Do you hear?”

Evidently Edwin understood this command, for he had been used to eating his meals under just such trying circumstances, and he went at once to the place assigned him. The good food upon the table was very tempting, and when he had eaten all that was on his plate, he watched the other children to see what they would do when more was wanted, and when he saw them passing plates, he did the same.

He did not repeat this, however, for he found that he was not expected to share with the rest or to eat until his hunger was satisfied. Without a murmur he did without the dainties that were given freely to the other children, and with a dry crust he finished his meal in silence.

When bedtime came, Edwin was given a place to sleep in an unused part of the house, and there alone in the darkness he could repeat the words that the kind old lady at the poorhouse had taught him. Then while the rats and mice played hide-and-seek in the room about him, his eyelids closed in peaceful slumber.

We have heard that “there is nothing so bad that it could not have been worse.” For Edwin life seemed to be constantly growing more serious and dark, but “man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh upon the heart” (I Sam. 16:7).

CHAPTER IV. FINDING FRIENDS

Oh! ask not, hope thou not too much
Of sympathy below;
Few are the hearts whence one same touch
Bids the sweet fountains flow.

—Mrs. Hemans.

The first morning for Edwin in his mother's home dawned clear and bright, and as the soft gleams of brilliant sunlight shone in upon the coverlet of his bed, he, who had been a poorhouse waif, opened his eyes and in bewilderment gazed about the place. Suddenly he remembered some of the events of the previous day, and especially the form of the “big man” and that of the “woman,” who, he had been told, was his mother. He remembered, too, his decision to do all in his power to please both.

His heavenly Father understood his heart if his earthly parent did not, and this all-wise guardian, knowing how very hard it was going to be for the child in this new home, enabled him to find friendship that was really warm and true.

Slipping noiselessly from beneath the covers—for the night had been cold—Edwin went to the window through which the morning sun was streaming, and there he saw a scene that thrilled him with delight. Lying asleep upon the walk in the warmest spot that could be found was a large Newfoundland dog. Clad in his heavy coat of shaggy fur and surrounded by a bed of green, he was indeed a pleasing picture. There had been several dogs at the poorhouse of which Edwin had been especially fond, but there had been none so beautiful as the one upon the walk below. The bees, too, were busy gathering among the flowers the honey for their winter's supply, and hopping about here and there over the lawn were the little “jumper-men.”

As Edwin from his elevation beheld the part of God's creation that he had already chosen for his friends, his loneliness was quite forgotten. He was still gazing down upon the scene when his mother appeared in the doorway and with cruel words ordered him to hasten below to the kitchen. Little did she know that her child was finding in the animal kingdom the friendship that she had denied him, and she would not have cared had she known.

During the day and those that followed, Edwin endeavored in every possible way to help his mother, but his understanding so little about her ways and the names and uses of the simplest articles about the house seemed only to increase his troubles and hardships. And as slaps and bruises such as the dog had not known were his portion, the unfortunate child endeavored, whenever it was possible to do so, to hide from sight, but he always tried to be ready to give heed to the slightest order. But even this faithfulness, as well as the fact that he had so much difficulty in comprehending her meaning, made the mother still more unkind.

One duty that was assigned him as a daily task was sweeping the crumbs from beneath the dining-table, and when he had learned how, so thoroughly did he do this work that he never stopped brushing until he had found every particle of dust or lint in sight that had settled under other articles of furniture.

Another duty was carrying food to the dog, and he soon found that the well-filled plate of scraps contained far better food in many instances than he was allowed to share at the table. Whenever this happened, as it often did, and there was plenty of other food for the dog, Edwin ate a portion, but never without feeling confident that he was not robbing his friend. As the dog usually looked very wise, Edwin took it for granted that his motive was understood as right and just, and in this way the child was able to get some of the food that he would otherwise have been denied, and the dog's allowance was still sufficient. Rather than rob the dog, he would always have gladly done without.

When Edwin was given the care of his little baby cousin, who was just beginning to walk, he felt that this work was very hard indeed, but he did his best to understand just what was expected of him. Having been the youngest child at the almshouse and having spent so much of his time apart from the others, Edwin was unable to think of many ways in which he could amuse the little fellow, and sometimes it seemed that all of his efforts to please had been in vain.

A few weeks after Edwin's arrival in his mother's home the children—Edwin and his three cousins, Elmer, Jennie, and the baby—were playing in the yard with Perry the dog. Elmer, a lad scarcely a year younger than

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Edwin, was tossing a stick for the dog to return to him, and Edwin was astonished to find that his friend Perry was so very wise. The baby, who was in Edwin's charge, was barely able to keep upon his feet, but Edwin was doing his best to protect him from falling and to keep his eyes upon both the child and the dog at once.

Suddenly above his head in a large apple-tree Edwin heard a rustling of the leaves and a chattering of little birds, and he realized that his feathered friends had returned with a breakfast for the little ones. As he gazed upward endeavoring to locate the nest, he was just pointing to the spot when whiz went the stick with which Elmer had been amusing the group. So dangerously near to the nest did the missile go that Edwin, crying out with terror and anxiety, for the moment forgot all about his baby cousin. Running toward the tree as though hoping to protect the nest, he was just in time to see the stick miss the mark and then fall upon the ground alarmingly near the baby's foot. Although unhurt, the baby screamed, and a moment later Mrs. Fischer came rushing from the house and demanded a reason for the little one's crying.

Elmer, ever willing to justify himself at any cost, said hurriedly: "It was all Ed's fault! I just tried to throw that little stick up there in the tree, and when it came down it struck the baby's foot. If Ed had been minding his work, the baby wouldn't have been there." But Elmer failed to tell that he was throwing at the little nest with the intention of knocking it out of the tree and that the stick had done no harm to the baby's foot.

Accepting the explanation without any further details, Mrs. Fischer became furious, and, picking up the stick, she struck Edwin time and again upon the head and shoulders. Then, after calling him many hard and cruel names, she said, "I'll teach you how to attend to your business if there's any sense in you at all!"

After looking at the baby's foot and finding that there was nothing wrong with it at all, the woman, without a word of apology or sympathy for her suffering child, returned to the house.

Once again when the poor boy was so much alone, as far as a human friend was concerned, his heavenly Father understood and supplied his need. Perry at once left his former master and, going close to Edwin, did all within his power to soothe the little sufferer, and his sympathy was as balm to the wounded, troubled spirit of the child. Casting aside his grief and reserve, he caressed the noble animal, and when comforted he arose and was soon able to care for the little child that had been placed in his charge. And thus the afternoon slipped slowly away.

So thoroughly seasoned with bitterness and grief had the day been that Edwin was glad when he saw the shadows lengthening, for he knew that it would soon be dark. The sweet quiet and rest of the night were inviting. He thought of the pattering of tiny feet upon his coverlet and wondered if the rats and mice would call again. He hoped that they would, for they too were his friends. But after supper another surprize and disappointment was awaiting him. At bedtime he was told that he need not go to the attic to sleep any more, as there was room for him in Elmer's bed, and that thereafter the two would sleep in his mother's room. Edwin would have preferred the attic, but he submissively did as he was told, and as he slept the Lord kept vigil and watched tenderly over the sleeping child, for "his eye seeth every precious thing" (Job 28:10).

CHAPTER V. SUFFERING FOR THE FAULTS OF OTHERS

In silence weep.
And thy convulsive sorrows inward keep.
—Prior.

Edwin's head was still aching when he awoke in the morning, but he arose, dressed hurriedly, and hastened to the kitchen to see if his services were needed by his mother. There was little that he could do, but with brush and pan he gathered the dust and lint from under the various articles of furniture. It was such a comfort and satisfaction to Edwin to know the names of those articles, and their uses.

After the meal was over, he carried the scraps to the dog; but as the supply was short, he did not help himself to a part as he did when there was plenty, for the golden rule was too much a part of his nature. When his morning duties were done, his mother told him to go and take care of the baby; but when he went out into the yard, he could find no one but Perry the dog.

For the moment Edwin forgot what his mother had told him to do. The eyes of his noble friend seemed beckoning him to the spot where he was lying, and Edwin obeyed. Sitting down by Perry's side, he buried his little face in the furry neck of the graceful animal, and all about him seemed to say: "Good morning, my boy. Cheer up, cheer up! Our meals you shall share and our songs you shall hear." The fact that there was no regret within his heart because of the lack of human friendship made it easy for him to accept the comfort and encouragement that was sent him through other channels by his loving, tender heavenly Father.

The small hand was stroking the sleek side of the huge animal, and the little bird-song in the tree close by added much to his enjoyment, and, sitting erect, he chirped in reply a sweet little song that he had learned at the poorhouse from the birds. This peaceful condition, however, was too good to last. In a very short time he heard the voice of his mother asking him where his cousins had gone.

"I haven't seen them yet," he said simply.

"And didn't you know that I meant for you to hunt them up?" she exclaimed in a tone that was much more harsh and severe than that in which her other words had been spoken. Then adding, "I'll teach you to pay attention to what I say!" she picked up a board that was lying near and began to beat him as she had done the day before. Hoping to escape some of the blows, the child drew closer to his mother, but the following instant he found himself tumbling head foremost toward a stone wall and heard the woman say, "Get away from me, you blockhead, or I'll dash out your brains on that stone wall. You are dumber than the dumb and not fit to live, and I wish you had never been born."

When the awful treatment was ended, Edwin was lying in the grass in almost a helpless condition, but he was left there piteously moaning while his mother went to find the other children. The baby was in the house in his crib and was still asleep, and the other two children, who had been on the opposite side of the house at play, were standing in full view of the scene. Without a word of comfort for her suffering child, she told Elmer and Jennie to go quickly to her room, as she intended to take them to the country, and the three disappeared to prepare for the trip.

It was some time before Edwin could arise, but at last, bruised and bleeding, he got upon his feet and hobbled to a place that was not quite so conspicuous. There he was sitting when his mother came from the house. The baby, then awake and dressed, was sitting in its carriage, and the other children were by her side. Before leaving the yard, she called loudly for Edwin, asking where he was hiding, and as the child came limping toward her, she threw him a package, saying as she did so: "Here's some dinner for you and Perry. We'll not be back before night, but you see to it that you stay right here in the yard. If it rains, you can crawl in with the dog." Without any other information as to what she intended to do or where she was going, and without a word of sympathy, the little group passed through the gate and were soon out of sight.

To be thus left alone at so tender an age with no other companions than nature and the dog, to some might seem cruel, but to Edwin life was already too full of varied experiences for this fact to make any material difference in his feelings. He did think, however, that it was very kind of his mother to leave Perry and the birds as his companions, and no better company could he have desired.

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The small package that Edwin had received from his mother was of great interest to the half-fed child. Knowing that it was intended for the dog as well as for him, he called for Perry to come, and together they went to the place beneath the little nest where the scene of cruelty had occurred the day before.

Opening the package, he found that the dinner consisted of a small piece of boiled pork, all fat, and a little dry bread, in all scarcely enough for one, and yet two, one of which was a hungry dog, were to dine upon it. After Edwin had considered all this, feelings arose in his heart, but they were not of ingratitude or displeasure. He was anxious to know just how to divide the food so that each would receive his just portion. He concluded that since Perry and he were the parties concerned, Perry must help him to decide.

“Perry,” he said, “you are the biggest, and you eat much more than I do, but, Perry, you get all you want very often, and I never do. Now, this morning your plate wasn’t quite as full as it is sometimes, so I didn’t take any bites. I gave it all to you, Perry, and I was so hungry. Don’t you think that it would be all right now if we divided this dinner in halves? It would be all right with me if it would with you.”

The dog had been an attentive listener, and as his little master waited for an answer. Perry, who had been taught to “speak” in his dog language, answered, “You, you,” and Edwin understood it as being his perfect consent. Still fearing that he might not have been perfectly understood, Edwin began again, “Now, Perry, are you really willing to have it that way, and can you trust me to divide both the meat and the bread?” Again the dog’s “You, you” meant “Yes” to Edwin; so, taking the bread in his fingers, he proceeded to divide it as evenly as he could. Then he did the same with the meat, and their dinner was all ready.

The next thing that puzzled them was the time of day and when to eat. This was also decided by Perry, and at last the two faithful friends began their scanty meal. There being no dishes, table manners, or napkins to bother with, the dinner was soon eaten, and after a little romp (for Edwin had quite forgotten his bruises) the two lay down together beneath the apple-tree. Here they were soon lulled to sleep by the murmuring of the wind among the leaves, the chirping of the birds in the branches, and the singing of various insects in the grass; and their dreams were sweet.

When Edwin awoke the sun was high and its rays were streaming down directly into his eyes. Again he wondered where he could be, but Perry’s cold nose against his cheek reminded him of what had happened before he fell asleep, and, sitting up, he looked around to see if he was right. Everything in the yard was just as he had seen it before his nap, and the empty newspaper by his side brought to his mind the humble lunch that had been given him by his mother.

Next he gazed around at the landscape before him. His mother’s home being in the very edge of the village, Edwin could look for a long distance in one direction. But it was not the gardens nor the corn-fields that attracted his attention; he was considering the sky, which was to him as a high blue arch, and he wished that he could know what was above it.

Presently he began playing with Perry, throwing a stick as he had watched his cousin do the day before. He found it great sport. Once when near the picket fence that surrounded the garden, he noticed some chickens near the gate scratching in the soft earth. After watching them for a little while, he saw something smooth and round lying where he could easily reach it, and he found that it was a pretty white stone with pink stripes in it. To Edwin it was a valuable treasure, and by searching carefully he soon discovered two other stones that were equally pretty. A number of playthings belonging to his cousins were scattered about the yard, but thinking that they might be displeased if he touched them, he let them alone.

When he returned to the place beneath the apple-tree, he carefully examined each little stone in its turn, and he considered them very pretty indeed. The one with the pink stripes was so nearly round that it might have been mistaken for a marble; the next was oval in shape and was of a pearly whiteness; the third, although not quite so round as the first, was brown and was a very handsome little stone.

While he was still admiring his treasures, he heard voices and, looking up, saw his mother and the children returning from their visit. A sudden fear that Elmer might want the stones made him thrust them out of sight, but he was not swift enough to escape the eyes of that young lad. Elmer saw the act and, thinking that Edwin might have discovered something valuable, said authoritatively: “Ed, what was that that you put in your pocket just now? Let me see it.”

Edwin hesitated, for he did not want to part with what seemed to him his only earthly possessions; but when he saw his mother’s threatening look and heard her say, “Out with whatever you’ve got, Ed, or I’ll see why! You

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needn't try to show any of your authority around here!" he said, "I haven't anything except these little stones that I found in the yard over there." Then taking the stones from his pocket, he handed them to his mother for inspection.

Finding that the stones were of no value, Mrs. Fischer returned them to her son, and with the two younger children she passed on into the house. Elmer, however, did not go with the rest, but sat down on the grass near Edwin, and watched him closely as he returned the little stones to his pocket. Edwin, although so young and seemingly ignorant along some lines, knew what it was to be robbed of similar treasures; and, noticing the same evil light in his cousin's eye that he had noted many times before at the poorhouse among the children there, young as he was, he felt sure that, if given an opportunity, Elmer would steal. He hoped that his cousin would forget about the stones; so he decided not to refer to them any more and to play with them only when he was alone.

During the evening nothing unusual happened, and when it was time to retire for the night, Edwin was told that the bed that he had occupied the night before was to be his permanent sleeping-quarters. The moon was shining bright and clear, and beneath its silver rays the two boys crept into bed. Both were very still; in fact, they were so very quiet that in a short time each thought the other asleep. It was therefore a surprize to Edwin when he felt his cousin creeping stealthily from the bed and out upon the floor where the rays of the moon were the brightest.

As Edwin had inherited from his mother a natural love for neatness, he had already formed the habit of hanging his clothing upon the bedpost, and, turning softly in the bed, he could see from where he was lying, a sight that made him tremble with excitement. Elmer's hand was already in the pocket containing the treasured stones, and Edwin could not help exclaiming:

"What are you doing there, Elmer? Don't take those stones! They are mine!"

Elmer quickly withdrew his hand when he heard his cousin speak, for he did not expect to be caught; but in an irritated tone a voice from the bed opposite the boys said:

"Ed, what's the matter with you? Can't you let that boy alone? Shut your mouth I say and let him have those stones if he wants them, for what are they worth, anyway?"

Thus rebuked. Edwin said no more; and Elmer, glad to have his own way, yielded to his selfish desire and, again thrusting his hand into the trousers-pocket, became a thief indeed.

How sad! Edwin had early chosen the path of right because it was right, but Elmer was already on the road that leads to destruction and death! Why? Because he had decided in his heart to do evil. Even the kind old lady at the almshouse had not entered his life. Was it Elmer's fault? Not altogether. Temptation comes to all, but with the temptation there is a way of escape (1 Cor. 10: 13). Elmer could have chosen to do right and leave the stones where they belonged; but when he was caught in the act of stealing, Mrs. Fischer, who was responsible for his training, should have carefully taught him the dangers connected with stealing. A little seed of dishonesty sown in the heart needs only cultivation to help it to grow.

The following morning when Edwin's tasks in the house were completed, he was told to go outside to look after the baby, and here it was that he recalled Elmer's act. After making sure that the stones were not in his pocket, Edwin went over to that part of the yard in which his cousin was playing, and as their eyes met he said:

"Elmer, why did you steal my stones last night? I want them back."

"I haven't got anything that belongs to you, and I didn't steal your stones," Elmer almost shouted; and, running to Mrs. Fischer, he said excitedly, "Ed called me a thief and said I stole those stones out of his pocket last night."

"I'll teach him to call you a thief!" the woman exclaimed in an exasperated tone and ran toward her son with a club and began using it freely upon him, saying as she did so: "Ed, you wretched child! Is that all you've learned at the poorhouse? What are those little old stones good for, anyway? And to think you'd dare to accuse Elmer of stealing them!"

The beating that Edwin received was far worse than the one given him the day before, and in the evening when he laid his little tired and aching body upon the bed beside his cousin, he wondered why he was forced to suffer and bear the punishment that rightfully belonged to some one else, but he did not complain or feel unkindly toward those who justly deserved the blame.

When at last he fell asleep, God sent angels to minister to the needs of the little forlorn child, and they cared for him tenderly while he slept.

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“When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up” (Psa. 27: 10).

“But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer” (1 Pet. 4: 15).

CHAPTER VI. THE STRANGE VISITOR

How shall I ever go through this rough world!
How find me older every setting sun!
How merge my boyish heart in manliness!

—Coxe.

The little seed that had been planted in Elmer's heart was not long in sending forth a sturdy sprout; for it was in fertile soil, and there was nothing to hinder rapid growth. Not only did he continue to watch Edwin's pockets for coveted articles like the stones, but from the match–safe in the kitchen to the purse of Mrs. Fischer in the bureau–drawer he stole frequently. Nor did it stop with this. At the village grocery he often slipped behind the counter and took articles for which he did not pay, and finally he visited the combination money–drawer.

Of much of Elmer's dishonesty Edwin was aware; but, feeling that his mother would believe no report about his cousin that he might bring, and dreading her punishments for tattling, he kept all such knowledge to himself. Even when blamed and abused for the things that Elmer had done, he bore it patiently, unless questioned; then he told the truth and took the consequences, usually a beating.

Elmer, on the other hand, while endeavoring to cover up his misdeeds, told lie after lie, and when accused and blamed by the grocer and others, he was screened and helped out of his difficulties by Mrs. Fischer.

When Edwin was about ten years of age, his mother moved from the village in which she had been living to a farm among the foothills of the Alleghany Mountains. Here it was that Edwin for the first time saw an outline of the wonderful Blue Mountain of which he had at Christmas time heard many weird and frightful legends. Blue Mountain was one of the tall mountain–peaks that stood out a little apart from the main ridge and was known among the people as the home of St. Nicholas and his elves. Strange stories were connected with the place, and all who believed them were full of superstition and awe.

It was reported that during the year St. Nick, as he was commonly called, was busy manufacturing and preparing wonderful toys to be distributed throughout the country among the children who were deserving. In order to know to whom the presents were to go, he sent out his elves into the homes to take an inventory of the lives of the children. These reports were to be returned just before Christmas eve so that he could use them as a guide in distributing his gifts. For all the children who were not entitled to presents tortures of many kinds were invented. These were to be inflicted when the annual tours were made.

All this and much more Edwin had heard in his former home at each Christmas–tide, and as the tortures had always been his lot, he did not like to think about the great mountain any more than he could help. It was little wonder that he felt this dread, for to him St. Nick was a fierce and terrible monster. But it was a great mystery to him why St. Nick had never found out about Elmer's misdeeds.

Even at the age of ten Edwin was very small, and his ignorance concerning the ordinary things of life was really painful. A dread of not being understood seemed constantly to hover over him, and as he had been taught to feel himself inferior and in the way, there was no opportunity for him to improve. When company came to the house, he was ordered to remain in the kitchen or in the yard, but never in hearing–distance, and he was always too busy to visit had he been permitted to do so. A few times he had been sent to school to help the smaller children through the snow or mud, but it was only occasionally and with no explanation as to the meaning of school or the value of learning.

