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WILLIAM HUNTER'S MOVING HYMN
By Duane V. Maxey

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INTRODUCTION

I first email-published much of the material in this article under the title: "The Hymn of the Hallowed Spot." The first article dealt exclusively with some facts and moving accounts relative to the hymn, "There is a Spot to Me More Dear." At that time, I had not yet learned the name of the hymn-writer, and with the email publication I invited any of my readers who might know the author's name and other information about the hymn to send me that information.

Warren Haskell, one of our HDM boosters and users, responded to my request and sent me the following email: "The song mentioned is found on page 274 of the 1910 Free Methodist Hymnal and lists one William Hunter as author (1811-1877). He is also listed as author of My Heavenly Home Is Bright and Fair, page 645."

This email named the hymn-writer: WILLIAM HUNTER -- but a search of the HDM Library revealed that there are at least 3 different William Hunters mentioned therein, and very possibly 4 of them! Which William Hunter was the hymn-writer? In order to discern that, I did more searching in the Library references to William Hunters, and by comparing facts and dates related to each, I have managed to identify with certainty William Hunter the Hymn-writer. See those facts presented in the first division of this revised, enlarged, and renamed article related to his moving hymn: "There is a Spot to Me More Dear."

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I.
IDENTIFYING THE HYMN-WRITER

The William Hunter who is the hymn-writer focused upon in this article was born in 1811 and died in 1877. However, there are apparently 4 different men named "William Hunter" who are mentioned in the HDM Digital Library. It is the 4th of these William Hunters listed below that is the hymn-writer involved in this article. Note with the listing of each, the information that identifies him as different from the other William Hunters:

(1) WILLIAM HUNTER (1728-1798) ONE OF WESLEY'S USEFUL PREACHERS -- This William Hunter was an English Methodist Preacher, said by J. A. Wood to have been "one of Mr. Wesley's most useful preachers who led hundreds of souls into the cleansing fountain." Wood gives part of this William Hunter's holiness testimony in "Perfect Love," hdm0181. There is a sketch of this William Hunter found in hdm0365, a volume of Thomas Jackson's "Lives of Early Methodist Preachers," and, it is this William Hunter who is mentioned by E. J. Drinkhouse in hdm0428: "William Hunter departed in 1798, in his seventy-fourth year. He was a favorite with Wesley. His labors were marked with success and his departure singularly triumphant."

(2) WILLIAM HUNTER OF BENGAL -- In hdm0085, "The Life of Adam Clarke" by John W. Etheridge, "Mr. William Hunter of Bengal" is mentioned. While it seems possible to me that this William Hunter is the same as the one listed above, I doubt that this is so, for when I searched the Thomas Jackson sketch of the above William Hunter, there was no mention at all of a town or location called "Bengal". This, of course, does not rule out all possibility that the two William Hunters are the same person, but I think it very possible, if not probable, that they are different individuals.

(3) WILLIAM HUNTER OF ASBURY'S TIME -- This William Hunter could not be the hymn-writer focused upon in this article because THIS William Hunter was already active in the Methodist ministry in America as early as 1807, -- 4 years before the hymn-writer was born. THIS 3RD William Hunter is mentioned the Cyclopedia of Methodism, hdm0721, appointed with Henry Boehm to Pennsylvania in 1807. Thus, this man was an early laborer under Francis Asbury. Another reference in the Cyclopedia of Methodism, hdm0856, records that this William Hunter preached the first sermon in Chester, Pennsylvania in February, 1810, and states that he was the presiding elder of the Schuylkill district. Further, hdm0604 records that this William Hunter was associated with Robert Richford Roberts in Philadelphia in the spring of 1813, William Hunter being the preacher in charge. Finally, the biography of John Emory, hdm0579.txt, states that in 1813 this William Hunter was appointed with John Emory to "the Academy charge, (now called Union,) in Philadelphia." Thus, this William Hunter could not possibly have been William Hunter, the hymn-writer of this article.

(4) WILLIAM HUNTER, THE HYMN-WRITER (1811-1877) -- The William Hunter focused upon in this article is also mentioned repeatedly in our HDM Library: by James B. Finley in "Sketches of Western Methodism" -- hdm0230; by E. M. Bounds in "Heaven, a Place, a City, a Home" -- hdm0397; by Matthew Simpson in his book, "A Hundred Years of Methodism," hdm0519; again by Matthew Simpson thrice in the Cyclopedia of Methodism: hdm0722, hdm0723, and hdm0769; and by the unlisted author of the Sermon Illustration titled: "How Some Sunday Schoolers Faced Death," hdm1040.

Division 2 below of this newly titled article, "William Hunter's Moving Hymn," gives the sketch of William Hunter, the Hymn-writer by Matthew Simpson in the Cyclopedia of Methodism, file hdm0769. It is easily seen from the reading of this sketch that he was much more than a hymn-writer in his labors for God and for Methodism. He was at once, a Methodist preacher, scholar, editor, spiritually minded song-writer, and I suspect that he was also a zealous holiness advocate.

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II.

MATTHEW SIMPSON'S SKETCH OF WILLIAM HUNTER, THE HYMN-WRITER

William Hunter of East Ohio Conference, was born in Ireland, May 26, 1811. The family emigrated in 1817, and settled near York, Pa. He was converted, and united with the church in 1828, and in 1830 entered Madison College, Uniontown, having been induced so to do by Rev. Dr. Charles Elliott. In pursuing his studies he was dependent on his own labor, and after leaving New York he engaged in teaching. In 1832 he was licensed to preach, and in 1833, having served as a supply on Blairsville circuit, he was admitted on trial into the Pittsburgh Conference, and appointed to Beaver and Brighton, and the following year to Pittsburgh.