Once the teacher sent word to Mrs. Fischer that if she cared to have her son learn to read she must supply him with a primer. Before doing as the teacher had told her, Mrs. Fischer took up a primer belonging to one of the other children, turned to a lesson well over in the book, and commanded Edwin to read the paragraph to which she was pointing. Seeing that he was unable to tell one letter from another, she shouted at him: “Ed, you blockhead! there is no use for you to try to learn anything, and I will never spend any money for books to help you to disgrace me any more.” Then so great was her cruelty that the child fell prostrate at her feet in a swoon. But even this did not cause the heartless mother to be sorry for what she was doing to her child. Almost before he had recovered from the effects of this severe punishment, she ordered him, if he knew anything at all, to tell her the time of day. When he could not do this, he was again mistreated.

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Shut away as he had been from the society of every one who could have helped him, he was, of course, unable to unravel the untruth that had been related to him about Blue Mountain; and when told that the time for St. Nick to pay them another visit was drawing near, he looked upon the event with increasing dread.

“No good thing, Ed, can you expect this year on Christmas eve,” he heard Elmer say a few days before that eventful night. “He never has remembered you with any good, and I don't think he ever will.”

Yes, Edwin knew all about the neglect. He remembered, too, that he had been told that upon Christmas eve, instead of going to bed, he must sit before the fireplace upon a certain chair in the sitting-room to await the arrival of St. Nick. Perfect obedience being so impressed upon his mind, Edwin obeyed, but imagined many things, one of which was that instant death would follow any refusal to do the bidding of St. Nick. Therefore when the appointed time arrived, Edwin was ready and seated in his chair even before the remainder of the family had retired. Then, while his cousins were thinking of the happiness the morrow held in store for them, and the children in other homes were dreaming of the sweet stories to which they had listened concerning the Christ-child and God's great love in sending his only Son as a Christmas gift to all the world, Edwin heard a sound in the yard as of heavy tramping. Then the lashing of a whip upon the window-pane and house caused him to spring from his chair and seek for a corner in which to hide. Presently he again heard the lashing upon another window-pane, followed by a fierce blow upon the kitchen-door, which had been purposely left ajar, and he saw the door fly open and beheld an object so completely hideous that he was more frightened than he had been upon any previous occasion.

There, clad in a pair of old trousers that were partly covered by a short petticoat, and wearing a bright red blouse elaborately trimmed with white cotton batting in imitation of white fur, a sunbonnet of faded blue, and a false face in the form of a mule's head, stood the object posing himself as St. Nicholas.

One glance at the frightful creature with the long whip in his hand would have been sufficient to strike terror through the heart of a more enlightened mind, and Edwin, with the remembrance of the suffering of previous years still fresh in his mind, was under a mental strain that was fearful indeed.

The strange form, pretending not to notice Edwin, laid down his whip and began loosening the large pack of toys that were upon his shoulders. As the sack was laid down in front of the old fireplace, a rubber ball rolled out upon the rug, whereupon Edwin heard him say in a gruff tone:

“Now, if that hain't a mess! Guess I've come off without that there list, after all. Thought those little imps wasn't going to get it in, and when they did”—here he pulled out a long strip of paper that appeared to have writing upon it and from which he began reading the names of the children and the presents that each one was to receive.

As Edwin saw the costly gifts that were one by one taken from the sack, there seemed to be nothing lacking and plenty for him to have at least one toy, but his name was not called. There was a hobby-horse, a top, a horn, a ball, a wagon, a doll, dishes, a rocker, candy, and nuts. A sudden longing came into his heart to be remembered.

As if divining Edwin's thoughts, the monster, who was the child's own uncle disguised, turned suddenly and, facing Edwin, said:

“Now, sir, I'll become acquainted with you! I'm the person that some folks call Santa Claus, but by others I'm known as St. Nick. To you, Edwin, I shall be St. Nick, and I want to say that if you touch any of these things that I have placed here for your cousins, you'll find out what Old Nick can do.” Then with a wave of his hand he said, “Come on out here now before I leave to go to another home. I want you to look at each of these things, so that you will know just what they are like, and then you see to it that you keep your stupid hands forever off!”

In obedience to the commanding voice of the frightful being, Edwin went breathlessly forward and listened to the words:

“Do you see that horse? Well, that's Elmer's, and because he has been such a good boy he shall have the ball and the top. The other things are for his sister and brother. Now that you have seen these nice things that are for good children, I want to show you the part that is to be yours, but you will have to go out in the kitchen to see it.”

On the way to the kitchen Old Nick, who had taken up his whip, flourished it to hurry the child along, saying as he did so, “Now, you little gump, here's your treat.” Then he threw a few nuts upon the kitchen-floor and ordered Edwin to hurry and pick them up. As the child obeyed, down came the lash of the whip upon his fingers, and the blood began at once to ooze from the deep gashes. When the hand was withdrawn, the lash fell upon his body. Next he was told to dance and then to sing and at last to pray. As he each time tried to obey, the whip was

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used upon him. The dance and the song were both very crude, but the prayer was the words that he had learned from the old lady at the alms-house. Those words Edwin felt were appropriate because Old Nick had knelt beside a chair when explaining what he wanted him to do, and he remembered that he had knelt thus at the old lady's knee. But before the list of terrible tortures was exhausted, Edwin could stand no more. Weakened by the loss of blood from his wounds and by the extreme fear, he fell as though dead.

How long he was there or what happened after he had fainted Edwin could never tell, but when he became conscious, he was alone and the room was cold. Painfully he arose and by the aid of the lamp that was still burning low, he crept away to his bed, which was fortunately very close to the kitchen.

As the sun arose in the eastern sky, it cast its bright rays upon the snow-covered ground around the home of Mrs. Fischer and caused a dazzling brightness, but it did not erase the many footprints that had been made the evening before by the supposed St. Nicholas, nor was it sufficient to soothe the poor little aching head of the unfortunate Edwin.

Edwin had been in bed but a few hours when he heard the children's voices. He listened to their remarks as they examined in turn the beautiful gifts, and then—was it possible? He thought he heard the youngest child in a tone of disappointment saying, “Why, where are Ed's stocking and things? Didn't he get anything at all?”

The answer from Elmer was spoken differently. “No, hush!” he said. “Ed hasn't anything here. Santa Claus, you know, doesn't bring gifts to every one. There are only certain people who are allowed presents.”

Then Edwin heard his cousin explaining the story of Blue Mountain and St Nicholas as he had often heard it before; but when his cousin said, “The reason that Ed wasn't remembered is because he does so many bad things,” Edwin wondered again what kind of report the elves had carried concerning the pebbles and the other things that Elmer had taken dishonestly and what explanation they had given regarding the lies. But there was seemingly no way for Edwin to know these things. His storehouse of knowledge was apparently closed, but still he was not discouraged in well-doing nor was he tempted to do evil. Like Job, he could have said: “Thou knowest that I am not wicked ... I am full of confusion ... Even when I remember I am afraid, and trembling taketh hold on my flesh” (Job 10:7, 15; 21:6).

CHAPTER VII. MYSTERIES UNFOLDING

The brave are ever tender.
And feel the miseries of suffering virtue.

—Martyn.

Hedged about by such walls of difficulty, Edwin seemed to be shut entirely away in a little world that was all his own. As he had no one to help him to understand the every-day happenings about him, it was not strange that the mysteries of nature were hidden as well. Shunned and abused as he was, even curiosity was almost of no avail. But although he knew it not, the all-seeing Eye was watching over him and angels were rejoicing over the manner in which he was laying a foundation for a strong and noble Christian character.

Edwin's holding no revenge in his heart toward those who had so repeatedly wronged him made it easier, in a way, for him to endure his hardships. And by constantly being watchful and on his guard, he was many times able to improve little opportunities to assist either his mother or his uncle, and in this way he sometimes evaded punishments that he would have otherwise received. His always being on the alert made it easier for him to become familiar with the names of various things that he could not have otherwise known. To gain any knowledge at all was indeed a pleasure, and it enabled him to escape so much unjust abuse.

As his love for doing good increased, so also his admiration for and interest in the things of nature and that which was strange and mysterious were deepened. He often wondered about the blue arch above his head, and, supposing it to be an upper story to the earth, believed it to be inhabited by a family similar to St. Nick and his elves. He often tried to imagine what kind of man this being could be and wondered whether in any way he resembled St. Nick.

In electrical storms he supposed that the man must be very angry and that the sounds and flashes were the result of throwing or rolling heavy or combustible articles of furniture as he had so repeatedly known his mother and uncle to do. As such a view of life was all that he knew, it was not strange that he could make no better comparison.

Occasionally he noticed his uncle and Elmer throwing stones high up in the air, and sometimes when the stones went too high to be followed by the naked eye, he supposed that they pierced the arch and lodged on the other side.

The fact that while he was at the poorhouse a few persons had died and been buried in the ground was till fresh in his memory, and from the oaths and unkind language of his mother he had come to the conclusion that all must die and be buried in the same manner. What became of them after death he could not fathom, but he concluded that the frost in the winter-time was a sort of cold vapor arising from the bodies of those who were dead and that such things were all governed by the great man above the arch.

In the village where his mother had lived, very little attention was given to family quarrels or to the troubles of children, but in this new neighborhood it was different. A dear old couple by the name of Hahn, living very close, soon became greatly interested in the child Edwin. Many times they listened with deepest sympathy to his cries of agony and terror, knowing that his cries were caused by cruel blows or kicks. Then when the little fellow, all bleeding and bruised, would be discovered hobbling about and endeavoring to comprehend what was expected of him that he might the more perfectly perform the task THAT had been assigned him, their hearts were filled with indignation and pity.

"I don't see how it is," said Mrs. Hahn one day to her husband at the close of the midday meal.

"Now, that Mrs. Fischer seems in some ways to be a pretty good sort of woman, but when she speaks to her son, she acts like Satan himself. Only yesterday I saw her out cleaning up the yard, and she seemed quite good-natured until she discovered Ed coming out to help her. Then, without telling him where to get it, she told him to hustle around and find her a picket, for she wanted to fix the fence. I saw right away that he didn't know what a picket was, but I wanted to see what he would do. He didn't ask. Instead he ran around the house looking in every direction and came back to tell her that he couldn't find any. Then, in a tone that she would not have used for the dog she yelled at him that it was of no use to expect an idiot like him to find anything. Next she went to a pile of pickets that was near the barn and easily got herself what she was wanting. Still she didn't explain anything

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to Edwin, but I could see that the boy knew then what a 'picket' looked like.

"Now, Pa, I'll tell you what I'd like to do. Since his mother acts toward him as she does, I'd like to ask him over here whenever he can come, just as though he were coming to help us, you know, and then we could tell him about many of these things that he doesn't know. Perhaps if he knew better what they meant, it would not be so hard for him, and he would escape some of the abuse."

"That's a bright idea, my good little wife," said Mr. Hahn smiling his approval. "I believe that we ought to help the boy all that we can, for he's sure having a hard time of it. Do what you think is best, but be careful not to let Mrs. Fischer think you want to help her son, or all your plans will be upset. She doesn't care what becomes of the boy, and I think she would be glad to see him die, but doesn't dare to be the one to end his life. But she'll do it if she keeps on as she is going."

"Well, with your consent I'll do what I can," replied Mrs. Hahn, and with a relieved expression she hastened to make some plans that were to amount very much to Edwin.

Mrs. Fischer graciously consented to let her son go to help the old couple now and then, "but," she added, "you'll soon find that he's no good to anybody. I find him lots more bother than he's worth."

"I'll risk that part of it," Mrs. Hahn answered, and from that day a great change came into the poor boy's life.

In the home of Mr. and Mrs. Hahn, Edwin was still very timid, but they were so kind and considerate that his intense fear gradually gave way to confidence and trust. It seemed that his new friends were never vexed because of his extreme ignorance. Instead of reproaching him for what he did not know or understand, they took extra pains to explain their meaning in the simplest language possible. To Edwin the explanation of the most trifling every-day occurrences seemed wonderful, and to the unenlightened child it opened up many avenues for thought that had hitherto been closed. Never once while he was with them did they seem to grow weary of trying to make things more simple and plain for the inquiring child.

The more Edwin associated with these friends, the more he began to understand how he had been wronged; for many questions concerning the earth, the sky, and himself were corrected. In explaining about St. Nick, Mr. Hahn said:

"Edwin, that terrible creature that treated you so shamefully on Christmas eve was not St. Nicholas at all. It was your uncle, who had, with the consent of your mother, dressed himself in the hideous clothing in which he appeared to you. He must have wanted to see just how much he could deceive and frighten you."

"But how about his home in Blue Mountain?" Edwin asked in amazement. "If Santa Claus doesn't make the toys up there, where does he make them?"

"Edwin, don't you believe those stories any longer," Mr. Hahn answered. "Your uncle bought from a store in the city of M—all those presents that he gave to his children. The stories that he told you about the elves visiting the homes to discover who were bad are untrue. I know it seems very strange to you, but what is the most difficult for me to understand is how your mother and uncle could find pleasure in frightening and deceiving you in such a way.

"Well, if Blue Mountain isn't the home of St. Nick, what is it?" Edwin asked in a mystified tone.

Then in very simple words Edwin heard for the first time the real facts regarding the great mountain that had until then been as an awful nightmare to the unenlightened boy. Pointing away toward the line of blue and white domes and peaks that grew more and more faint as they faded away in the distance, Mr. Hahn explained that they were only high parts of the earth. "Blue Mountain," he said, "is only one part of the range, and those dark places that you see on its sides are just trees and bushes such as grow right here in our yard. Then there are large rocks, some of them the size of this house, and springs of water where many animals and birds may drink. And in some places there are large flower-gardens, where the flowers grow without the use of the spade or the hoe. I would certainly like to take you to see the mountain, Edwin, if it were not so far away, but it would take us too long to go and come, for it is very much farther away than it seems."

Reasons were given also for the strange noises that Edwin had attributed to the rolling of heavy articles of furniture, and the names sky, thunder, and lightning were rightly applied. But with all their information, Mr. and Mrs. Hahn gave no hint that there was a great and supreme Being over all, one who had created all the wonders that they had been describing, for they were not Christian people and were not acquainted with the love of God. They were greatly interested in the things that pertain to this life, but seemed unconcerned about heaven, eternity, and the Bible. So Edwin continued to believe that some great man who had died and left the earth was living

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above the blue arch and that the electrical storms were in some way the result of fireside quarrels and confusion.

To Edwin it seemed that every moment that he from time to time spent with these kind friends was precious indeed, but the effect upon the mother was not what Mrs. Hahn had desired. Finding that her son could understand more about the work, she became more particular and increased his tasks accordingly until it seemed that he could do nothing to suit her. Poor nervous child! if only he could have known the words of the Psalmist, what a comfort they would have been—"He shall deliver the needy ... and precious shall their blood be in his sight." (Psa. 72:12, 14).

CHAPTER VIII. DISCOVERS THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Where'er thou art, He is; the eternal mind
Acts through all places; is to none confined;
Fills ocean, earth and air and all above,
And through the universal mass does move.

—Dryden.

Mrs. Fischer may have felt that her neighbors were learning too much about her family matters and business affairs, and it may have been for other reasons best known to herself, but she soon became dissatisfied with the farm and thought best to move away to another part of the country. The place decided upon was near a public highway where there was an extra building that could be used by the uncle as a blacksmith-shop, and there was also a good barn, where the horse, cow, and chickens could be kept.

When Mrs. Hahn heard of her neighbor's plans, she was sorry, for she had become very much attached to Edwin and did not like to see him go so far away from her home. She therefore decided to ask Mrs. Fischer to allow the boy to stay through the summer months with them in their home. "He could do lots of little light things that would be a great help to husband and me," she said.

"Well, I can't see why you are taking such an interest in that boy," the mother replied. "Now, if he were bright like Elmer, I wouldn't be surprized, but Ed is such a blockhead. You can have him, though, if you can make any use of him, but I'm sure that you will very soon be sick of your bargain."

Mrs. Hahn assured the mother they were willing to run the risk, and it was decided that Edwin should stay with the Hahns for a while. So it happened that Edwin saw his people pack their goods and drive away from the farm leaving him behind. To be left in the care of the old couple whom he was learning to love so dearly was indeed a happy change, but how great it was none but him and his heavenly Father could understand. Surrounded as he was in this home by kind friends, provided good food, and enabled to think happy thoughts, he soon grew well and strong and was able to do all the work that could be expected of any eleven-year-old boy.

In the new home of Mrs. Fischer things went along seemingly well enough for a time, but as Elmer continued his underhanded work of taking things that did not belong to him, he became more and more bold, and Mrs. Fischer, not having Edwin to blame, was forced to see some of his faults.

One day shortly after the family were settled in their new home, word that the barn was on fire rang out loud and clear, and a smell of burning wood and hay and clouds of smoke filled the air. Rushing to the door, Mrs. Fischer saw that the barn was wrapped in flames. With a scream for help she ran out into the yard, where she discovered the uncle and several others endeavoring to deaden the flames, but their efforts seemed all in vain.

It was too late to save the barn, so the attention of all was turned to the house and other buildings. As the wind was in their favor, no other building besides the barn was lost, and fortunately the disaster had occurred in the daytime, when the animals and chickens were out in the lot, so that the damage was not so great.

When the excitement had somewhat subsided, and Mrs. Fischer looked about for some one to blame for carelessness, she found that Edwin was not there and that Elmer was the guilty person. Having repeatedly watched his father smoking a pipe or a cigar, Elmer had decided that it was time for him to learn to smoke if he ever expected to appear like a man. Accordingly, with a few stolen matches in his pocket and some corn-stalks cut into cigar-lengths, he had gone to a place back of the barn for his first lesson. He had not intended to have his actions upon this particular occasion known, because both his father and Mrs. Fischer had seemed to be against his learning to smoke so young. But through the fire, caused by the dropping of burning matches among the litter at his feet, and the testimony of his little brother, who had been present, his guilt became known.

Although Mrs. Fischer knew that Elmer deserved correction for this deed, she simply smoothed the matter over and allowed it to pass by unnoticed. But when the news of the burning of the barn reached the ears of Mrs. Hahn, she said: "Edwin, you should be very thankful that you were not there. Had you been, Elmer would no doubt have laid the blame on you, and in her fury your mother might have thrown you into the flames." Edwin understood that what Mrs. Hahn had said could very easily have been true, and he was very glad that he had not been present when the barn was burned.

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His life in this new home was so different in every way from what it had been in his mother's and he was so happy and content that he had no desire to return. He was therefore very sad when he was told in the fall that the farm was sold and that as his old friends would go to the city to live with their children, it would be necessary for him to return to his mother.

"I'm very sorry," Mrs. Hahn said, "that you must leave us; but, Edwin, I believe that your mother will be more kind to you, because you have learned how to do so many things and can do your work so well. I will see that Mr. Hahn goes with you and will have him explain to your mother what you can do, and when she sees that you can learn when you are taught and can do the things that she expects of you, we shall hope that she will have more patience with you than she has had in the past."

Thus it was that one day late in the fall as the sun was slowly sinking down into a bed of crimson and gold, Mr. Hahn and Edwin drove up to the place of which they had both heard but only Mr. Hahn had seen. If Edwin had expected to find a pile of rubbish to be cleared away where the ruins of a barn was resting, he was mistaken; for the owner of the property had attended to that, and a new building had been erected upon the old foundation, and everything else was neat and clean.

"Well, Mr. Hahn," Mrs. Fischer began in answer to the announcement that her son had arrived, "I suppose you are very glad to be rid of your charge. I'm afraid he has made you lots of trouble."

"Oh, no, Mrs. Fischer," Mr. Hahn replied, "we got along just fine! I have no fault whatever to find with your son. He is as good-hearted and faithful a boy about his work as I have ever seen, and if we were not going to leave the farm, I wouldn't think of bringing him back. I think you have misunderstood Edwin; for he seems so very anxious to learn and asks so many questions about everything that I have found it hard to find enough answers for them all. Then, when he has once learned a thing, he never forgets it, and he seems to want to put every bit of his knowledge into use. I'm sure your fears about his being dull are groundless, but he does need to be taught, and you will do well to give him a fair chance along with the other children."

After making a few other remarks and giving Edwin the promise, "If I ever return to the farm again, I will let you know and will take you back again," Mr. Hahn said, "Good-by," and Edwin was left behind to begin again the kind of life that had been so hard and bitter. The kindnesses shown him during the summer and the greater keenness of his judgment and understanding made the renewal of past cruelties even harder to bear than they had been before.

After Edwin's home-coming Elmer and the other children found more time to shirk, and, seeing his eagerness and ability to do so many things that he had not before understood, the family forced the poor little tired form to work far beyond its strength. But without complaint Edwin strove to do all the work assigned to him and to make every move count so that he would be able to accomplish more than that if possible, but on every hand only failure and unhappiness seemed to be awaiting him.

Late in November, one evening just before time to do the milking, Mrs. Fischer, while in a terrible fit of anger because of some little mistake of Edwin's hardly worth the mentioning, ordered him to go out in the yard and bring her a good strong stick and to hurry. And Edwin, though knowing that the stick was to be used upon himself, went to an apple-tree and cut from it a good strong branch. Even under such extreme circumstances he was determined to do his best. As he handed the stick to his mother, she clutched it and with a fiendish expression she beat her son so cruelly that he fell upon the floor. Then with her foot she kicked him about the room until the blood was flowing freely from various wounds and gashes made by her shoe and the stick.

The condition of the room and the helpless state of the child seemed to enable the wicked woman at last to realize what she was doing, and, fearful lest some one discover him thus, she ceased her cruelties and commanded Edwin to get up and clean the room. Then, without waiting to be sure that he could do so, she went out to the barn to milk the cow.

Edwin, in almost an unconscious state, realized at last that he was in the kitchen alone, and he endeavored to arise, but there seemed to be a pain in every part of his body, and he was lying in a pool of blood. After a great effort he managed to reach the sink, but it was some time before he could stop the flow of blood from his mouth. Looking at himself in the glass, he saw that a portion of his lip was cut and loosely hanging so that the teeth behind it were exposed, and the blood was still running from his mouth. Until then, though he would not have known how to express the thought, he had never ceased to hope that in some way or other he would be able to win his mother's love and confidence, but with this terrible outbreak of passion all desire to try to live seemed to

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vanish.

After doing what he could to cover up his mother's cruel conduct, he staggered through the open door and down the walk that led to the barn. He was intending to do what he could to help with the evening work, but he could not suppress the sobs that were welling up from his poor troubled and wounded heart. Only hardships and discouragements seemed to be his portion, and without considering who was liable to hear him, he cried out in his anguish:

“If such it the best that a person can have in life, it would be better for him not to live at all.”

As the cry of distress floated in through the partly open stable-door, Mrs. Fischer was filled with wonder. Never before had she heard her son speak so sensibly, and, hastening to see what it all meant, she said: “Ah, Ed! I heard you speak, and this time your words were not those of an idiot, but wise and full of reason. But how dare you wish yourself dead? Don't you know that there is a God over us who hears every word we say?” Then she added, “Why is it on such things you can talk so well and on others you seem so dull?”

At the sight of his mother's face and the sound of her words, two thoughts flashed through his mind: “Have I done anything to displease her?” and “Is there really some powerful being by the name of God above me in the sky?” Instantly a feeling of awe and reverence filled his soul, and something within him told him that this great Being who could hear all that he said must be more than a common man. The very thought that God could hear him speak made Him seem strangely near.

As he continued to think, his troubles seemed to vanish and the suffering from his wounds became less intense. Then he remembered that the name of God had been used many times by his mother, uncle, and the children in ways that he was sure were wrong. If God could hear everything, what must he think of the people who would talk about him thus? He wondered, too, why Mr. Hahn had not mentioned the name of God when explaining the reasons for the sounds above the sky, or “high blue arch,” as he had called it. Poor untaught child! God alone could be his teacher.

“Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in earth! He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people” (Psa. 113:5–8).

CHAPTER IX. IN THE HOME OF A WITCH

A mother's love—how sweet the name!
What is a mother's love?
A noble, pure, and tender flame.
Enkindled from above.
To bless a heart of earthly mold;
The warmest love that can grow cold;
This is a mother's love.

—Montgomery.

Yes, this is the nature of a true mother's love, but such love poor Edwin had never known. At the age of fourteen the unwelcome child felt that there was nothing in life for him except that which was hard and unreasonable. The things that he had learned from his kind friends, Mr. and Mrs. Hahn concerning nature often helped him to forget his sorrows, and the fact gained from his mother, that God's eyes were ever upon him, beholding his actions all the time, was a constant source of comfort and satisfaction, for he was sure that he was always trying to do his best.

"If I do as well as I can, God will surely know and care," he reasoned. Thus, his Creator filled a place in the lonely life that had never known a father's or mother's love. And strange as it may seem, the neglect and abuse that Edwin endured did not rob him of his strength and ability to perform all the duties assigned him. So if Mrs. Fischer had hoped to bring on the premature death of her son through her cruel treatment, she was disappointed, and within her evil heart she conceived another plan.

In a distant part of the country, among the hills where two public highways crossed was a home, large, aristocratic, and almost elegant in appearance. The large two-story-and-a-half brick house nestled amidst the dense evergreen and floral shrubbery, the large luxuriant orchards widening around it, the immense barn on the corner opposite, and the wheat-and-corn-fields waving in the distance, caused many a passer-by to envy the possessors; but a look at the interior of the house and only a brief acquaintance with the occupants were sufficient to disillusion any one regarding the family's culture and happiness.

Mr. Fitch, a thriving and ambitious young farmer, had inherited the home and, having married a woman of an evil and superstitious family, soon discovered that he was bound to a person whom the community looked upon as a witch. The years had rolled by, and Mr. and Mrs. Fitch were now old. The fame of the evil woman had been published, and she was considered as one who was able to relieve people of any sickness or to drive trouble away from their doors. The treatment, called powwowing, consisted of repeating long lists of words that she had learned from a book called "The Black Arts." This book and an almanac made up the entire Fitch library.

As this Mr. Fitch passed the home of Mrs. Fischer on his way to and from the city, it became his custom to stop at the uncle's blacksmith shop. In this way the two families became acquainted, and Mrs. Fischer learned something of the nature of the witch. Just why and how it was suggested to the mind of Mrs. Fischer that the Fitch home would be the proper place to send her son is hard to tell. It would seem that Satan (understanding Edwin's desire to do right) helped her strive to throw every wicked influence possible about him and plan to discourage, deceive, and tempt him to do evil and become like the rest of the family. And she may have thought that there was a possibility of a mysterious and unquestioned death. At least, it happened that one day late in the summer she asked Mr. Fitch the question:

"How would you like a fourteen-year-old boy who would work for you for his board and clothes?"

"To be sure, I need one very much!" was the old man's reply. "My wife has a little girl to help her, and I need a boy to be with me. He could help with the chores and herd the cows. I've tried several lads, but they always run off."

"Well, my Ed will be just the one for you then," said Mrs. Fischer confidently. "You needn't be afraid that he will run off, for he knows too well that he must stay where I put him."

"How about his wages and schooling?" Mr. Fitch inquired with a suspicious glance at Mrs. Fischer, but he was instantly assured that such would not be necessary. "Only his clothes and board will be required, and I shall

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expect you to see that he earns them.”

“Very well, ma'am, then we can count it a bargain, and I will take your son right home with me today if you like,” and the old farmer and Mrs. Fischer hastened to the house to inform Edwin of the plan.

Edwin, brush in hand and down upon his knees, was diligently brushing away the crumbs from under the table in the dining-room when he was told in a few words to stop his work and prepare for the journey.

“You are to go home with Mr. Fitch,” his mother explained. “He wants you to live with him and be his choreboy.”

Perhaps Mrs. Fischer did not understand the expression that came over Edwin's face, but the news gave him intense satisfaction. He could compare the change only to his visit in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Hahn, and he could desire nothing better. Any place, Edwin reasoned, must be better than his mother's home, and he was soon sitting beside Mr. Fitch as he drove away in the direction of the mountains.

When they arrived at the place that Mr. Fitch explained was his home, Edwin was more delighted than ever, for he had never pictured anything more beautiful. But when they drew near the house and he heard oaths and language still more vile than he had ever heard from his mother's tongue, he wondered if he heard aright. Even during her most terrible tantrums he had never heard such words, and when through the open kitchen-door he saw Mrs. Fitch with a rolling-pin in one hand and a pie-pan in the other and with her face turned toward the sky, blaspheming the great God of the universe for permitting a certain crop to fail, he felt faint and sick.

Again and again the wicked woman blasphemed that holy name because of the failure caused by drought, and threatened, on account of the failure, to enter other fields and with a burning torch to set fire to them all. Then as curse after curse upon other things rang from her lips, she continued beating the air with rolling-pin and pan until it was dangerous to be inside the room. Edwin remained very close to the door, and the girl whom Mr. Fitch had mentioned as being his wife's helper, he saw spring to one side just in time to escape being struck by a huge piece of dough that was thrown by the wicked woman at her head.

How long the unearthly scene had been going on or would have continued is hard to say, but from exhaustion Mrs. Fitch sank heavily upon the floor and for some time was in an unconscious condition. In answer to Edwin's worried expression Mr. Fitch remarked, “Oh, that's nothing! She'll be all right after a while,” and together they went out to the barn. Edwin asked no questions, but he wondered if such things were right and had to be.

In this new place he soon discovered that he must bear, in some ways, even greater cruelties than had been forced upon him in his mother's home, for in rainy weather or during the hardest storms as much was expected of him as when the sun was shining. Many times he was forced to work all day long without a dry thread of clothing upon his body and often without sufficient food. For all this he never complained, but he wondered why it was impossible to please some people, when he was always satisfied with so little.

The greater part of the Fitch property that was used for pasturing purposes was low and swampy and had long been the haunt of many poisonous snakes. One portion of the land that was higher than the rest, Mr. Fitch had decided to have prepared for spring plowing, and Edwin's work was to gather the brush and the stones into piles that they might be burned or hauled away. He was also instructed to drive the cows from those parts of the pasture in which the snakes were the most numerous. With nothing to protect his bare feet and with no understanding of the danger of snakebites, he was often tramping in places where the reptiles were gliding past him in many directions, but upon none of these occasions was he ever bitten.

It was said that ghosts and many strange objects were often discovered in the house or grove of the Fitch property, and also that some unearthly creatures had been frequently known to rise from an unused chimney and, moving slowly toward the large field, to disappear always at a certain place. Others said that ghosts and horrible-looking forms had been met in the grove, and still others had heard strange noises, as the slamming of doors and windows when no breeze was blowing, the moving of heavy pieces of furniture, and the rattling and dragging of heavy chains.

One man said that once while working for Mr. Fitch he was sleeping in a certain room when suddenly the covers from the bed began to move and that although he resisted with all his strength, they were torn away. Feeling confident that he was the only occupant of the room, he left the place in the night vowing that he would never return.

These stories and many more were told by the visitors who congregated in the evening about the home from time to time, and they were usually approved and strengthened by Mr. and Mrs. Fitch, who could tell of many

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worse and more absurd happenings. Edwin often listened to the weird tales because those telling them were anxious to frighten him, but sometimes it was because of his own curiosity. He was often seized with a strong desire to investigate and to find out for himself whether the things that they said were really true. Upon different occasions he was allowed to sleep in the rooms that were supposed to be haunted, but never did he see or find out anything that was unusual.

Lying and stealing and other evils were often freely discussed by the boys and girls of the neighborhood when they gathered in the grove, and it was no uncommon thing to hear some one telling of a narrow escape from detection. Occasionally Edwin was asked to tell a lie to help another cover up some evil deed, but this Edwin always stoutly refused to do. When fun was made of him or he was mocked for his principles of right, his answer was always, "I never want any one to lie or steal for me, and I will not do such things for any one else." His reason for speaking thus was not that he looked upon either of these things as sins, for he had no conception of what sin was. It was simply his sense of duty and his admiration of doing that which was right and just. Thus, his mother's desire to have him educated in wrong-doing was in no wise gratified, and his young life, even in the home of one of Satan's most efficient servants, was protected and preserved pure and blameless.

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners." (Psa. 1:1).

CHAPTER X. A CONTRAST

When people once are in the wrong,
Each line they add is much too long;
Who fastest walks, but walks astray,
Is only furthest from his way.

—Prior.

At the age of nineteen Edwin was still untaught by man regarding the hereafter and God. The little that he had gleaned from the words and actions of the sinful people with whom he was forced to associate had opened his understanding sufficiently for him to know that there is a spirit life and some sort of reward for the evil and the good, but that was about all.

His life in the home of Mr. Fitch had been hard indeed, but through all his hardships the desire to do right had never left him, and the little prayer learned in the poorhouse was still a comfort when he was lonely and sad. Many times in the silent hours of the night as he repeated the words softly to himself and realized the waves of strength and courage sweeping over him, he was made to wonder, but he never thought of connecting the prayer with God. To Edwin the words were simply a pleasant and sacred memory that was treasured and appreciated, but his divine Teacher was using them as a foundation for his spiritual education.

Although Elmer knew little more concerning the hereafter, he was far better informed in the ways of the world, for his life had been paved with opportunities, and he had made use of them. However, without a standard in his heart such as Edwin had erected and with no home government to protect and guide him, as a petted and humored and spoiled child he had indulged in many sins until some of the crimes traced to his door were of the blackest hue. He had already been tried for various crimes, but the latest trial was for his having promised to marry a young girl, when he had already a living wife and child in another part of the city. "Why," do you ask? "could this difference be?" Take a look into the heart and life of each, and you will discover the answer. Every thought and purpose of the one, regardless of consequences, had been to do the right for principle's sake and because it was right, and God, noting his good intentions, had guided him onward. The other, from the time that he had stolen the pebbles in the silent hours of the night, had sought for opportunities to do similar underhand deeds.

Was it the fault of Elmer that such things should be? Not altogether. The greater blame must be laid at the door of those whose duty it was to warn and advise him of his danger and to see to it that he obeyed them while he was young; for it is very plainly stated in the Bible that the child should be trained in its youth (Prov. 22:6). Nevertheless, the evil-doer must have his just deserts; for "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7).

Elmer had continued his stealing until among the stolen articles were suits of men's clothing, sums of money, and other things too numerous to mention. He had also been guilty of forging notes. But the crime of deceiving the young girl seemed to his friends the most humiliating.

Although Edwin no longer lived in the community of his mother or Mr. Fitch, for he was supporting himself, he had learned what a mother's place in his life should be and the attitude that a son should hold toward her. He therefore, regardless of her former shortcomings, went occasionally to see her. In answer to those who questioned how he could respect or visit his mother after all that she had caused him to suffer, he would say: "She is still my mother, just as though she had always been good to me, and I shall always regard her as a mother. During my childhood I held nothing against her for all the things I suffered, and why should I now?" Hearing of Elmer's trouble, Edwin hastened to his mother's home, and while listening to her tale of woe he heard her say:

"I just can't understand what Elmer means by doing such outlandish things now that he is grown up. If he were a boy, I wouldn't think so much about it, but here he is a man and bringing home to us nothing but sorrow and disgrace. He can scarcely get out of one trouble until he is in another, and he even sets the other children up to do things that are bad. Now, how is it that you, whom I never gave credit for knowing anything, have never caused me any anxiety or trouble in any way? No matter where you are or how hard you have to work, I can never find any one that has anything bad to say about you. I can't see why there should be such a difference."

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“Why, Mother,” Edwin answered, “it is very plain. I can tell you all about it. Do you remember the time when Elmer took the pebbles from my pocket in the night time? That was his start. After that he often took things from your dress–pockets and money–drawer, and it was easy for him to slip in behind the counters at the stores to help himself, for you always took his part and shielded him; and you never taught him that he must be true to his wife. You told me I must never speak to you of these things, and I did not before, for I knew that it would do no good; but the little seed that was planted in his heart that night when he was allowed to keep the pebbles has grown until it is what you see it now. Elmer is a thief and will have to receive from the law the punishment that you ought to have given him long ago.”

“I don't see how taking a few little stones out of your pocket could make him a thief or amount to this,” his mother said as the truth began to dawn upon her.

“Why, Mother,” Edwin answered, “it is just as natural for that little deed to grow and multiply as for a thistle–seed to grow and increase when it is dropped in the ground. One healthy stalk will bear a great many blossoms, and every blossom will have an abundant crop of seeds. The little thistle–seed is very small and perfectly harmless if watched and destroyed before it has time to grow, but let it take root in fertile soil and get a start, and it will surely yield many more thistles and continue to increase long after the plant itself is forgotten.”

While Edwin was speaking, his mother seemed to realize something of the meaning of his words. The time to undo many of the wrongs that she had done the growing boys when they were under her care had gone; but had she known it, there was still a chance to help poor Edwin, who, through observation, had discovered some deep and mysterious truths.

He had found that there is nothing certain upon the earth except that everything must have a beginning and an ending, and that old age and death are unavoidable. The stories of ghosts and superstitious sayings had opened up avenues for thought, and he reasoned that if everything must die, and if there is a heaven and a hell, and if God knows all we do and say, there must be some way for a person to know in which of these places he will live after he is dead.

For a long time the thought had troubled him, but although he had asked many people regarding the matter, no one had explained it to his satisfaction. Taking note of his mother's friendly attitude toward him, he ventured to ask if she could give him any information on the subject, but her answer was: “We can not know these things until after we are dead. We must wait and see.”

As Edwin left his mother's home to return to the place where he had been working, he was more perplexed than ever; but he had decided that since the good place and the bad had been made for a purpose and since the good and the bad must inhabit their own proper places, he would not cease trying to solve the problem until he proved that it was an impossibility to do so.

Poor Edwin! Could some one have read to him from the Bible—but no! Had he listened, he could not have understood; he had no way of knowing that it was God's word to man.

“Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city” (Rev. 22:14).

CHAPTER XI. SEARCHING FOR LIGHT

The inquiring spirit will not be controlled;
He would make certain all, and all behold.

—Sprague.

At the age of twenty-one Edwin had formed one bad habit. Having had nobody to tell him that the use of tobacco was harmful to his body and seeing it used as commonly as a food by nearly all, regardless of age or sex, he had learned both to smoke and to chew. By the permission of the farmers for whom he had worked, he had raised a few tobacco-plants for himself, and the leaves of these plants, when carefully dried, were what he used as smoking-tobacco, but the cigars and chewing-tobacco he purchased at the store.

But although Edwin had never heard that tobacco was in any way unfit for the use of man, something within him seemed to suggest that there were some things about its use that were filthy and unclean. One thing that he abhorred was the chewing of tobacco in the house, because he pitied the women who were forced to look after and clean the spittoons. When in the house in the evening or on Sunday he considered smoking his pipe or cigars more appropriate, and he had supplied himself with special mouth-pieces for his cigars and convenient cases in which to carry them in his pockets. He did his chewing when at his work in the field. He also felt that it was placing his employer's property in too much danger to smoke when about his work in the barn, and this he always avoided. Thus, the same principle that had governed his earlier years was still his ruling trait.

Although for so many months Edwin had been seeking carefully and often with tears for some clue to the mystery connected with the hereafter, he had as yet found no one who could inform him on the subject; for those whom he considered the best people living were as uncertain concerning the future reward as the most vile. But from information gleaned he felt that there must be a place somewhere beyond the grave where the good and the bad would live again. When reasoning about the matter, he would say, "Now, if I am on the road to heaven, how am I to know if I get off that road and take a branch that will land me in hell?"

The thought of his own good behavior and abhorrence of all that he considered evil did not suggest to his mind that for this reason he might be the more entitled to enter the better place, for all his actions had been prompted by a sense of justice and his duty toward his fellow men.

Having become acquainted with a young married couple named Frank and Amanda Kauffman, Edwin went often to their home to pour out his troubles and perplexities. But although these people tried hard to help him, their efforts often plunged him into greater doubts and confusion. Whenever he went to them or to any one else with his question, it seemed that the answer was still the same: "No one can know about these things. We must all wait and see." Still he was not discouraged. Instead he was more than ever determined to keep on trying until he did find out.

Had Edwin been able to reason about the drunkard, the thief, or the liar, as not being fit for the good place, it might have been different, but to him the evils with which they were bound were a matter of choice. He had never heard the story of Adam and Eve, and so did not know that their first sin had severed not only them but also the entire human race from God's family (Rom. 5:19). Had he known that it is impossible for any one to know God or to enter the better world without first realizing that he is already condemned and on the road to destruction, and that the only way to be transferred to the highway leading to heaven is to be forgiven and adopted back into the family of God as a redeemed child, it would not have been so hard for him to understand upon which road he was traveling.

It was springtime, and as the days grew warm and bright, the tiny grass-blades in the meadowlands made their appearance. Then it was that the farmer for whom Edwin was working realized that it was time to gather the stones that were scattered here and there throughout the meadow into piles that they might be hauled away before they became lost in the soft, velvety carpet of green; for should they be left where they were, later on the knives of the mowing-machine and the teeth of the hay-rake would be badly damaged and perhaps broken. Edwin was told, therefore, that his work for a time would be to gather all the stones, both large and small, into heaps in systematic order so that they could be easily hauled away by the team in the large farm-wagon.

As THE field was large and level, it was a pleasant place to work, and Edwin, having plenty of time to think,

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confined his thoughts principally to the things that were uppermost in his mind. He reasoned thus:

“Now, if a man must walk every step of the way through life in uncertainty and doubt as to what the end will be, and has such a short time to stay in this world how miserable THE remainder of my life will be! If only I could do something whereby I could know surely that I would at the last have my desire, I would be so glad! Still,” he reasoned on, “there must be some way to know these things, and I will not stop trying to find out just what it is. It's altogether unreasonable to believe that we can not know until after we die about these things. God surely has some way to let us understand; for if he didn't what would there be to hinder every person on earth from going to hell? Surely God wants some of the people to go to the other place.”

His belief that some were surely on their way to heaven was firm, and he felt that those few must not be in doubt as to where they were going, and that God must in some way let them know how to live in order to keep on the right road, and also that their lives must be peaceful and happy. But he felt that some great change would have to take place in one's life before this assurance could come.

Thus, God again, when all men failed him, became Edwin's teacher, for these thoughts were in accordance with the Bible, and in wisdom and love his heavenly Father helped him to comprehend the very principles of a true Christian life. The truths he thus learned were so deeply stamped upon his mind with the divine seal that they could never be erased. Still within his heart there was another question that had not been answered: “How can I get this assurance within my own heart?” Nothing could ever bring satisfaction until he knew without a doubt that he was going aright, and nothing but facts would ever dispel his doubts.

“God,” he reasoned, “is the only one who knows, and the only way for me to understand is for God to let me know just what he thinks about me. God will not deal with me according to what the people may think of me, or by what they may say. Some say that I am all right now; but if I were all right, I should be the first to know it, and I do not feel that I am fit now for heaven if I should die.”

The knowledge that he had always tried to do the best that he could and that he had endeavored to treat every creature living as fairly as he knew how was not enough to satisfy him, and he said: “There is something still of which I have never heard or dreamed. If only I could find out what it is or by what means I could get it, how glad I should be! Can it be that I must die before I know what it is?”

“Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart” (Psa. 44:21).

CHAPTER XII. A REVELATION ON ETERNITY

Life is real! Life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.

—Longfellow.

While Edwin was still laboring among the stones in the field of grass, this thought came suddenly to his mind: “If I should be so unfortunate as to die before I receive the assurance that I am going to heaven and I should happen to find myself in hell, how long would I have to be there? And how hot would be that fire that I have heard so much about from profane tongues? Would there be any ending or wearing away of eternity? and would the suffering after a while be less severe? or would it go right on just the same forever and ever?”

As his desire to know these things increased, he was willing to lay aside his thoughts concerning how he was to get the assurance that he was going to heaven, and as he passed from one heap of stones to another, he became sorely troubled. He longed for a friend to whom he could go for help, but no one was suggested to his mind. Even his friend Frank Kauffman, he was sure, could not enlighten him; for to none of the questions he already asked upon these subjects had he received satisfactory answers.

Then suddenly, as though he had passed into the great beyond, everything about him appeared to be changed. He seemed to have died and passed into hell, and the flames, as they rose in imagination about him, were penetrating every fiber of his being, and he cried out in his distress. But as though the vision had been only to teach him of the reality of that place of torment, Edwin felt himself caught up, as it were, and he was seemingly suspended in an endless space with the eternal realities of life opened up for him to view. For miles and miles nothing but space appeared to stretch before, above, and around him, with the glaring flames that he had just left but a short distance behind him.

Then the scene was changed, and he saw before him a great and high mountain of sand, and the thought of the impossibility of counting the grains was suggested to his mind. Again the scene changed, and each grain in the mountain seemed to be a year, and the grains as years began to form themselves into one continuous straight line, so long that the distance could not be measured by the human eye, for there was no end. Once more there was a change. The line of years took the form of a great measuring-rod, and strength was given Edwin to grasp the rod and to try to measure the duration of hell-fire; and he tried to see if in eternity there could be any possible way of forgetting the past. Twice with the immense rod he measured into the sea of Forgetfulness, but before the third measurement was taken, he saw from a backward glance that hell was no farther away from him than it had been at the first. In great distress Edwin dropped the rod, and the vision passed away.

When he realized that he was still in the field of grass and was on time's side of eternity, he was very glad indeed. Through the vision he was convinced of two things—that hell and its torments were certain, and that eternity was without end—and he was filled with a new determination and zeal to do everything in his power to obtain an assurance within himself that he was really on the road to the better world.

How sad that Edwin could not have gone directly to Jesus as some did in olden time and have heard him explain that to enter heaven one must be born again.

“The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” “Except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:8,3).

CHAPTER XIII. PUZZLED ABOUT PRAYER

Heaven asks no surplice round the heart that feels,
And all is holy where devotion kneels.

—Holmes.

Edwin's distress of mind and his confusion of thought were greatly increased when, a few days after the vision in the field, there was another strange occurrence. The stones had not all been gathered into piles, but the work was progressing well, and when Edwin occasionally stopped in his work to note the appearance of the large field, he was pleased with what he had accomplished. The burden of his thought, however, was not the work nor the neatness of the place. Neither was it the beautiful scenery of slightly rolling country, the Christmas stories and legends connected with Blue Mountain, nor the ghost-stories and horrors in the home of the witch. Even the vision of eternity was a thing of the past.

"If only I knew! If only I could tell, before I die, on which of the roads I am traveling to eternity!" was the constant cry of his troubled soul. Once when these words had just escaped his lips, he suddenly heard a strange and rumbling sound that seemed to come from the very heart of the earth, and he felt the ground beneath his feet begin to shake. Unable to understand what had happened, Edwin hastened to the house, but the people there were as mystified as he himself, except that they said, "Surely it must have been an earthquake!" and some suggested that the end of the world might be near. With this bit of knowledge, Edwin returned to his work, but oh, how heavy was his heart!

"Why is it so hard," he cried, "to discover the secret that is causing me all this worry and trouble?" But the words had no sooner escaped his lips than he added, "There is and there must be some way to find out, and I'll keep on trying until I know that it is of no use to try."

Across the fields on a pretty knoll stood the humble little dwelling of Frank Kauffman and his wife, and as Edwin glanced occasionally in that direction, he wondered if his friend would be able to enlighten him about the earthquake, and he planned to visit him that very evening after supper.

Frank's home, although small, was always cozy and inviting; for Amanda, long before Frank married her, had been taught by her energetic, systematic mother, Mrs. Miller, the principles of good housekeeping. And Frank, although not a Christian, had been reared by a pious and devoted mother, who in all her ways endeavored to set before her children an example that she would not be ashamed to have them follow, and she was a woman who knew the value of prayer. For this reason Frank could easily talk on a few of the principles of religion; but when it came to the actual experiences, he was at a loss to know what to say.

But although Frank's mother was so noble and true, his father's goodness was only from a moral standpoint, and regardless of the evil effect that his smoking might have upon his three growing boys, he very much enjoyed his pipe. As a result of the father's indulgence, Frank and his two brothers, when scattered out in homes of their own, said, "Father smoked and seems none the worse for it, and I guess a little tobacco will not hurt us."

But the fact that some of her family smoked at all never ceased to be a great worry to Mrs. Kauffman, and whenever there was an opportunity she reminded them of their fault. And as Frank's home was but a short distance from his mother's, Edwin's visits were noticed by the anxious woman, and when she found that he too was a tobacco-user, she was much worried about the influence he might have over her son.

After she had expressed her fears concerning Edwin, one day to Frank, her son answered, "Mother, you are doing Edwin a great injustice; for instead of his being an evil associate, he is not only noble and good, but a pattern of good works, for even in the use of tobacco he is moderate and neat. More than this," Frank continued, "Edwin is very much interested in religion, and many times I am unable to answer his questions because they are so deep."

Could Mrs. Kauffman have known Edwin at this time, she would certainly have been of a different opinion, and she might have helped him through some of his difficulties; but she knew nothing of the perplexities of his mind, and Edwin did not know of her anxieties concerning his influence over her son.

When Edwin saw the evening shades beginning to gather, he was glad, and as soon as his supper and evening duties were over, he made his way across meadow and fields to the home of his friend, and he did not forget to

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carry with him a generous supply of dried tobacco-leaves, which he had tied up in a large red handkerchief. The leaves were for his friend and him to smoke while they talked.

As he passed the place in the field where he had felt the shock of the earthquake, he remembered, that he had not told Frank about the vision of eternity and hell that was still fresh in his memory, and then so rapidly were the things suggested to his mind that he would like to say, that he began to wonder if he would be able to unburden his heart in so short a time.

When he approached the house, he saw his friend Frank seated upon the porch. Frank was resting after a hard day's work in the field, but he gave Edwin a hearty welcome and bade him be seated beside him. Edwin took the chair, and the two were soon loading their pipes from the dried tobacco-leaves contained in the red handkerchief. Then as the circles of blue smoke began to arise in the air, Frank asked:

“Did you feel or hear over at your place anything of the earthquake?”

“Yes, and I should like to know more about it,” Edwin answered.

“It shook the windows and doors in our house so hard that my wife couldn't imagine for a time what was happening,” Frank continued, “and my horse in the field came very near getting away from me.”

“It seemed to me,” Edwin remarked, “that the whole field where I was working was going to pieces and that I was going right down into eternity.”

Then, as they smoked, Edwin told his friend all about his vision and explained how dreadful he felt it would be to land in such an awful place when he came to leave this world.

“I guess you felt like saying a prayer about the time you found yourself in hell, didn't you?” Frank asked as Edwin finished relating the incident.

The awful picture of the future world that had been painted in words had caused Frank to shudder, for he was not prepared to die. It might have been Frank's manner and it might have been the tone in which the word “prayer” was spoken that caused Edwin to exclaim:

“Prayer! what is prayer?”

“Prayer,” Frank replied, “is man's way of talking with God. When anybody tells God what he wants, he prays; and God has promised to hear his words and to help him out of his troubles. But the person who prays must speak from his heart and not try to say a lot of words that he has learned from some one else or from a book. A prayer from the heart is the only kind that God will hear.”

“What do you mean by talking with God?” Edwin asked in a still more mystified tone, for he had never thought of man while still on the earth or in fact anywhere else, as speaking with God in heaven.

After Frank had explained that such a thing was possible, Edwin exclaimed:

“Who can make such a prayer? Do you know of any one who can?”

The twilight shades had all disappeared from the sky above, and it was already dark where Frank and Edwin were sitting, but inside the cozy living-room Amanda, seated beside a table, upon which a kerosene-lamp was burning, was quietly knitting. Pointing in her direction, Frank said, confidently:

“There's one who can pray. And she prays from the heart.”

Although Edwin had been in the home a number of times and had noticed Frank's wife, he had never talked with her, and as he gazed through the open window, he wondered what kind of person she could be. Turning suddenly to his friend, he said:

“By what means does a person become able to pray such a prayer?”

“By being converted,” Frank answered.

“Converted!” Edwin exclaimed with even more wonder shining in his large brown eyes, for he seemed to realize instantly that another great and important subject had been introduced.

In answer to Edwin's question as to how it was possible to be converted, Frank explained that one was converted through prayer or by praying; but this answer was more confusing than any other had been, and Edwin exclaimed:

“Why, Frank, how is this? You say that the only kind of prayer that will amount to anything is that prayer that comes right out of the heart, and that to pray such a prayer one must be converted. And now you say that one is converted through prayer. Now tell me, if this is true, how and where does a person get his start?”

Not being a Christian himself, or ever having had the experience of salvation, Frank did not know how to unravel the tangle of thought that he had woven within Edwin's mind, and he was at a loss to know what to say.

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How easy it would have been for Mrs. Kauffman to help Edwin out of his difficulty had she known, but she was in her own home a short distance away burdened and sad. She had watched Edwin as he crossed the fields on his way to the home of her son and knew that they were smoking upon the porch.

When the subject of prayer was dropped, Edwin told his friend that the farmer for whom he was working would soon be caught up with his work and that it would be necessary for him to look for a new place to work, and he asked Frank if he knew of any farmers who were needing help. As Edwin had expressed a desire to get into another neighborhood, if possible, for the experience, Frank said that his father-in-law, Mr. Miller, would be in need of hired men during harvest, and added, "If you wish, I will speak a good word in your behalf."

Edwin expressed his gratitude for his friend's interest, and then after a few other remarks he arose to go. Before leaving, however, he emptied the contents of the red handkerchief out upon a piece of paper. Then, putting the handkerchief in his pocket, he bade his friend goodnight.

It was a beautiful evening, but Edwin paid no attention to the stars as they gazed down upon him from above. He was thinking of his friend's words, and he said aloud: "To be converted must be the very thing for me and just what I need. But how am I to get converted, since I must pray and since I can not pray until I get converted?" The words taught him at the poorhouse came quickly to his mind, but he said sadly: "No, they won't do! Frank said that a prayer is words, but that the words must not be any that have been learned from any person or book. They must come right out of one's heart. What can it all mean?" And that night, for the first time in many years, the little prayer failed to bring him comfort before he closed his eyes in sleep.

"O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come" (Psa. 65: 2).

CHAPTER XIV. A PRAYER-MEETING

Oh the precious privilege
To the pious given,
Sending by the dove of prayer
Holy words to heaven!
Arrows from the burning sun
Cleave the quivering air;
Swifter, loftier, surer on,
Speeds the dove of prayer,
Bearing from the parted lips
Words of holy love,
Warm as from the heart they gushed,
To the throne above.

—Mrs. Hale.

Not long after the excitement caused by the earthquake had subsided, Frank Kauffman informed his father-in-law, Mr. Miller, of Edwin's intention to change his place of employment and took great pains to mention the young man's good qualities. As a result, Frank returned with the message: "My father-in-law will be glad to have you help him on the farm even before harvest, and you are at liberty, he said, to come just as soon as you care to do so." Accordingly, at the end of the month Edwin, together with his trunk and other baggage, was transferred to the home of Mr. Miller.

When the news of Edwin's departure from the neighborhood came to the ears of Mrs. Kauffman, she rejoiced, because she felt that his influence over her son in regard to smoking would not be so great; but little did she know what the move was to mean to Edwin or that it would bring him even more directly into her life.

Mr. Miller, a well-to-do old farmer, was still strong for his age and well able to assume the responsibilities connected with his business; so the greater part of his help was hired by the day. But since he would need one steady hand to help him throughout the harvest-season with the barn-and house-chores, he hired Edwin for two months. Finding that all that Frank had said of him was true, the Millers took Edwin into the home as a member of the family.

Edwin was not long in discovering that he greatly enjoyed being in this home, for both Mr. and Mrs. Miller were good people, and Mrs. Miller was a professor of religion. But to the young man so hungry for the right kind of living the lack of profanity between the husband and wife was the thing most noticeable and gratifying.

He had been there but a short time when the motherly sympathy of Mrs. Miller was aroused on account of his extreme ignorance on many subjects, and she did not grow weary in explaining the meaning of new words and in doing all else that she knew to do to enlighten his mind. That she might have a better opportunity to talk with Edwin, he was invited to share with the old couple the smoking-hour that was spent in the little summer-kitchen (for both Mr. and Mrs. Miller were fond of their tobacco). For this kindness Edwin was very grateful.

The little summer-kitchen, which had been built just back and a little apart from the large, convenient farm-house, was principally for the purpose of keeping the larger building free from the offensive odors that might arise from the cooking or the use of tobacco; but Mrs. Miller was so extremely neat and clean about her housekeeping that this room too was always cozy and inviting. In the chimney-corner of the kitchen a large fireplace had been built, and the latter had been covered by a closed iron cooking-grate. Above the rustic stove was a mantel, upon which the tobacco supplies of the old people were kept, and Edwin was told that he was welcome to place his pipes and cigars with theirs if he desired to do so. The invitation was gladly accepted, and when Edwin's things were arranged, the mantel was well filled. The other furnishings of the room were a large cupboard, the necessary articles for cooking, a long home-made dining-table in the center of the room with long benches on both sides, and a few old-fashioned straight-backed chairs. And here they met night after night to smoke and to talk.

The congregation to which Mrs. Miller belonged was in the habit of holding their weekly prayer-services in

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the residences of the different church-members, and soon after Edwin's arrival in her home Mrs. Miller told him that on the following Thursday evening there was to be a prayer-meeting at her house.

"A prayer-meeting!" Edwin exclaimed with as much wonder and astonishment as he had displayed when talking with Frank about prayer; and immediately he connected the words with those that he had listened to on the porch of his friend's home. And when he asked simply, "What is a prayer-meeting?" she hid her surprize and explained that some people from different parts of the neighborhood would come together after supper in some room and spend an hour in reading, praying, and singing hymns.

"Can I be with you too?" Edwin asked as though he expected to be denied the privilege; but when Mrs. Miller answered, "Certainly," the beseeching look immediately changed to one of gladness.

"Can it be possible," thought Edwin the following day as he went about his work, "that in this very home where I am now living they will have prayer. Only three more days! How can I wait until Thursday night?"

When at last the appointed evening had arrived, Edwin with great inward emotion and with bright anticipations watched the people as they arrived in groups of twos and threes, some on foot and others in carriages. When all had arrived and had passed on into the house, they were greeted by Mrs. Miller, and Edwin was invited to join them in the comfortable sitting-room of the large house.

Edwin felt that these people were conferring upon him a wonderful privilege and honor, but he could not get away from the feeling that he was an intruder in their meeting. He was surprized that no one else seemed to look upon his being there as strange. In fact, all were so very kind that he decided to get all the good possible from being there and to solve, if he could, the puzzle of prayer, also to find out what it meant to become converted.

Now, Edwin had never learned that there was any other language than the Pennsylvania Dutch dialect, and having never been in a neighborhood where the Bible truths in any language were taught in his hearing, and not knowing that there was a Bible or a Savior, he had no way of understanding (even in his mother-tongue) what to most people would have been simple and readily comprehended.

When all was in readiness for the service to begin, a song was sung and then a chapter from the large German family Bible was read. After that all knelt to pray. Edwin knelt also, but he faced the others and gazed upon the upturned faces as though they belonged to creatures from another world. When Amanda and Mrs. Kauffman prayed and he saw their faces beaming with the glory of God, he was sure that their prayers were informal, for no books were before them and the words seemed to come from their hearts. The reason that he could not understand what was said, he felt sure, was because they were talking to God, and the language was that of another world.

When they arose and began telling of God's goodness to them, some even leaping and shouting at times, Edwin supposed that it was another form of prayer, and as the words spoken were all in German, they too, he reasoned, must belong to another world. Notwithstanding he rejoiced because he was there, and he believed that everything was just as it should have been.

When the meeting had been dismissed and the people had gone to their homes, Edwin and Mr. and Mrs. Miller went to the summer-kitchen to smoke before retiring. While they were filling their pipes and selecting the coals to light them, Mrs. Miller inquired, "How did you like the meeting tonight. Edwin? Was it like you thought it would be?" His answer did not reveal the fact that he had not understood enough of what had been said or done to form any new conclusion. He did tell her, however, that he thought the meeting was really wonderful, and he asked how they all knew that they were on the road to heaven. For Mrs. Miller this was a very hard question to answer, for she too was living in great uncertainty regarding the future and her reward; so she said:

"They don't know anything about that for sure in this life. They must wait until after they die before they can find that out."

In reply to Edwin's questions on prayer and what it means to be converted, Mrs. Miller explained that she had gone forward and given her hand to the minister a long time before and that after waiting a year's time he had told her she was in the church, and that joining church was what was meant by being converted.

"What do you mean by 'church'?" Edwin asked, feeling that he had found another word bearing upon the great subject that was perplexing him.

"Why the church is that big building down on the first four corners as you go into town. You can't miss it, for it's the only building there, and if you want to go down there with us some time to a meeting, you can. We have meeting, you know, every Sunday at the church."

But Edwin did not know, so he said, "Do you mean that you have prayer-meeting every Sunday?"

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“Oh, no,” she answered; “it isn't a prayer-meeting. We just get together and listen to the minister talk, but we always sing, and the minister prays for us.”

“And don't you know, because you go to that church, that you will go to heaven when you die?” Edwin said in astonishment, but the answer was, “Oh, no; we don't really know anything about that.”

As Edwin pondered over the matter that night when alone, he said, “If it took Mrs. Miller a whole year to get into the church, it will take me that long to get converted; but I can't see why she doesn't know any more than she does about getting to heaven.”

Although Edwin could get no understanding in regard to the deep things that were upon his mind, he never for one moment thought of giving up in his efforts to search for them and to find out. In his heart he was still sure that there was a way to know these things, and although his friends had failed to discover them, his confidence in their sincerity was not in the least shaken.

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3: 9).

CHAPTER XV. A STAR OF HOPE

Come then, O care! O grief! O woe!
O troubles! mighty in your kind;
I have a balm ye ne'er can know,
A hopeful mind.
—Vane.

During the weeks that followed, Edwin was very busy, but most of the time that he was at work about the chores or in the harvest-field where the men were gathering in the ripened grain or preparing for the threshers, he was reviewing in his mind the scene on eternity, the talks with Frank, the prayer-meeting, and what Mrs. Miller had told him in regard to the church.

“It will take me just a year from the time I start to go to church before I can become converted, or be able to pray the right kind of prayer,” he said to himself; “and how much longer will it take before I know that I am on the road to heaven?” for regardless of Mrs. Miller's confident statement that nobody in this world could know of his future reward, Edwin was still of the opinion that people could. “It's just because they haven't got that far along, I guess,” he reasoned, and he felt very sure that some of the people who were at the prayer-meeting must know.

Among the day-laborers who worked for Mr. Miller was a Mr. Kunz, who, although not a Christian, was a good, intelligent, and friendly fellow, and who lived only about a mile away. For this young man Edwin soon formed a great attachment, and as the weeks slipped by he occasionally found time and opportunity to visit him in his home. During one of these visits Mr. Kunz said in answer to Edwin's questions on prayer and the other things that were troubling him:

“I don't know very much about such things, Edwin, but I think that you can find out all you want to know if you will go to the big camp-meeting that is soon to be held on the camp-ground yonder,” and with his finger Mr. Kunz pointed to a strip of woods that Edwin had heard spoken of as the “Camp-Ground.”

“Why! what has the camp-meeting to do with such things?” Edwin asked, greatly surprized; for his idea of the camp-ground had been that it was a place for worldly amusements to be held, such as picnics, festivals, and ball-games, and it was hard for him to connect it with anything that he considered so solemn as prayer and getting an assurance of heaven.

“It has much to do with it, Edwin,” Mr. Kunz replied. “The meeting is held by men and women who are converted and whose business it is to see that those who come to the meeting get converted. They will know what you need and will help you to understand how to get it.”

“Do you mean,” Edwin asked, his eyes opening wide in wonder, “that one can get converted right there at the meeting?”

“Yes, indeed, I mean it,” Mr. Kunz replied, smiling at the eagerness of Edwin. “Every year many are converted, and it is for that very purpose that the meeting is held.”

Poor Edwin! It was hard for him to make the words of Mrs. Miller and those of Mr. Kunz harmonize; but as he considered what his friend had said, a bright star of hope arose in his sky, and he at once decided that the thing for him to do was to attend that meeting. He asked Mr. Kunz how it was possible for those people to get any one converted in so short a time. As Mr. Kunz was not a Christian himself, he could only answer that he did not know how it was, but that somehow they did it. With this knowledge Edwin arose to return to the place where he was making his home.

It was Sunday afternoon early in August, but Edwin gave no heed to the warm rays of the sun. As he walked along the highway toward the home of his employer, his heart was light and happy, and as he was alone he swung his arms and clapped his hands in his delight. The thought that it was possible to become converted within a week's time, or eight days, as the meeting was to continue over two Sundays, seemed almost too good to be true. “But why not,” he reasoned, “when there will be such able men and women at the meeting to do the work. At the church where Mrs. Miller was converted, it might have taken a year, for there was but one man to do the work; but at the camp-meeting there will be many.”

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Then he began to wonder how the work would be accomplished, and he concluded that it would take some kind of a scientific, systematic performance, together with a wonderful prayer, and that then, if the work had been properly done, an assurance that the person was converted and safe for heaven would come.

Suddenly as he walked along, he felt that he was not alone, but no one was in sight. Then these words seemed to be whispered in his ear:

“You had better not rejoice too soon, for your hope may be in vain. Your master may refuse to let you go to the camp-meeting; for you know how busy he is just now and how necessary that he should have your help.”

But without the slightest fear Edwin answered in an audible tone:

“Yes, sir, I know that the work is pushing us hard just now, but this matter, to my mind at least, is of far greater importance than all the work on the farm. And then I do not expect my master to give me the time off to attend the camp-meeting. I'll tell him how much I dislike to leave him and that nothing else at such a time would induce me to go. Then I'll say that I will not only work for him as hard as I can the four weeks before I go, but that I will stay two weeks longer than I agreed to stay and will give him that work free, if he will only let me attend that meeting.”

Had Edwin thought to ask Mr. Kunz if anyone could get converted in less than the eight days, he might not have been so determined to remain for the entire meeting; but, supposing that it would take at least that long for the operation, he did not want to run any chances of failure in his undertaking.

He had hardly finished telling what he would do in return for the favor that he was expecting to ask of his master, when again he seemed to hear the voice speaking. It said:

“Your week's absence from the farm at this busy time might cause your master so much inconvenience and loss that he would not even consider your offer of two extra weeks of labor in return.”

“Under such circumstance I'd give him a month's time for the one week,” Edwin answered bravely.

Then the voice suggested that he might be unable to leave under any circumstances, but at this suggestion Edwin exclaimed:

“Well, sir, then I shall go anyway! My matter is of far greater importance than anything that is connected with his farm, and I can not afford to miss that meeting. I can not give up a chance to get converted; for if I do and should die, I shall go into eternity unprepared. I will just tell him that I am going anyway and will take my chances on all the rest.”

Because of this decision on Edwin's part, the tempter, who was Satan, the enemy of all who will do right, was forced to flee. Had Edwin listened to the suggestions longer or given the wicked one any encouragement to stay, there would have been no end to his arguments; for it is the business of Satan to discourage and dishearten all who seek to travel upon the highway that leads to heaven.

Thus, we find that Edwin in his ignorance had once more been guided by Divine Providence and that his heavenly Teacher had taught and aided him in his hour of need. God never fails when a soul is doing his best to please him. Failure comes, not merely from a lack of understanding, but from a lack of decision and purpose to go all the way at any cost. Every one who is honest with himself and anxious to do the will of his Maker will be shown the way.

“The Lord looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men. From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth. He fashioned their hearts alike; he considereth all their works... Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; to deliver their soul from death.” (Psa. 33: 13–19).

CHAPTER XVI. A REVELATION ON TOBACCO

Who is it that will doubt
The care of Heaven, or think the immortal
Pow'rs are slow?
—Davenaut.

When Edwin entered the barn on the morning following his Sunday afternoon visit, he found that Mr. Miller was there ahead of him and that the large forkfuls of fresh hay for the horses' breakfasts were already tumbling rapidly from the large mow above.

"As soon as he comes down," thought Edwin, "I'll ask him about my going to that meeting, for it'll be as good a chance as I'll have." Then as he went about among the feed-bins, measuring grain for the stock, he rehearsed in his mind the little speech that he had planned, to see if it could be improved; but he decided that it was just what he should say, and with all his heart he hoped that his generous offer would be accepted. If possible, he wanted to go without causing any hard feelings on the part of his employer. Still he felt that he must go, and was resolved to go even if Mr. Miller should be stubborn.

It was really but a few minutes until Mr. Miller was descending the stairway that led from the loft above, but to Edwin in his anxious state of mind it seemed a long, long time. It was a little hard at first to break the silence, but finally he said:

"Mr. Miller, Mr. Kunz was telling me that the camp-meeting that is to be held on the camp-ground before long is for the purpose of getting people converted and that the work can be done in a week's time. I should like to go to that meeting, but I hate to leave you, for I know how much work there is to be done just now. But I feel that I must get converted as soon as I can, for I don't know how soon I may die. Now, I'll work for you as hard as I can before I go, and when I serve the time that I've agreed to stay, I'll work two weeks longer for you for nothing if you will only let me go to that meeting!"

Edwin had spoken excitedly, and every nerve in his body was on a tension when Mr. Miller said slowly:

"Why, yes, I guess you can go. To me this matter of getting converted doesn't seem so important, but I think I can manage the work all right if you want to go."

Edwin could scarcely believe his ears, and when he found that no second offer was necessary, it was as though a great and heavy burden had been rolled from his heart. During the days that followed he endeavored to live up to the agreement that he had made to work faithfully for his master. Many times he thought of the meeting, and as often he asked himself: "Is there anything special that I can do to help in this matter? Is there anything that I ought to do so as to be better able to go through the operation?"

He even asked Mrs. Miller if she could think of anything more that he could do, but she, failing to understand his meaning, said: "No, there isn't much that you can do. The things about the camp-ground are pretty handy, and it's only a few miles away, and I will see to it that your clothes are clean and mended." But still Edwin was not satisfied. Every day he reviewed his conduct to see if there was any possible way that he could improve himself.

One evening his divine Teacher again came to his assistance. It was after supper, and Edwin was still in the summer-kitchen. The smoking-hour, too, was over, and his pipe and tobacco were on the shelf. Mrs. Miller had retired to her room in the large house for the night, and her husband was making his usual rounds about the place to see that all the pasture-fences were secure.

Sometimes when the horses and cows were trying to rid themselves of the tormenting flies and mosquitoes, they would loosen the rails of the fences by rubbing their itching sides against them. Thus an opening would often be made, through which, if not repaired, the entire herd might find their way and do much damage both to themselves and to the large fields of waving corn that were growing all around the pasture-land. For this reason it was necessary after the animals had quieted down for the night to see that everything was in good condition, and Mr. Miller would trust no one to do this chore but himself.

Seated in his accustomed place on the bench near the end of the long dining-table, Edwin, with both elbows upon the table, was resting his face upon his hands. Again he was thinking of the one great subject about which he was so seriously concerned. Suddenly he seemed not to be alone. Looking about him as though expecting to see

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some person standing near, he heard a voice seemingly from above his head, and he was told to listen.

When the voice of the tempter had spoken discouragingly on the way from Mr. Kunz's, Edwin had felt no fear, but now a fear that caused him to tremble crept over him. But when the voice in tender, loving tones said softly, "Do not be afraid, for I am your friend," he turned with eagerness to listen.

"You want to be prepared for heaven," the voice continued. "Now, tobacco—using is unbecoming and unclean in my eyes, and before you can get on the highway that leads to heaven, you must stop using tobacco."

Until then Edwin had not been told by a living creature that tobacco was not a food, or that it was unfit for the use of mankind, or unclean in the sight of God; but as he listened to the words of his divine Guide and Teacher, the great truth of the matter sank deep within his heart, and he had no thought or desire to dispute them. Neither did he stop to think or reason that his best friends Mr. and Mrs. Miller, Frank Kauffman, and Mr. Kunz were all using tobacco. Instead he arose and, going to the mantel, selected all his smoking—materials there, opened the grate, and dumped them one and all upon the few living coals that were still smoldering among the ashes. He also brought from his room in the large house a box of cigars, some pipes and cigar—holders, and threw them in upon the other things.

When Edwin, all unconscious of the dense smoke and the strong odor that were beginning to arise from the old—fashioned chimney, returned to his place by the table, he resumed his former position on the bench and endeavored to continue his meditation as it was before the revelation.

Outside the night was perfect. A bright moon looked down from its lofty height among the stars and revealed the farmer repairing a place in the fence—corner where the rails had been loosened. Scarcely had he finished the task, when a glance from the hollow in which he was busy toward the hill upon which his home was located, caused him to gasp and shudder with fear. Then with his nose in the air he began to inhale and said, "Why, that smells like tobacco—smoke." The time of night and the fact that the smoke was coming in great volumes from the chimney of the summer—kitchen made him think that the kitchen was on fire and that the tobacco on the mantel—shelf was causing the smoke.

With anxious haste the excited old gentleman turned his steps toward the house and hurried forward in that direction. A few minutes later Edwin's surprize was no less than his employer's had been; for the latter, breathing heavily and nearly exhausted from the exertion of climbing the hill in such haste, threw open the door and rushed in. For the moment neither spoke, and then after a curious glance first toward the mantel and then at Edwin, who was still sitting calmly beside the table, Mr. Miller hastened to the grate and, lifting the lid, gazed in wonder upon the heap of burning tobacco.

That the old farmer was displeased and even vexed at what he saw could be easily detected in his features. Seeing that only Edwin's belongings were in the fire, he hastily demanded an explanation. Edwin replied that he had destroyed the tobacco and cigars because he did not feel that they were fit for him to use, but he said nothing about the manner in which he had discovered the fact. "I put them in the fire," Edwin continued, "because I did not want any one else to defile himself with what I could not use myself." Then seeing that Mr. Miller was taking a few of the cigars from the grate, he said, "If you take them out of the fire and use them, I shall not be to blame, but I have no more use for tobacco, and I will not give to any one else what I consider unfit to use myself."

To Edwin the use of tobacco had been a great source of comfort in his lonely hours, and he had endeavored to secure for himself every little convenience that would make its use more pleasant and cleanly. Aside from his pipes and cigar—holders, he had provided himself with a self—lighting match—safe for his vest—pocket, a self—closing rubber chewing—tobacco pouch that kept the tobacco clean and moist, and other things that appealed to his sense of cleanliness. His efforts had always been to do away with the filthy part connected with its use. In fact, he had often been commended for his neatness in regard to his tobacco; but when God said that it was unclean and unfit for the use of any one who was seeking to be on the highway to Heaven, he did not care for it at all. It was no trial to give it up, and he was glad to part with everything connected with its use.

Edwin's example should have been a real rebuke to Mr. and Mrs. Miller, but instead, they attributed his conduct to his ignorance and even made almost unkind remarks about his unnecessary waste. But this couple should not receive too much blame; for they, like Edwin, had never been taught that the use of tobacco was anything that should be avoided. In their home life they had all respect for Edwin, and in their efforts to help him in his ignorance to understand their views of the Christian life they had been honest and earnest.

Their displeasure at his destruction of his tobacco—supplies was due to the fact that they had never heard that

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tobacco was injurious to their bodies and not a food. In their minds Edwin's conduct was justly worthy of criticism. Had they known that the pleasure derived from the use of tobacco is like the sensation produced by scratching and rubbing the skin when one has a skin-disease, they might have understood. If it were not for the disease, no pleasure would result from the friction. Likewise, were it not for the disease of the tobacco-appetite, the use of tobacco would sicken instead of give pleasure. Tobacco contains a deadly poison. Its constant use will in time injure both body and mind past repair. In many cases it has been the direct cause of various diseases and insanity, and it may land the soul in hell.

“The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust... to be punished: but chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness” (2 Pet. 2:9, 10).

“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.” (Rom. 6:12, 13).

CHAPTER XVII. THE CAMP-MEETING

And many learned to trust the Lord
From precious truths that here were heard,
While sounded out God's precious Word
From pulpit and from altar too.
By hearing of its meaning true,
They learned to know that God would do
Just as his Holy Word had said,
In leading all that would be led.

—A. B. Gildersleeve.

Edwin was faithful to his promise regarding his employer's interests, and at the end of the month the farm-work was under such good control that both Mr. and Mrs. Miller had decided that they too could attend a part of the meeting. Several times Edwin had visited his friend Mr. Kunz, and upon one occasion he had noticed that where the roads crossed there was a large advertisement It read:

CAMP-MEETING

AUGUST 31—SEPTEMBER 7

A series of religious open-air meetings will be
held on the
CAMP-GROUND AT MAPLE GROVE
Everybody invited. Come and bring your friends.
Camp-Meeting Committee.

But as he could not read the words, he was at a loss to understand what was meant by the sign; but when his friend explained that it was a notice of the camp-meeting of which he had been telling him, Edwin thought he comprehended, and he felt that it was indeed a wonderful thing.

When at last the morning of the thirty-first arrived, everything about the farm was in excellent condition to leave. Mrs. Miller brought Edwin his clean clothes that she had so carefully mended, and said: "On the camp-ground, Edwin, you will find a large boarding-tent. There you can buy your meals, and there will be some place given you to sleep at night. Of course, you can do as you like, but I wouldn't take along anything that I didn't need, for bundles will only be in your way." So when Edwin set out for the camp-ground, which was a distance of about five miles, he was empty-handed.

The day was perfect, and Edwin, dressed in a neat suit of clothes, straw hat, and colored shirt, appreciated it as such. The little birds and nature had lost none of their charms for him in all the trying scenes through which he had passed, but upon this occasion they were merely passing thoughts, for his mind was upon the meeting and his purpose in going to it.

From his experiences in the prayer-meetings Edwin had learned that he could not understand the words that were used in prayer, and he did not know why this was so; consequently the thought was suggested to his mind that now perhaps he would be unable to know when the operation through which he was soon to pass would begin.

Dinner was just over when he reached the grounds, but although the boarding-tent was pointed out to him by a man who was working hard to get his tent-pole in position, Edwin did not go to ask whether there would be a second table, partly from ignorance and partly because of his not being very hungry. He was more anxious to examine the place where the meetings were to be held. Mr. Kunz had given him a description of what to expect, but he wanted to see it all for himself. He soon discovered the crude structure that was to serve as a pulpit, and he found that it was just as his friend had described it. The rows of seats, which were simply some boards laid upon large blocks of wood, were also as he had expected to see them. There were enough of these rude benches to accommodate a large congregation. Only above the stand was there a covering, and Edwin wondered what would happen in case of a storm, but this also was but a passing thought.

Finding, by inquiring of a neighbor whom he happened to know and whose name was James Hass, that the

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meeting—hour was close at hand, Edwin suddenly realized that if he was to have an interpreter he must make haste in finding one, and as Mr. Hass did not seem to have any special duties, he asked the favor of him. After Edwin had explained that his object in coming to the meeting was to be converted and that all he wanted of Mr. Hass was that he inform him when to act, the two went at once and took their places on the front row of seats very close to the pulpit, and there they waited patiently while the rest of the people assembled. Judging that Mr. Hass would be as anxious to help him as Edwin had himself always been to do kind acts for others, he had no thought of doubting his interpreter's sincerity. After the bell had rung the minister soon arrived, and the meeting was begun.

The opening exercises were similar to those of the prayer-meetings that Edwin had attended and were in the German language. The minister arose and read as his text Titus 3:7: "That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." As he talked upon the hope of the righteous, his words would have been a great inspiration and encouragement to Edwin could he have understood them. The speaker went into detail regarding the sinful state of mankind and endeavored to make perfectly clear why it was necessary that a person should see his lost condition before he could become a Christian by being born again, but of course Edwin did not receive the least light.

At the close of the sermon the minister said, "If any one desires to be converted and become an heir to these promises, let him stand."

"It's time to act now," Mr. Hass whispered in Edwin's ear, not knowing that Edwin had thus far understood nothing of the sermon; but he explained his meaning by adding, "You must stand up and let him know that you want to be converted."

Without a moment's hesitation Edwin arose, and while he waited to be told what next to do, his heart was bounding with joy and bright anticipation, for he was positive that the wonderful operation of which he had been so long dreaming had at last actually commenced. He was sure that they were beginning with him all right, for they were commencing with his case on the very first day of the meeting. And, because he supposed that it would require the entire season of the camp-meeting to complete the work, he was very grateful to his interpreter for telling him what to do.

While standing thus in front of the audience, he turned about to see if there were any in the congregation that he knew, and to his surprize he discovered in one of the back seats his mother and a few others with whom he had been acquainted. With a thrill of satisfaction he again faced the minister, wondering if they too had come to the meeting to get converted. He did not know that his mother had lately taken up a "faith," as she called it, and by her old associates was being termed religious. But he believed that she must have had some good intention in coming to so sacred a place and that she would approve of the step he had taken.

He was still standing, facing the minister and wondering what the next step would be for him to take, when his interpreter explained that he must be seated. Edwin was greatly disappointed, for he desired that since the work had commenced it might go right on to its completion. Still he made no complaint, believing that the minister knew his business and would be faithful to him.

As Edwin sat down beside Mr. Hass, feeling that everything would come out all right in the end, he did not see the expression of disgust that shadowed his mother's face. Feeling that he was disgracing her by his ignorance, she would have enjoyed punishing him as she was in the habit of doing in his childhood, but this was beyond her power.

It was but a few minutes after Edwin had taken his seat until the meeting was dismissed, and the people scattered out over the grounds, a few to the pump, some to the boarding-house entrance, and others to their private tents. Edwin followed the largest crowd, for Mr. Hass had left him as soon as the meeting was dismissed, and he went to the boarding-house for his supper. He was very hungry, having had no dinner. After the meal was ended, he walked about over the grounds until it was time for the evening service. Very glad he was when he heard the meeting-bell ringing as Mr. Kunz had explained it would, and, finding his interpreter, he was soon again seated in front of the pulpit.

The evening's discourse was given in the English language, but it was no more enlightening to Edwin than the afternoon's sermon had been; still, by his expression of reverence and awe the congregation was not aware of this fact. At the close of the service Edwin was surprized to see that the entire congregation arose and remained standing as he had done in the afternoon. By this he supposed that all who were there had come to be converted. Then an altar-call was made, and Edwin's interpreter whispered, "That means to go forward."

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Now, if Edwin had not already been in front of the entire audience, he would have gone forward; but supposing that the call was for some one else, he remained standing as he had done in the afternoon, but he made no move toward the altar. Still the singing continued and no one came forward, and as the minister's manner became more and more earnest, all eyes were turned toward him. Edwin became sorely troubled; for he feared that he was not doing all that he should do to get the best results, and he did not want to hinder the operation.

He saw the long vacant bench in front of the pulpit, but he had no way of knowing that "going forward" meant to kneel in prayer before the altar where the spiritual workers might pray with and help him to understand what it meant to be converted. For this ignorance he was misjudged, many supposing that he was stubborn and unwilling to bow before the altar in so humble a manner.

Noticing that Mr. Hass had occasionally spoken to him, no one else thought it necessary to do so. It seemed that night that the singing and invitations were continued an unusually long time, for Edwin's case was already creating an interest. The fact that he was a subject for prayer and the anxiety pictured upon his face made many long to see him move out and get an experience of salvation. And Edwin, feeling that something was expected of him and that he was losing much valuable time, became more anxious and concerned as the moments crept by.

It was another opportunity for his divine Teacher to act, and suddenly he seemed to feel the pressure of a strong hand placed upon his shoulder, and by an unseen power he was forced downward upon his knees directly in front of the altar. Although he could not have told how or why he was there, he was sure that it was the right thing for him to do, and immediately his worry was gone. Thus, unconsciously and mysteriously he was being led one step at a time, but always he was unable to know just what thing to do next.

Seeing Edwin kneeling at the altar, the minister soon came and, kneeling beside him, began to ask various questions, but to all that he said he received no answer, and he wondered at Edwin's silence. Then again Edwin was misjudged. Not knowing that it was because the young man did not understand the language, the minister arose, leaving Edwin still kneeling at the altar, and dismissed the meeting.

When Edwin realized that the people were scattering out over the grounds, he too arose from the altar and followed them. Then he remembered that Mrs. Miller had said that some place would be found for him to sleep, and as Mr. Meyer, one of Mr. Miller's neighbors, appeared among the crowd, Edwin made his wants known, and the kind old gentleman hastened to show him a good bed that he had prepared in his covered wagon. It had been made, he told Edwin, for another brother, but he could share it if he liked.

Edwin lost no time in getting into the place assigned him, but before sleep would come to his eyes, he had carefully reviewed in his mind all the events of the day. Charging his mind with the place where he had left off in the evening, he was determined to commence again right there at the very first opportunity that was offered him, and he was confident that he would somehow discover just what was the next best thing to do. Still he could not help wondering just what that step would be. He was still pondering upon these things when sleep came to his relief, and it was not until the early songs of the little birds peeled merrily forth through the grove the following morning that he awoke from his dreams.

Edwin was soon dressed and out upon the grounds, feeling thankful indeed that he was still permitted to live and enter upon another day of life. Only a few people were in sight, and he began to wonder how long it would be before breakfast would be ready. Then he thought he could hear the sound of singing such as he had heard in the meetings, and he listened carefully. "I can not afford," he told himself, "to miss anything that pertains to the meeting." He found that the sound was coming from the tent near where he had spent the night, and, walking up to it, he quickly lifted the flap that served as a door.

The tent was owned by Mr. Meyer, as was the wagon in which Edwin had spent the night, and the occupants of the tent, which were Mr. and Mrs. Kauffman, Mr. and Mrs. Gardner, and the Meyers, were having their morning worship together. To Edwin the little scene that met his gaze was a pleasant surprize; for he at once connected it with the prayer-meetings that had been held at the residence of his employer, as he recognized some of the people who had been at the meeting and whose countenances and earnestness in prayer he would never forget.

The worship was over, and the song to which Edwin had listened had been intended for the closing-song. Then they were to separate and each family go to their own tent for the morning meal. Edwin's appearance in the doorway changed their plans, and Mrs. Meyer, a dear old lady who had felt a deep interest in Edwin from the time she had first seen him in the prayer-meeting, arose and, offering her chair to Edwin, bade him enter and be

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seated, while she found a seat for herself on the foot of a temporary bed. Edwin needed no second invitation, for Mrs. Meyer had spoken in his mother-tongue, and he could understand what she said. Then she said, "Let us once more kneel down and pray," and they all knelt down, Edwin following the others' example.

As they prayed, Edwin once more watched their faces and carefully listened to every word, but not a word could he understand. He knew that the people were praying, but he did not know that they were praying for him.

So deeply was Edwin impressed with the earnestness of these people and so sincerely did he wish to join them in prayer, that he decided to watch carefully for small words that he could say regardless of their meaning and to repeat such words as a prayer for himself.

"If I take some words from a real prayer, they will be a part of a prayer, and it will not be as though I had learned the words from a book or from some person."

Thus, in his ignorance he listened and reasoned, and when he had found three small words, meaningless in themselves, he began to repeat them in audible tones. The fact revealed to Edwin while working among the stones in the field of grass that God had made a provision whereby man could be able in this life to understand upon which road he was traveling toward eternity had never left him, and although he had not as yet discovered anything at all about God's great plan of salvation, he was still certain that as soon as he was converted he would discover all the things he was longing to know. At that moment it seemed to Edwin that the only way to unravel Frank's definition of prayer and what it meant to be converted was to use some words from a real prayer until he could form a prayer of his own, and for this reason he had selected the three little words.

God, as a "discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12), saw the sincerity of Edwin's purpose, and the little unintelligible words reached his throne as though they had been an eloquent prayer, and the more he prayed the more desperately in earnest did he become.

Suddenly Edwin felt that his prayer must have taken hold on God, for a burden new and strange and different from anything that he had ever experienced seemed to settle down upon him, and as it grew heavier and heavier, he felt that he was being crushed to the earth. Then a feeling of unworthiness that even the earth should hold him up and keep him from instant destruction in hell until God in his mercy would deliver him swept over him, and in his desperate condition he cried out until his voice was heard all over the camp-ground, and the people in crowds came to discover, if possible, what was taking place in Meyer's tent.

Then a strange and wonderful thing occurred. Heaven in all its beauty seemed to open to his view, and as the great burden rolled away he sprang to his feet, and while leaping about the tent he shouted for joy and thanked God because he was at last sure that he was on the road to heaven.

When at last Edwin could think about his surroundings, he saw that both "flaps" of the tent were open wide and that Mrs. Kauffman, Frank's mother, was earnestly preaching salvation from sin to an immense congregation. The latter had been drawn together by the sound of Edwin's agonizing cries, and although Edwin could not understand what she was saying, for she was speaking in the German language, he was sure that she was telling them of God's wonderful power and goodness to him. And as he looked about him, he wondered why the people and trees had never appeared so beautiful to him before.

When the curiosity of the crowd had been satisfied and Edwin was once more on the outside of the tent, he was surprised to find that all nature was beautified and that the songs of the birds were sweeter and more thrilling than he had ever known them to be. In recovering from his state of rapture, he realized that only one half day of the camp-meeting was over and that he not only was converted but had all the remainder of the meeting before him. It was his blessed privilege to enjoy the remainder of the time with all the rest of God's good people.

Such had been his breakfast, and when the meeting-bell began to ring, Edwin did not look for his interpreter; for he felt that since he had received that for which he had come to the meeting, it was no longer necessary to trouble Mr. Hass.

The all-seeing Father not only had understood Edwin's ignorance and taught him his need, but had helped him to know how to approach his throne in an acceptable manner.

"For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper ... and precious shall their blood be in his sight" (Psa. 72:12, 13).

CHAPTER XVIII. DISCOVERS THE EXISTENCE OF GOD'S WORD

O precious volume! only in thy pages
We read the duty of all our race;
Only thy sunbeams, shining through the ages.
Reveal the wonders of saving grace.

—Daniel S. Warner.

Edwin had heard that there was such a book as the Bible, but that the Bible was a good book or of any more value in the world than the almanac or the “Book of Black Arts,” that had been in the home of Mrs. Fitch, had never been suggested to his mind. So of course he did not know that the Bible was God's great message to the world. It was therefore a wonderful thought when the truth first dawned upon his mind.

The little group that had been present at the time of his conversion were the first to explain the matter to him, and when Mrs. Kauffman added, in words that he could understand, that the Bible contained the story of Jesus, she found that he had never heard that there had ever been any one on the earth by that name. It was a long story, but after hearing a little, Edwin was anxious to hear the remainder, and when his kind friend had finished speaking, he asked simply, “Was Jesus God's son and yet a man just as I am?”

“Yes,” Mrs. Kauffman replied; “God made man in the first place, good and pure like himself, and he was made master of all that was in the world. In return for all these blessings, God demanded obedience and said that death to all the human race would be the penalty for his disobedience.”

Then she related that man yielded to sin and fell from the holy state in which he was created, receiving as his penalty eternal banishment from God's presence, and she went on to tell of the provision that had been promised at the time of the fall.

“For more than four thousand years,” she said, “this awful blight of sin continued; then Jesus, the provision that God had promised, came into the world to live a life of perfect obedience to God. And God sent to all the world by his Son the message that any and all who would follow Christ's example and live as he had told them at the first to live, would be forgiven and with his Son would become a part of his own great family (Heb. 5: 8,9). God in this way formed a bridge across the gulf that had been fixed between the sinner and his Maker. Now it is possible for any one who will, to cross the bridge and to enter heaven, but they must prepare for the journey before they die.”

“Is all that in the Bible?” Edwin asked in astonishment; “and is it so that God's Son once lived upon this earth?”

“Yes, Edwin, it is true,” Mrs. Kauffman answered. Then she read and explained Heb. 1:1–3 and 5:8, 9: “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.”

She then told him that the place where Jesus had lived was far away from there, but that it was a country similar to our own. As she continued to talk about Jesus' home, Edwin exclaimed, “Oh, if only I could some time go and see that place for myself!” But when he thought of what such a trip would cost, his hope of ever getting there was destroyed. As Edwin considered the wonderful love that had prompted God and his Son to make so great a sacrifice for men and women who had been disobedient to his laws and commands, his heart was flooded with love for his Creator, and he cried:

“I knew that God must have made some way for man to know where he was going to land in eternity! Jesus is that provision. I can see it all now, and the assurance that we are going aright is that we are obedient to God?” he added with a rising inflection.

“Yes, it is obedience to God,” Mrs. Kauffman explained. “But there is more to his plan than that. God wants us to love and reverence his Son for all that he has done. To do this we must ask God to forgive and to receive us

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back into his family for Jesus' sake. This is a true prayer when it comes from the heart.”

“Is that the prayer that I prayed when I was converted?” Edwin asked, remembering the three little words that he had selected from one of the prayers in Mr. Meyer's tent.

“No,” Mrs. Kauffman replied; “your prayer was different. It was really no prayer at all, but you see you did not understand these things or know how to pray. God knew what you wanted, because he understands the heart, and he knew that you would have asked for it in proper words if you could have understood.”

Both Mr. and Mrs. Kauffman were very good to Edwin; for after he had left their neighborhood, they had learned something of his worth. Every day during the meeting they endeavored in some way to help him to understand what it means to be a Christian, and some of the wonderful things that are in the Bible. Much of their effort was lost, however, because of his ignorance, but it seemed that each time he was able to grasp a new thought that would correspond and link on to his own experience.

When the last day of the camp-meeting arrived, Edwin was sorry, for he felt that it had been a good place to be; but since he had received the benefit for which he had come, he was ready to return to the farm and fulfil his agreement with Mr. Miller and do all that he could to make up for the time that he had been away at the meeting. The Kauffmans, Itterlys, and Meyers had all given him pressing invitations to visit them in their homes, and with many happy remembrances of the meeting in his mind he was soon well on his way down the dusty road in the direction of his employer's home.

Again he noted the sweet songs of the little birds, and nature seemed all aglow with her beauty and grandeur; but as before, when he was on his way to the meeting, his mind was too full of weightier things to give outside things much thought or attention.

As he passed in through the open gate, he remembered that Mrs. Kauffman had said that in a certain city not more than ten miles away a Bible could be purchased, and, knowing that Mr. Miller occasionally went to that city to do his trading, he decided to ask him to get him a copy while there.

When he reached the summer-kitchen, he found the old couple partaking of their evening meal, and when Edwin had taken his accustomed place on the end of the bench, he was asked to give an account of the meeting and to tell how he had enjoyed himself while there. It was in glowing terms that Edwin described each little detail and the effect that the entire meeting had produced in his life. When he had finished, Mrs. Miller remarked:

“I'm glad, Edwin, that you have at last found out what it means to be converted. But of course you will have to join the church. You can go with us to our church every Sunday if you want to, and after you go a while they will tell you whether they want you to become a member.”

Edwin gladly accepted the invitation, and then after telling what Mrs. Kauffman had said about the Bible, he asked Mr. Miller if he would buy him a copy the next time he went to the city. The latter said that he would do the best that he could. When the smoking-hour arrived, Edwin remained, but to visit, not to smoke. He cared no longer for his pipe, for the appetite for tobacco was all gone.

Although Edwin was disappointed a number of times because of his employer's forgetfulness to do his errand, a few weeks after the camp-meeting had closed, a little red leather pocket Testament in both the German and English languages was placed in his hand, and what a treasure it was! The price that Edwin had paid for it seemed very small indeed, but he did not know that the little volume was only a part of the wonderful book of which he had heard such thrilling accounts.

In the days that followed a great longing to read the sacred pages of his little Testament came into his heart, but even to have the little book in his possession was a great comfort, and very often he drew it from his pocket and pressed it to his heart while he was at his work.

On Sunday, Edwin never failed to go with Mr. and Mrs. Miller to the little church that was on the corner where the roads met and crossed, and he was still as earnest and anxious to learn as he had been at the camp-meeting; but the difficulty of the language was ever before him, and his extreme ignorance concerning the Bible was very noticeable.

At last when the subject concerning whether he should be accepted as a candidate for a member of their denomination arose, a lengthy discussion among the most prominent brethren followed, and it was decided in Edwin's hearing that he was far too ignorant on Bible lines ever to amount to anything among them. It would therefore, they said, be best to drop the matter at once.

“Think of it!” said one, “it doesn't stand to reason that any one with so little education and knowledge

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concerning the Bible could be so easily converted. He will be like a wave of the sea—lost and forgotten, in a very short time. Why, he can't even understand the preaching yet or the things that you try to explain to him! To my mind his case isn't worth bothering with."

After Edwin had heard this man's reasoning and had found that it was the decision of all, he was given an opportunity to speak for himself. He said:

"I'm sure that you are mistaken when you say that I will not stand. I know that I am very ignorant about what is in the Bible, but if you will just give me ten years, I will prove to you that God, who has brought me through all my past difficulties, and in spite of all my ignorance has directed me always in the right way, will never fail to teach me the next best thing to do."

After Edwin's speech it was decided that it would be all right for him to attend the meetings, but that they could not accept his name even on probation.

It was with a sad heart the following day that Edwin went about his work upon the farm. He could not understand why the brethren had doubted his ability to stand nor their reason for not allowing him the same privilege that was given to others, simply because he was ignorant and his conversion had not required so long a time as they were in the habit of allowing their more enlightened members. "God surely knew what he was doing," he reasoned, "and I believe that my life is as precious to him as that of any other man, though he may know a great deal more than I do."

All day long he was burdened and sad, and when night came, instead of resorting to the summer-kitchen as had been his habit for so long, he went to his room immediately after the evening chores were done. Falling upon his knees and taking from his pocket his little red Testament, he opened it and laid it upon the chair before him. Then as tears blinded his eyes, he buried his face in his hands and, bending reverently over the little volume, made his request known to God.

"O God!" he cried, not caring by whom he was heard, "you who have been so faithful to me in the past, in helping me out of all my difficulties, help me now! I have learned that this little book is to make me know what you want me to do, so help me to be able to read what is in it."

To Edwin this task was no greater for him than others had been that he had mastered, and with perfect faith, believing that God would open his understanding sufficiently for him to comprehend the meaning of all that he needed to know, he began the work of learning what he should have known many years before.

With his finger Edwin carefully traced in several words the outline of the letters, until suddenly a few of the characters that he had learned from the school-teacher when, in his early childhood days, he was sent to school as protector of his younger cousins, returned to his mind, and although they had been meaningless then and had been long since forgotten, they corresponded perfectly with those before him. Thus he continued to labor long into the night, and during the days and evenings that followed, whenever there was a moment to spare, a moment that he could feel was his own, he endeavored to locate the same letters in other words. But although he could locate several of the letters, he did not know their names.

Later on, after the corn-husking was done, Mr.

Miller decided that he could get along with the work by himself, and Edwin began looking for another place. When the word became circulated that Edwin was wanting a job, several opportunities to get into good families were offered him, but he would decide on none of them until he had spent a few weeks in visiting the kind friends whom he had met at the camp-meeting.

During Edwin's stay with Mr. and Mrs. Miller, Edwin had learned to respect them very highly, and their kindness and sympathy meant very much to him, but he felt that he was sadly misunderstood by them both and that their judgment was not altogether good. He was sad, too, because of the attitude of the church-members toward him, but his only thought was to prove to all that he was sincere, and although so coldly held off by some he continued to attend the meetings regularly.

On the morning of his departure, Mrs. Miller in her motherly way invited him to visit them occasionally, and after thanking them kindly for all their interest in him, Edwin left for the home of Mr. and Mrs. Kauffman. Frank Kauffman was at his mother's home when Edwin arrived, and when he saw the welcome that she gave to the one whom she had so severely condemned, because of the influence she was afraid he might have upon her son, he could not help smiling. He had heard that Edwin had given up the use of tobacco, and it was not long until he learned from Edwin himself his reasons for doing so. Frank was much impressed by the story and felt that perhaps

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Edwin was right about the matter, and he would have been glad to give up the use of tobacco himself, but the power of habit was great, and the poisonous nicotine was so working in his system that his strength of decision was limited.

Edwin's stay with the Kauffman's was prolonged to several months; for these people, finding that Edwin was so anxious to learn to read his Bible, began at the foundation and taught him both the English and the German alphabets and instructed him how to use them in forming words. Until then Edwin had not understood the difference in the languages, and, finding that the words used in prayer and preaching, were not a heavenly language as he had supposed, but were meant for any one to speak, he decided at once to master them both. He reasoned that what he could not comprehend in the one language he might in the other, and his progress in the undertaking was so rapid that it was marvelous.

When he learned that the Bible was in two parts—a New and an Old Testament—and that his little red-covered book was only the New, he longed for the complete volume and was soon in possession of one.

“Hear me speedily, O Lord: my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit. Cause me to hear thy loving-kindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee” (Psa. 143: 7, 8).

CHAPTER XIX. DEVOTION AND WORKS

Faith builds a bridge across the gulf of death,
To break the shock blind nature can not shun,
And lands thought smoothly on the further shore.

—Young.

During his visit in the Kauffman home, Edwin learned what was meant not only by prayer but by a life of true devotion, for Mrs. Kauffman was a very spiritual woman. She was sorry for the decision of the brethren to refuse Edwin even a trial for membership in the church, but she endeavored to encourage him in the belief that all would come out right in the end, and Edwin very courageously said that he was sure it would. And the fact that he was misunderstood by some did not lessen his confidence in the brethren nor cool his intense love for humanity. Neither did it dampen his desire to be a blessing to mankind, and so great did the latter longing become that he began to seek for opportunities of doing good.

By living in such sweet communion with God he learned a great many lessons that were very helpful to him in different ways; and with a little help from his kind friends he learned to read in such a marvelously short time that it was plain to all that God was truly his teacher.

One day while Edwin was quietly meditating upon the wonderful things that he had read within the Bible, he compared them with the experiences through which he had passed, and he marveled at the manner in which they corresponded. Then, while thinking of what had taken place at the camp meeting, he remembered his mother and his surprize at seeing her at such a place. "Could it be possible," he said to Mrs. Kauffman, "that my mother's reason for attending the meeting was that she was interested in spiritual things?" His friends thought it was probable, and then Edwin said that if such was the case he would like to tell her about some of the wonderful things God had done for him. In this Mrs. Kauffman encouraged him, and she helped him to find several appropriate passages of Scripture that he could read to his mother, and when he went she bade him Godspeed.

Edwin had not visited his mother since the time when her proud heart was crushed because of the shame and disgrace that had been forced upon her through Elmer's actions. Since then many things had taken place in her life that had caused her to change some of her ways, but the "faith" that she claimed to have taken up and that had encouraged her to attend the camp-meeting was only a "try to do better" plan.

When Mrs. Fischer saw her son approaching the house, she at once remembered his ignorance at the camp-meeting, the ridicule created by his queer actions, and the hard feelings that, in her embarrassment, she had felt toward him; still, she endeavored to treat him kindly, and at first she permitted him to talk freely about his experiences before and after the meeting. But when in conclusion, he said, "Mother, can't you see how necessary it is for any one to be converted, or to be born again into God's great family?" she exclaimed: "Oh, such trash! I won't listen any longer! I've committed no sins that I need to repent of. *My 'faith' is good enough for me, and I don't expect to know everything about heaven in this life. The church that I have joined teaches that if you do as well as you can you'll go to heaven anyway, and after you have pledged any church that you will stand by it and then you go and join another and take up their 'faith,' you become a shame and disgrace to the church to which you did belong.*"

"Yes, but you may not get to heaven if you do not anxiously seek to know the right way," Edwin said, and the earnestness in his voice could be felt.

Then opening his Bible, which was already well marked, he read: "Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets: she crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, saying, How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. Because I have called and ye refused.... I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh.... Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord; they would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy

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them. But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil” (Prov. 1:20–33).

That his mother was surprized to hear Edwin reading the words was very plain to be seen, but her spirit was still proud, and she cried: “No, Edwin, I won't listen to any more. Those words are in the Old Testament, I know, but they were written for the people who lived at that time, and not for us. The New Testament is for us.”

“Well, then, Mother,” Edwin said, quickly turning to the third chapter of St. John, “let me read to you something from the New Testament, some of the words of God's own Son to all the world. Jesus was talking to a man who was a teacher and very wise, but he told him that the only way to get to heaven was to be born again, for he said: 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered.... God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.' And now, Mother,” Edwin said, “here is the part that I want you to listen to especially: 'He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.'”

The reading of the last scripture had been more difficult for Edwin, but he had reviewed the words so often under the direction of Mr. Kauffman, who had taken a keen interest and delight in the manner in which Edwin was learning, that he was able to read them both plainly and distinctly. But still his mother said:

“That, too, was long ago. Things are different today. You needn't try to tell me that what the people did and said at that time were anything like what they say and do today.”

Then as Edwin attempted to explain, she said:

“No, Edwin, you must not say anything more to me about these things. I'm satisfied to let well enough alone; and if I'm contented, you ought to be.”

Seeing that his mother was determined to continue in her uncertainty, Edwin next thought of his own brother and sister in the flesh, whom he had never seen. Through his mother he had found out where they were living, and although it was a long distance to their homes and they were as strangers to him, he decided to visit them and at once set out upon the journey.

The brother had heard through the mother some things about Edwin's stupidity, as she called his extreme ignorance (for which she was herself to blame), and he had also heard of Edwin's willingness to suffer cruel punishments and unjust blame. “But,” the mother had also said, “with all his block-headedness, he has never done anything to compare with what Elmer, his cousin, has done to make me ashamed.”

It was therefore with real interest and curiosity that the brother received him into his home, and he was shown much kindness by his brother's wife. When Edwin explained how wondrously he had been led and taught of God, the brother was astonished, for he could see that all Edwin had said was very reasonable and sensible, and he wondered why he had never thought to search out some of the things for himself. The brother's wife as well was greatly interested, and when Edwin read and explained the verses from his well-marked Bible, they were both convicted and exclaimed:

“O Edwin! what must we do to get this great salvation?”

Immediately Edwin turned to Acts 16: 30, 31, and read the jailer's words to Paul and Silas, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” and Paul's answer, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shall be saved, and thy house.” He then explained that Jesus came to seek and save the people from their sins and that he went about preaching the glad tidings of salvation, after which he gave his life upon the cross that their salvation might be possible.

Next he read Isa. 55: 6, 7: “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”

“To forsake sin,” Edwin explained, “is to stop doing anything that one knows to be wrong, like stealing, lying, swearing,” and he named over a number of other things. “By the power of the will it is possible for any who have

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formed such habits to stop doing the things that are wrong, but before a person can really be delivered from sin, he must be very sorry for having disobeyed God. That sorrow is repentance if the person is sorry enough to ask God to forgive him and to cleanse him from all unrighteousness.”

Edwin did not tell them that it had always been his desire to do to others as he would be done by, for to him this had been only his privilege and duty to mankind, and he fully realized that before he was converted he was, with all the rest of humanity, in a sense separated from God. Instead he said:

“You must think of God’s goodness,” and he read: “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” And then he read Heb. 10:39: “But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.”

“O Edwin!” his brother cried, “why is it that we have never heard of these things before? Surely God has sent you to us.”

As a large revival was being held in the city at that time, they all decided to attend, and at the meeting and with Edwin’s help the brother and his wife were gloriously saved.

When the meeting was over, Edwin was urged to prolong his stay. This he did, and he spent a few weeks very profitably in helping his relatives to become established and to learn how to study the Bible that had so long been only an ornament in their home.

His sister also was deeply impressed with the wonderful things that God had done for Edwin, but she was the mother of several small children, and her life was such that she thought that she was unable to make the necessary sacrifices. Edwin read to her from the seventh chapter of Matthew these words of Jesus: “Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.” Then he explained to her about the house that fell, but she only answered: “No, Edwin, it is of no use. I can not live it now,” and thus Edwin left her feeling her need but unwilling to yield.

From his sister’s home Edwin returned to Mrs. Kauffman’s, where he was again treated with the greatest affection and respect. As he told of his experiences, his kind friends were deeply interested as well as astonished at the manner in which he had succeeded in his brother’s home, and Mrs. Kauffman thanked God for so wonderfully answering prayer.

Learning that Edwin was again in the neighborhood, the farmers with whom he was acquainted did their best to engage him to work for them, but to all he said: “No, not yet. I have not satisfied my mind. I am still a guest in the home of Mrs. Kauffman, and since they are satisfied to have me stay, I think that there must be more things that God would teach me from his Word, so I will study my Bible for a while longer.”

Baptism was the next subject that bothered him. During his recent visit with his mother he had learned from her that, as an infant, before he was taken to the poorhouse, he was baptized; but he had read in his Bible, “He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). “No infant could believe or reason anything about the Lord Jesus,” he told Mrs. Kauffman, and he asked her advice about having the work done again.

“You had better go to your minister and ask him what he thinks,” Mrs. Kauffman said. Edwin improved the very first opportunity, which happened to be the following Sunday immediately after the morning service.

Replying to him, the minister asked:

“Don’t you think the baptism in your infancy amounted to anything?”

“I don’t know,” Edwin answered cautiously. “That is what I came to see you about. The Bible says, ‘He that believeth and is baptized,’ and I’m sure that I didn’t know enough at that time to ‘believe’ anything, and the way that I understand that verse is that I am to be baptized after I am converted.”

“Well, then,” said the minister, “if you do not feel satisfied, I will, at some convenient season, attend to the matter.”

For several weeks Edwin anxiously waited for the “convenient season”; then on entering the chapel one Sunday morning, he noticed on a stand beside the altar a large bowl of water, and he wondered if it was in any way connected with his baptism. He was not kept long in suspense, for immediately after the morning exercises he was requested by the minister to come forward and to take his seat upon the altar. Edwin quickly obeyed, and the minister, after a short ceremony, took the bowl in his hand and with his fingers sprinkled a little of the water upon Edwin’s head.

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To Edwin it was a very solemn affair, for he was very sincere. At the close of the ordinance the minister said, "Now, whether you consider that your other baptism amounted to anything or not, I hope that your doubts will be forever gone." At the time Edwin thought they were, but later on when he read, "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead" (Col. 2:12), he thought that to be really baptized meant more than merely to have a little water sprinkled upon his head; and when he considered that John baptized people in the river Jordan and that Jesus, his example, walked down into the water, saying, "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness," and that when Jesus came up out of the water the voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:15, 17), he felt that he should like to go down into the water as though he had been buried from the sight of the world just as his Savior had done.

As was his custom when perplexed over such problems, he went to Mrs. Kauffman that he might have the benefit of her judgment. She advised him to go to a body of people that believed in immersion and be baptized by their minister. Edwin followed her direction, and as soon as possible he was put under the water as a testimony to the world that he was dead to sin.

Thus, day by day God in his wisdom continued to be Edwin's teacher in the deep as well as in the simple things of life until the wisdom of the poorhouse waif was in many things far beyond that of many who professed to be leaders of men.

"For his God doth instruct him to discretion and doth teach him" (Isa. 28: 26).

"Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart." "Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who is devoted to thy fear" (Psa. 119: 33, 34, 38).

CHAPTER XX. CALLED TO SERVICE

Walk

Boldly and wisely in that light thou hast;
There is a hand above will help thee on.

—Bailey.

When Edwin heard of the heathen in other lands across the sea, a great longing to help them to understand God's love and to bear them the message of Jesus' mission to the earth came into his heart. So great did this longing become that he spoke of it to the brethren at the church, but he was told that it would be better to first prove his calling at home, for there were plenty of heathen all around him needing his help.

Without criticism or feelings that he had been dealt with unwisely, he accepted this judgment as proper and right, and at once began by seeking for opportunity to talk about his experiences with both neighbors and friends. In this way he made his efforts for doing good to count, and he became personally acquainted with the greater part of the community. Mr. and Mrs. Kauffman, seeing Edwin's zeal and courage, were surprized and pleased, and, taking note of the good he was accomplishing, offered him the privilege of holding prayer-meetings in their home. Soon others gave him the same opportunity, and it was evident that God was using him even to the saving of a few souls.

As Edwin continued to grasp every opportunity for usefulness, the brethren who had refused to accept him as a candidate for membership in their church, became anxious to have him enroll, but Edwin told them: "No, my ten years are not yet up. You must remember that I told you I wanted that long to prove to you that I could stand and that I am truly converted."

When Edwin felt that he could spare the time from studying the Bible and doing spiritual work, to resume his labors as a farm-hand, he found that it required no effort to find a place, as all seemed to know of his ability and willingness to work. There was even contention among the farmers as to who would be so fortunate as to secure his services.

Finding out the true state of affairs, Edwin was pleased, and he decided to divide his time among them. In this way he was able to enter other homes and lives and to help them spiritually as well as with his labor. But through all this service Edwin was not without various trials and tests; but in everything he was able to give God thanks and to draw useful lessons. "For thou, O Lord, hast proved us: thou hast tried us as silver is tried." (Psa. 16:10).

After a time Edwin felt that he would like for at least a while to try city life. Finding a man that was engaged in peddling spring-water, he agreed to work for him for a share of the income. The business did not prove to be a profitable one for Edwin, but by very careful management he was able to make both ends meet. But when he had met his necessary expenses, he had nothing left that he could use for the work of the Lord.

This soon became a great trial to Edwin, and when one Sunday there was a call (in the new church he was attending in the city) for a liberal amount of money, he felt that he must subscribe twenty-five dollars even though he did not know how he could ever pay it. He believed that in some way or other he would be able to raise the money even though the time allowed for paying it was only one month. "God will help me in this thing as he has helped me through all my other difficulties," he said as he set out on Monday morning in his covered wagon to dispose of his bottled water.

At first the sales were as they had been on other days, but along in the afternoon they began to increase, and when night came and he had time to figure up the amount of the water sold, he found that there was over and above all his expenses five dollars extra to his credit. For four successive days this increase of sales continued, until he had four five-dollar bills laid aside.

On Friday morning Edwin started with a glad heart; for he thought, "If only I succeed today as well as I have been doing all week, by this evening I shall have the amount I subscribed." He expressed his gratitude in thanksgiving and praise to God. To his great disappointment, that day the extra amount of water was not sold, and on Saturday and Sunday he did not peddle. Climbing into his covered wagon filled with bottles, he started out for his boarding-place; but he was not in the least discouraged, for he was sure that the remainder of the money would be raised in some unexpected manner before the month was up.

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Scarcely had Edwin dismissed the matter from his mind when he came to an electric-car crossing. It was a dangerous place, for a few feet above the crossing the track was completely hidden from view by a large ledge of rock and a sudden curve. At this place Edwin always listened carefully for a signal. Hearing nothing and knowing that the car had been due fully ten minutes before, he was soon driving upon the track without any thought of danger, as he had so often done before. His surprize was therefore complete when, just as the back wheels of the wagon were dropping heavily over the last rail, there was a sudden breeze and whiz came the car around the curve. No warning whatever had been given, and a second later Edwin found himself among the legs and hoofs of the faithful animal that he had been driving.

It was indeed a narrow escape, and as Edwin crept from his dangerous position he found that not only his horse but his wagon and load of bottles were upside down and that the conductor and motorman were by his side inquiring of him how badly he was hurt.

Edwin himself was uninjured, and after the harness had been loosened, the horse was able to rise, and when the wagon and bottles were examined, it was found that nothing was at all harmed. But before Edwin was again on his seat in the wagon, the conductor had taken his name and address.

As he drove away from the scene of the accident Edwin was rejoicing in the fact that he had escaped so well, and with no thought of ever hearing any more about the affair he was soon putting his things away for the night. In the morning, therefore, he was greatly surprized when he was called to the door and by the same conductor that had the evening before taken his name and address was handed an envelope and told that the contents were his because of the accident that had occurred the evening before at the crossing. Edwin tried to explain that no harm had been done to anything, but the conductor replied that the blame was his because he had given no signal. "But," he continued, "it will always be a mystery in my mind how such an accident could occur without a single injury to anything."

Then the conductor went away, and when Edwin opened the envelope, he found that it contained just five dollars, the exact amount that he needed to complete his purpose—money. One week out of the four had not yet passed, and yet he had the full amount of his obligation. And when, on Sunday morning, he carried the money to the church and told of the wonderful manner in which it had been supplied (for indeed it was wonderful), many marveled.

In the city Edwin continued to do all in his power for the Lord as he had done in the country, and just about two years from the time that he attended his first prayer-meeting in the home of Mrs. Miller, he received an urgent invitation from Mr. and Mrs. Kauffman to return to their home and hold a series of revival meetings; "for" said the letter, "our house and all that we possess are turned over to the Lord, and we feel that you have proved yourself sufficiently to come and be our minister."

To Edwin the privilege of holding the meeting and the confidence of these people meant very much indeed, but he still felt keenly his inability of doing anything in his own strength. To think of himself as a preacher he did not, for God at that time had not revealed to him his calling in life. Still, he submitted the matter entirely to the Lord, and when the way was opened for him to go he was glad to accept the opportunity. As a result there was a wonderful revival; for Mr. and Mrs. Kauffman did their best to have the meetings advertised, and as Edwin's present, and early history as well, was well known throughout the country, the people for miles around, many of them out of curiosity, however, came to see if what they had been hearing about Edwin as a Christian was true.

When the meeting closed, Edwin had in the minds of the people proved himself to be a real minister of the gospel, and arrangements were soon made to buy a piece of ground and to build a small meeting-house. The idea was sanctioned by Edwin, and he saw it carried into effect, but when they begged him to stay as their pastor, he refused. "It is better," he said, "for you to get some one else to be your leader until I know positively that God has set me apart for that work"; and referring them to a certain brother who claimed to be a minister, he left them in his charge and returned to the city where he had been peddling water.

Edwin's object in leaving the community in which he had been holding the meetings was that he might have a better opportunity to know positively whether or not God had really called him to preach the gospel. His first duty, therefore, after arriving in the city was to go to the minister for advice and counsel. After confiding his desire to work for the Lord and the manner in which he had been used in the meeting, he was told: "There are many who mistake their calling in life. Sometimes the enemy of souls puts such feelings in the heart to mislead honest souls, or to get them out of God's order." And the minister related an instance of a young man who had

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once come to him just as Edwin had come for advice. "Seeing his earnestness, I gave the fellow a chance to prove himself, but it was found that he had no gift or ability at all to teach. In fact, he did so poorly in all public work that he was forced to confess that he was really mistaken. After that he never wanted to preach again, and it was even difficult for him to testify."

"Well," Edwin answered, "if it is the enemy in my case, I will have no trouble to get rid of this feeling, for I shall only be too glad to know that I am misled. All I want to know is what God wants me to do. If he doesn't want me to preach, that is the last thing I would care to do."

From that moment Edwin ignored the thought of preaching, and while he applied himself to his manual labor, he endeavored to forget all about his usefulness during the revival. And as he was thus striving with himself, the minister in whom Edwin had confided, desiring to know if there was anything to Edwin's convictions, paid a visit to the community in which Edwin had held the revival. Several months had passed, but the fire was still burning in the hearts of the people (although the one left in charge of them had done more harm than good), and as the minister listened to the glowing accounts of Edwin's works among them and the good that had been accomplished through his labors, he was forced to change his mind. "God's hand must surely be on that man for service," was his secret thought, and on the Sunday morning following his tour of investigation he brought the matter before the church.

Nearly the entire congregation with the exception of Edwin were present, and as the minister related carefully and in detail what had taken place recently in the community where Edwin had been so "strangely" converted and had formerly made his home, he added that only the wisdom and power of the Holy Spirit could have enabled him to accomplish such a work. "There is no doubt now in my mind," he continued, "that God's hand is upon the young man for the ministry; for his moral character is without spot and blameless in the eyes of all who know him, and he is well known and respected throughout the country for this and because of his unusual conversion."

In that meeting it was decided that it would be best to have another talk with Edwin before he was encouraged to preach. When the minister went to him, it was with these words:

"Edwin, do you still feel your desire to preach the gospel?"

"Oh yes," Edwin answered. "Since talking with you, I have tried in every way to get rid of the thought of preaching, if it was not God's will for me to preach, but the burden is only growing heavier. I have submitted the matter to you and the church, however, to decide for me, and I know that God knows the same; so I can quietly trust him until you tell me what you think would be best for me to do."

"Are you still fully agreed to allow the church to consider the matter for you?" Edwin was then asked.

"Oh yes, sir!" he quickly replied. "I have submitted everything into your hands, for I want to know just what you consider is best. I will be perfectly satisfied either way it may go. I am not anxious; for I know that if God really wants me to preach he will take care of it all and will work everything out in his own good time and way. If he does not work it out so that I am considered capable of preaching, then I shall take it for granted that it was a suggestion of the enemy, and I will take a vehement stand against those feelings as an imposition of the enemy. Now, I consider what I have said is sufficient, and it will be no trial for me, for I shall feel that I am in God's order, and I care for nothing else."

When the minister heard Edwin's humble answer and noted his willingness to allow God to have his perfect way with him and compared his manner with the many remarkable reports to which he had listened concerning his experiences, he was more convinced than ever that God's hand for service was surely upon this devoted young man. But he felt that since the thing had been left for the church to decide, he must in Edwin's absence once more place the subject before the congregation.

The time chosen was the following Sunday. When the minister asked for an expression from the people concerning Edwin's case, with one united vote they said that they were perfectly agreed to accept Edwin as a minister, provided he could prove his gift. It was therefore decided that since they had never heard him preach, they would call him in and let him deliver the morning sermon; and severe as was the test, it was carried out.

When Edwin a few minutes later entered the room and looked over that large audience, he had not the faintest idea of preaching to the people. His only thought was to learn what their decision had been, and his surprise was therefore complete when the almost painful hush that prevailed the room was broken by the request that he take the pulpit and assume full charge of the meeting that morning.

Had it not been that Edwin already knew the Lord to be an unfailing source of strength and an able helper in

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every time of need, his courage might have failed him, for upon the rostrum were several ministers and gospel workers. Instead, he instantly submitted the matter to the Lord, and, forgetting about his ignorance, he rejoiced that he could have an opportunity to glorify God and took his position between God and poor blighted humanity.

“Let us pray,” were his first words, and, falling upon his knees, he poured out his heart in fervent prayer to God, asking him for help and divine guidance in this, his great hour of need. While still upon his knees he was given a text, and, rising to his feet, he opened his Bible, turned to Luke 7:47, and read, “Her sins, which were many, are forgiven; for she loved much.”

Then as he explained the meaning of the words, his eyes became blinded by tears. As he lost sight of his audience, the Holy Spirit came to his rescue, and as the words poured forth from his mouth, it was evident to all that the sermon was given him by divine power. So lost to himself and the opinions of others did he become that he seemed to be swimming out into the vast ocean of God's boundless love.

That God was glorified and his name honored it is needless to say, and from that time Edwin was accepted without question as a gifted and qualified minister of the gospel, and his calls both in his home community and in other places were many. He was even preferred above other able ministers because of his strange and wonderful experiences.

As Edwin continued to preach, he remembered how hard it had been for him to understand that there were other languages than his own mother tongue, and he prepared himself to preach not only in the German and the English languages, but in Pennsylvania Dutch as well.

While studying his Bible he found that there was even healing virtue in prayer. In James 5:14, 15, he read, “Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.” In his own case he had found this to be true. God had not only healed his soul's sickness but also removed his bodily afflictions. Finding that he could receive such instant relief for himself, he was soon exercising his gift for others, and many were healed through his earnest prayers.

In one place where he was preaching, he made his home with a family in which there were two small children, a girl three years old and a boy about one year younger. To these children Edwin soon became greatly attached, and their love for him was no less than his own. Once when Edwin was away for a few days holding a series of meetings, the little boy became seriously ill with pneumonia. The parents, who knew the worth of prayer in time of sickness, took his case at once to their Great Physician; but although they prayed very earnestly, their prayers seemed to be of no avail, for the child grew constantly worse. A number of the brethren were repeatedly called in to pray for little Charley, but the child grew constantly worse until it seemed that it would be a question only of a few hours until he would be called into eternity. Finally the mother said, “If Edwin were only here, I believe that the child would be healed,” but Edwin did not even know that little Charley was ill.

At last the parents, while gazing down upon the little unconscious form burning with fever, gave up all hope of his recovery, consecrated their child afresh, and submitted their own wishes in the matter to the One who had lent them the darling. Then they seemed to see upon the fevered brow the angel touch of death, and the troubled spirit of little Charley, moaning piteously, appeared to be preparing for its upward flight to a better world.

Feeling that there was nothing more that they could do, the brethren had taken their departure, but only a short distance from the house they met Edwin returning unexpectedly from his trip. Had Edwin endeavored to do so, he could not have told them why he was coming just at that hour, but something seemed to bid him hasten, for his presence was needed. From the brethren he learned of the child's illness, and, hurrying into the house, he was soon beside the parents, who were still weeping over their little one.

As Edwin looked down upon the face of the one whom he so dearly loved, the words, “The prayer of faith shall save the sick” (Jas. 5:16), appeared to be all that he could see or hear. He went hurriedly to the door and called loudly to the brethren and bade them return at once. Fortunately, the latter had been walking slowly, for their hearts were troubled because of their neighbor's distress, so they heard the sound of Edwin's voice calling to them, and they immediately retraced their steps.

The little group, with the addition of Edwin, once more gathered around the child's crib. As Edwin knelt he clasped his own hands and raised them before him; then with upturned face and pleading tones, he asked God, for Jesus' sake, to heal little Charley.

For several minutes he prayed, and in his earnestness his body swayed backward and forward, and tears

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flowed freely over his cheeks. When the prayer was ended, and Edwin opened his eyes to look about him, to his great surprize and joy he saw before him upon the floor the little child with his hands clasped and raised as Edwin's had been and his large blue eyes turned heavenward. He too was praying, trying to imitate Edwin's example. At the very first of the prayer when Edwin's voice arose, the child regained consciousness and, seeing his friend upon his knees beside him, he had begged his mother to allow him to "pway" too. Lifting him tenderly from the crib, the mother had placed him carefully upon the floor. From that moment little Charley was well, and soon called for some food.

At another time, when Edwin was holding a meeting about seventy-five miles from this home, the little girl became seriously ill. "Have Edwin pway! have Edwin pway!" was all they could hear from little Charley; so a letter bearing the news and telling the nature of the child's illness was posted as soon as possible. When the word reached Edwin, he went to his room and there remained before the Lord until he felt that his little friend was healed. When another letter came from the mother, it brought the word that the little girl was healed, and the day and hour that the work was done agreed perfectly with the time when God had witnessed to Edwin in his room that the child was healed.

A few days after the healing of the little girl Edwin received still another letter. This time it was from the wife of a certain man for whom Edwin had worked and whose confidence he had won before God called him to preach. "Please pray for my husband," the letter ran. "He is in the hospital with a cancerous sore upon his right leg. The doctors give him no hopes that he will recover, but we have not forgotten how often God has heard your prayers, and we believe that if you will pray for him he will recover. There is no earthly remedy that can help him."

Edwin remembered the old gentleman well, and he went out in the woods where he could be alone and prayed earnestly a long time for the man, but he received no answer or impression that the work was done. For three successive days Edwin went alone to the woods to pray. On the third day he felt that the man would recover, and immediately he mailed a letter to the lady to that effect.

When the message was received and read to the sick husband, the faith of both him and his wife were increased and strengthened, and they too believed that he would soon be well. From that very hour there was a change in the man's condition, and the sore began at once to heal. When the nurses came to dress the sore, they were astonished at the change, and the doctors confessed that it was a mystery too deep for them to fathom, but to Edwin it was only another blessing from the Lord.

"And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease" (Matt. 10: 1).

"For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.... How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Rom. 10:11-15).

CHAPTER XXI. DISCOVERS GOD'S CHURCH

O Church of God, thou spotless bride.
On Jesus' breast secure!
No stains of sin in thee abide.
Thy garments all are pure;
Of unity and holiness
Thy gentle voice doth sing,
Of purity and lowliness
Thy songs of triumph ring.
—Clara M. Brooks.

A number of years had passed since Edwin began preaching, and in the suburbs of a large city where the houses were numbered in groups of twos and threes, there was a certain quiet dwelling that could not help attracting the notice of the passerby; for the place, surrounded as it was by a pretty grassy lawn with a few choice flowers scattered here and there, disclosed the fact that the occupants of the cottage were lovers of the beautiful.

Through an open window a song of praise was floating, and upon the face of the fair and noble young woman within could be read happiness, contentment, and love. She was busying herself about the stove, for she was Edwin's wife, and she was preparing her husband's evening meal. God not only had raised the poorhouse waif above his difficulties, but had given him in addition a good Christian companion to comfort and encourage him.

A smile and a cheerful word were Edwin's greeting when he returned from the post-office. Seating himself in the large comfortable chair that had been placed by loving hands close beside the window, he began at once to examine the mail. There were several letters, which were each read in turn; but when Edwin came to the paper, his face wore a puzzled expression, for the latter was not his own.

"I guess a mistake has been made somehow at the post-office," he said, "for this paper belongs to another person; but I see that the wrapper is loose, and I suppose it will be all right for me to slip it off and look the paper over, for that's what I hope the other fellow will do with mine." Then as he proceeded to unfold the large religious periodical, he remarked, "I haven't yet found a paper that can come up to our own, and we can rejoice tonight because whoever has it will have something good to read."

At the very beginning of their home life, Edwin, feeling that some good religious paper ought to come regularly to their home, had chosen from a bundle of sample copies the paper he considered best suited for their purpose, and for some time it had been making its weekly visits to their home. Since then it had been his custom to read aloud either from it or the Bible while his wife was busy about her household duties. In this way they could talk over together the subjects that puzzled them while these were still fresh in their minds.

As Edwin's eyes fell upon the title of the new paper that he had just brought and found that the name of the paper contained three words and that the middle word was Gospel, he said, "Well, it at least has a good name, and now we'll see if it teaches what its title indicates."

The heading of an article that read, "God's Word as Our Guide," next attracted his attention; and when he began reading, his wife left her partly prepared supper to come and look over his shoulder.

"As trusting children of God, we naturally look to him for guidance; for he has said, 'I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way that thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.' When two paths lie before us and we know not which one to take, we ask God to make known to us the way that he would have us take. God is willing to do this. He is glad to have us follow where he leads."

"That is very good," Edwin's wife remarked.

Drawing a chair beside his own for her, Edwin said:

"Never mind the supper. Sit down, and we will eat later."

Then he read: "In Exod. 19:5 God says that his people will be a peculiar treasure unto him above all people. This great favor is bestowed upon all those who obey his voice. When we see how much people have cost him, we can comprehend, in a measure, how precious we must be in his sight. Naturally we value anything by its cost. If this rule be applied here, truly God must place great value upon his people; for he spared not his own Son, but

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delivered him up for us all. He must therefore estimate our value by his Son.”

Next he read under the heading God's Church: “No one thing on earth is complete enough in its nature to fully represent the church of God. Neither is the human mind able to grasp singly a name that would express every feature of the church. For this reason God has made use of many relative names, such as kingdom, Zion, holy city, house, body of Christ, bride of Christ, family, sheepfold, vine and its branches, and other similar illustrations.

“First, let us consider the word 'church.' It means a congregation of people separated from the world (John 15:19). Next, God's church is characterized by being separate from the world and all its evils (2 Cor. 6:14), and Christ is the head (Eph. 1:22), the door (John 10:9), the foundation (1 Cor. 3:11), and the chief corner-stone (Eph. 2:19,20).”

For a moment the paper dropped idly in Edwin's hands, for the truth of God was streaming down into his heart. Ever since his talk in the summer-kitchen with Mrs. Miller, when she said that she was converted at the time when she joined church and in answer to Edwin's question as to what the church was replied that the church was the little building where the roads met, he had felt that there was such a thing as “the church,” but he could not get it settled that it was the building on the corner, as Mrs. Miller had told him that it was. But whenever so situated that he could do so, he had continued to be a regular attendant of every religious service either at that place or in some adjoining community. In his heart he felt that as the meaning of eternity, prayer, and conversion had been revealed to his entire satisfaction, God would in his own good time help him to discover the true meaning of the word “church.”

Presently he read under another heading: “The gospel of salvation that Christ preached penetrated the dark places of sin and idolatry like sun rays driving back the darkness of night. Wickedness in the hearts and lives of men gave way to grace and truth. Christ then established his church. True holiness adorned her fair brow. Unity and purity were her chief characteristics. Of her it is said, 'Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee' (S. of Sol. 4:7). And again, 'My dove, my undefiled, is but one' (S. of Sol. 6:9). 'He [Christ] is the head of the body, the church ... that in all things he might have preeminence' (Col. 1:18).

“Having purchased, founded, and built the church, God claims exclusive right to the government. She is not 'our church,' but 'God's building,' owned by God alone. All her members are the sons of God and bear his holy image. 'God hath set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him' (1 Cor. 12:18), for 'ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.’”

For a moment Edwin paused to meditate upon what he had read; then he continued:

“It is God himself that assigns each member his place in the church, or the body of Christ, and makes known to him what his line of spiritual work is to be—'Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing,' etc. (1 Cor. 12:27,28).

“The origin of the church is the immediate result of conversion and is inseparable from it. 'I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me ... that the world may believe that thou hast sent me' (John 17:9, 20, 21). 'As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby ... ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God.' (1 Pet. 2:2, 5, 9, 10).”

Again Edwin paused, and as the wonderful beauty and completeness of God's plan concerning his people dawned upon his mind, his large brown eyes were brightened with tears of joy, and he said to his wife:

“I believe I understand at last what is meant by 'the church.' All converted souls, both dead and alive, and of every nation or race of people in the world, make up God's church, and to become a member of the church is to be converted, or born into God's family.”

“Read on,” his wife said eagerly, and Edwin continued:

“God's people are not to forsake the assembling of themselves together to worship him (Heb. 10:25); 'for where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them.' (Matt. 18:20).

“It may be a mystery in the mind of some why we read in the Bible of churches, when God has but one church. A little attention to the word will convince any honest mind that the church of God is plural only in regard

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to its geographical location. The people in the different communities could not go up to Jerusalem in order to assemble themselves together in worship, for the distance in some instances would have been too great. Thus, it became necessary for many to form home congregations. But although they were often widely separated, the same sweet fellowship was flowing in the hearts of all, and God looked upon them all together as his church, or the body of his beloved Son. The idea in referring to the church, or the divine congregation, as a bride and wife in relation to Christ was to teach their close relationship. 'And I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord' (Hosea 2:19, 20). 'For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ' (2 Cor. 11:2). 'He that hath the bride is the bridegroom' (John 3:29). 'For thy maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called' (Isa. 54:5). 'Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints' (Rev. 19:7, 8). Since no man can rightly have more than one wife, God has but one church, and Christ is her husband."

"Wife," Edwin said, "this truly is wonderful. I see it all clearly now. God has had a purpose in keeping me from joining the little church on the corner, for I was already born into God's church when I was converted. He understood my ignorance; and although they have long since changed their minds concerning me, the ten years that I requested to prove my sincerity have shielded me from making a mistake, and my name has long ago been enrolled in heaven."

As they continued to glance over the pages of the paper, they came to a large advertisement of a camp-meeting to be held in an adjoining State. After reading the urgent invitation to all who could to come to the spiritual feast, Edwin said that he would like very much to attend that meeting. It was impossible for them to both leave at the same time, but Edwin's wife urged him to go while she remained to take care of things at home.

Before retiring that night Edwin told his companion about the first camp-meeting that he ever attended. "I know," he said, "that I was looked upon by many as a lunatic, but I'm glad that God realized and understood all about the difficulties that had surrounded my early life. And, Wife, if I had it all to do over again, I could never know more perfectly how to consecrate myself to God and to realize the completeness of his love within my heart." And thus their talk continued long into the night. Their supper had been forgotten, for they were feasting on heavenly manna.

When the time for the meeting arrived, Edwin bade his wife farewell at the station; and as it was but a few hours' ride, he was soon at his destination. His general appearance as well as his understanding of the three languages helped him to make a far better impression than he had made at the time of his conversion, but his same innocence regarding sinful pleasures was still very noticeable. From his earliest recollections in the poorhouse his desire to do right for principle's sake had never left him. This desire and God's wonderful protection had guarded him against many evils that might in later years have entangled his feet and obstructed his pathway.

What he saw and heard in the meeting was in such harmony with all that God had taught him and with what he had read in the Bible that he said, "Of a truth I have found God's church, and his people shall henceforth be my people."

He was still of the same humble, teachable spirit, and when he returned to his home, he carried many rich morsels of truth to his loving and faithful wife.

"One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph. 4: 6). "He will guide you into all truth" (John 16: 13).

CHAPTER XXII. VISITS THE POORHOUSE

I am not old—though time has set
His signet on my brow,
And some faint furrows there have met,
Which care may deepen now—
For in my heart a fountain flows,
And round it pleasant thoughts repose,
And sympathies and feelings high
Spring like the stars on evening sky.

—Benjamin.

It was evening in the late summer, and Edwin was sitting upon the porch. He had been reading, but the paper had fallen carelessly by his side. In the western sky the beautiful tints of gold were rapidly changing to the deeper shades of lavender and crimson, and as he gazed upward among the drifting clouds he seemed lost to his earthly surroundings. So enraptured and carried away with his meditation had he become that he did not notice the approach of his faithful wife as she came to take her place beside him.

“Edwin, your thoughts tonight seem to be very far away indeed,” she said. “I hope that you are thinking of things that are pleasant”

With a smile and a word of welcome, Edwin awoke from his reverie and said:

“Yes, Wife, my thoughts were pleasant. In imagination I was living over again some of my early experiences.”

“If that is the case, my dear, I greatly fear that a part of your thoughts were not as cheerful as they might have been,” his wife said as her chair was drawn closer. Taking the hand that was scarred and disfigured in several places by abuse in his childhood, she continued: “I fear that many things concerning your childhood would be very hard indeed if you were forced to live them over again even in thought.”

“Yes, Wife, that is true. There were many hard and bitter things, which are indeed painful to recall, especially those pertaining to my mother. To know that she has left this life without any hope for the future world, feeling that such was unnecessary, is hard, but it was not of her nor of her attitude toward me that I was thinking altogether. I was meditating upon my life as a whole. You see, more than fifty summers and winters have passed since I left the poorhouse in my boyhood days, and I have passed well over the best part of my life. I am now on the downward slope of life's mountain of years, and it will not be long until I shall be entering the valley of the shadow of death.”

The soft fingers of the gentle wife closed more tightly over the hand they held, as she said:

“Yes, dear, neither of us is young any more, for the silvery threads are already in our hair; but whether our years on earth are few or many, I believe that we both are ready to enter into the presence of our Lord at any moment that he should call for us.”

“I have no fears on those lines, Wife,” Edwin said, while his eyes were still upon the beautiful horizon; “for I have the sweet assurance within my soul that I am a child of God and that I am on the road that leads to eternal bliss and glory for all who are faithful unto the end. But this evening as I sat here gazing upon the beautiful handiwork of God, I wondered what could be awaiting us in that brighter and better world beyond the grave.”

“That is not for us to know now, Edwin, but some day the curtain will be drawn aside, and I am sure that the scene will be all the brighter for our having had to await God's time to reveal to us the mysteries that he has for a time thought best to veil.”

The silence that followed seemed too sacred to be broken, and the gathering darkness crept slowly about them. When the last shade of crimson had left the sky, Edwin said:

“I have been thinking of the many good things that have come to me in this life, and the manner in which they have come. It seems that God's hand has been over me ever since I can remember, and as I look back now I can see that God has always been my guide ever since I chose to do the right because it was right to do it, and that even in my extreme ignorance, when I knew nothing of God's existence, he guided my steps and enabled me to

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live a life that was upright and consistent in the eyes of the world. Then, when I had no earthly friend who was able to unfold the mysteries of the future world to my entire satisfaction, he became my teacher and taught me how to be born into his heavenly family. Surely it was only through his divine protection that I have been brought through all my perplexities to the present time. Then as I was thinking about my childhood home at the poorhouse, a great desire to visit the place again crept into my heart. It seems to me that it would be a comfort to stand once more upon the same ground and to see the scenes that I beheld at the time when I was a helpless waif."

"Fifty years, Edwin, have probably made many changes, and nothing would seem the same to you now. It could not be as it was when you were a child."

"That may all be true," Edwin replied, "and yet the more I think about it, the greater becomes my desire to go and visit the place again. If you could give your consent, I should be glad to go at once."

"That you certainly have," his wife said earnestly, adding, "I will gladly do all in my power. Edwin, to help you to prepare for the journey."

Three days later Edwin kissed his wife good-bye and with his handbag in his hand started for the railway station. After boarding the train he had a long and tiresome journey, but at last it was at an end. Alighting from the train, he stood for a moment upon the platform, trying to think which way to go. Noticing a man standing near, Edwin inquired the way to the poorhouse, and finding that the distance was not too great to walk, he was soon wending his way in that direction.

In that section of the country the land was quite level, and long before Edwin reached the place, he could see the large brick building that during his stay there was the quarters of the vicious and insane. He wondered if it was still used for the same purpose and if the same sights and sounds could be seen and heard. In a little while he was in front of the place that was his home half a century before.

Leaving the highway, he passed through the open gateway, and a picture of his uncle in the buggy with the little forlorn poorhouse waif sitting beside him arose in his mind. Looking about, he wondered if either Mr. Engler or the chore-boy Jim were in sight; but he was not long in discovering that a new manager (or "steward" as he was called) by the name of Blohm had taken Mr. Engler's place and that no one could tell him the whereabouts of Jim. He was beginning to realize that what his wife had said concerning the changes of fifty years was true, but the greatest surprise was before him.

The room in which he had been left by his heartless mother was still fresh in his memory as he had left it to go to his mother's home. When a moment later he stepped inside the up-to-date office that was in the main building, he could scarcely believe that the apartment was the same that he had known years before. Nothing, not even the couch upon which the cruel-hearted woman had laid her helpless babe, was there, for all the furniture was bright and new.

Here he met Mr. Blohm, and after introducing himself as one who had formerly been an inmate of the home, and relating some of the Lord's dealings with him, he told a little about his checkered experiences and ended the story by telling of his divine commission to preach the gospel. After all this explanation he was shown every possible favor and looked upon as an honorable guest. In fact, he was taken by Mr. Blohm himself all over the establishment.

A few of the inmates whom Edwin had known in his childhood were still living, and although they were greatly changed in appearance, he recognized them as the same persons. When he passed through the long hall, he thought of the time that he had followed Mr. Engler on his way to meet his uncle in the office, and he took a special look at the very spot where he was standing when the steward gave him the order to come.

Passing outside, he was told to examine a large marble stone that had been placed in the side of the building, and he found that all the names of the different managers, including August Engler's, were there. In another large building he found the bakery, and in this busy place the greater part of the cooking was still done. As he passed through the large double doors that divided the two apartments, everything seemed for a moment as it had been fifty years before, for just outside he could see the spot where he with other children had stood looking down into the bakery hoping to receive from some one a crust of bread or a stale biscuit.

At dinner-time he was conducted into the large dining-room. There he found many tables neatly spread with food that was good and wholesome, and it was plain to be seen that the needs of all had been taken into consideration. One special table had been assigned to the management and special workers, and it was there that Edwin was offered the seat of honor. It is needless to say that he greatly enjoyed the good, substantial meal, for he

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was very hungry after all his exertions.

After dinner he continued his investigations, and as he went about from place to place, he seemed to be living over again a part of the past. He recognized the place in which the old lady had taught him the words, "Now I lay me down to sleep," and as he remembered the comfort that he had realized while repeating them, his heart throbbed with gratitude to the One who knew and understood his childish desire to live right. At night he was shown to a clean and comfortable bed, and there he fell asleep with the past as a sacred dream.

In the morning Edwin arose feeling greatly refreshed and ready to enjoy another day in the county poorhouse, but before noon he reentered the main office and wrote a letter home to his beloved wife. It read:

"Dear Wife: Greeting in Jesus' name. I am sure that you will be anxious to hear from me and of my eventful journey. To me this has been a wonderful experience, and although it is true that everything is greatly changed, there are certain associations with every place that bring a flood of remembrances. The changes are principally in the people, however, and their manner of living, for very few buildings have been added or torn away.

"From the window where I am sitting I can see the old well where we children used to pump the cold water on our dry bread. I can also see the path leading down to the large turnip-patch, and as I watch the waving tops, I can imagine myself a child again eating the round white balls, dirt and all. I have also taken a stroll about the yard and stood upon the very spot where I used to stand when watching the queer actions of the insane and listening to their horrible sayings. The large brick building for the insane of which I have told you in the past is still as I remember it, except that it is no longer needed for the insane and the gratings from the doors and windows have all been removed. That part of the work is taken care of by the State asylum, and this building is now used for the weak and feeble-minded women. There is also another building where the men of this class are cared for by special workers.

"When it became known that a former inmate of the infirmary was a Christian and a minister of the gospel, it was considered a great honor to the establishment, and I have been requested to take charge of the morning service in the chapel next Sunday. I have already had the privilege of explaining some verses to a few, and some who knew of my early disadvantages confess with shame their own lack and wish for an experience like mine.

"Do pray for me that I may be the greatest blessing possible while I am here, and with the prayer that God will bless and keep you until we meet again, I will close."

That Edwin's visit at the poorhouse was profitable, both to himself and to others, it is needless to say. On Sunday he preached to a large audience, and he was privileged also to visit and pray for many who were unable to meet in the chapel. Thus, he who was once a poor waif in this institution was enabled to be a help and a blessing to those who were still unfortunate.

On Edwin's return home, he and his wife were in the cozy living-room until a late hour talking over the events of the past few days. Before retiring he reached for the Bible, and after he had read a chapter, they knelt together in prayer. In earnest, fervent supplication and praise he opened his heart to the One to whom he was so greatly indebted.

"O Lord," he prayed, "thou hast been so merciful to me all my days! Thy hand of love and protection hath been over me wherever I have been. Thine eye hath guided my feet past many pitfalls that I could not see. In my weakness thou hast been my strength. In my ignorance thou hast been my wisdom and teacher. When friends forsook me thou wast mindful of my needs. When others misunderstood thou hast been my Comforter. To thee, O God, I render thanks for all thy benefits, for thy saving and keeping grace that hath reached even to one so unfortunate as I. And now, O Lord, grant that all the remainder of my days, be they few or many, may be spent for thee and for others who have not yet learned to love thee and to know of thy great goodness. To thee we commit ourselves for the night and place our hands in thine for future service, knowing that when our work on earth is ended, thou wilt gather us home to live among the faithful forever. Amen."

There is little else to say of Edwin's life except that his determination is still on the increase to help men and women to understand their need of a Savior and to instruct them in the ways of the Lord. As we draw the curtain over the life of the unfortunate poorhouse waif, we should not rejoice alone because he has been able to rise above his difficulties but also because his divine Teacher will instruct all who will be taught.

"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in

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love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”