In 1836 he was elected editor of the Pittsburgh Conference Journal, and being re-elected successively, spent four years in this service. From 1840 to 1844 he was presiding elder on the Clarksburg and Beaver districts, the latter extending from Allegheny City to Massillon. In 1844 he was elected by the General Conference editor of the Pittsburgh Christian Advocate, the name of the paper having been changed. and was re-elected in 1848.

From 1852 to 1855 he filled pastoral charges in West Virginia Conferences, and in the latter year was elected Professor of Hebrew and Biblical Literature in Allegheny College, where he remained for about fifteen years. In 1872 he returned to the Pittsburgh Conference, and in 1872 was again elected editor of the Pittsburgh Christian Advocate. In 1876 he fell by residence into the East Ohio Conference, and was appointed, in 1877, presiding elder of Cleveland district. He died suddenly Oct. 18, 1877.

He was a member of the General Conferences of 1844, 1852, 1860, and 1870. He published a few books, chiefly of devotional lyrics. The principal one of these is the "Select Melodies," partly selected and partly original, which has gone through many editions. Probably 150,000 copies have been sold. He is the author also of some hymns which have found their way into a number of the standard church hymn-books, and which are sung in various parts of the world, having been translated into several languages. Among them may be mentioned those beginning "Joyfully, joyfully, onward I move," "The heavenly home is bright and fair," "We are bound for the land of the pure and the holy," etc. He was a member of the present committee for the revision of the Hymn-Book, and was also a co-laborer on the Whedon "Commentary," having the book of Proverbs allotted to him.

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III.

WILLIAM HUNTER -- ONE OF ZION'S SWEETEST MINSTRELS

In "Sketches of Western Methodism," hdm0230, James B. Finley described William Hunter as "one of Zion's sweetest minstrels."

Thomas Drummond was one of those Methodist stalwarts who was "faithful unto death" in the ministry. Just his spirit was passing, he said to his weeping friends around him, "All is well! Tell my brethren of the Pittsburgh conference I died at my post."

William Hunter wrote a poetic tribute to Drummond, his fallen comrade in the holy war, and James B. Finley recorded it thus: "When the brethren met at their holy convocation, which was shortly after, there were weeping eyes and sorrowful hearts; but the message which they had received from the dying soldier cheered them on in the battle of the Lord. One of their number -- one of Zion's sweetest minstrels [William Hunter] -- touched his lyre, and it lent forth a dirge pleasant but mournful.

"Away from his home and the friends of his youth,
He hasted, the herald of mercy and truth;
For the love of his Lord, and to seek for the lost;
Soon, alas! was his fall -- but he died at his post.

The stranger's eye wept, that, in life's brightest bloom,
One gifted so highly should sink to the tomb;
For in ardor he led in the van of the host,
And he fell like a soldier -- he died at his post.

He wept not himself that his warfare was done
The battle was fought, and the victory won;
But he whispered of those whom his heart clung to most,
'Tell my brethren, for me, that I died at my post.'

He asked not a stone to be sculptured with verse;
He asked not that fame should his merits rehearse;
But he asked as a boon, when he gave up the ghost,
That his brethren might know that he died at his post.

Victorious his fall -- for rose as he fell.
With Jesus, his Master, in glory to dwell
He has passed o'er the stream and has reached the bright coast,
For he fell like a martyr -- he died at his post.

And can we the words of his exit forget?
O! no, they are fresh in our memory yet
An example so brilliant shall never be lost,
We will fall in the work -- we will die at our post."

Finley goes on to clearly identify the writer of the above poem as William Hunter: "From this poet -- the Rev. William Hunter, formerly editor of the Pittsburgh Christian Advocate, and author of 'Select Melodies' -- we have received a sketch embracing some personal recollections of Drummond, which we subjoin."

I have included Hunter's sketch about Thomas Drummond only because, in writing about Drummond, William Hunter also reveals more about himself -- remarks written by the hymn-writer himself that will give the reader further insight into his character. (The material below is James B. Finley's quotation of William Hunter's sketch of Drummond:

"Yours of the 17th ult. is before me, asking for recollections of Rev. Thomas Drummond. I had no personal acquaintance with brother Drummond. He was my senior by two or three years in the Pittsburgh conference, and left it for St. Louis at the close of my first year as a probationer. I never saw him but once; that was at the conference in Washington, Pennsylvania, in 1834. He came up to me before the conference door -- having somehow associated my face and name together, as I had his -- and said, in that free and peculiar manner which was characteristic of him, while he seized my hand, 'How are you, Hunter? We need no introduction.'"

"He passed into the church, and I am not certain that I ever saw his face again. I left the seat of the conference, perhaps, that day or the next; and he was transferred to Missouri, where he shortly afterward died. From that conference I was sent to Pittsburgh, in company with T. M. Hudson and M. Simpson -- now bishop. Thomas Drummond had been there with Doctor Ruter, not the preceding year, but the one before that. I consequently heard much of him, and can testify to the universal esteem in which he was held. Some of the good old members could scarcely cease talking about him.

"I can not at this date call up particular incidents related to me concerning him, during his labors in Pittsburgh. I can only state that the general impression made upon my mind by what I heard was, that he was quite a good preacher; studious in his habits, industrious in his pastoral work, and an exceedingly agreeable companion in the social circle. He was a man of very kind feelings, although somewhat free and blunt in his manners. He was not one of those who continually wore a somber countenance, as if to smile was a sin, or a little pleasantry an iniquity to be punished by the judges. He was a cheerful, vigorous, energetic man, doing his duty with a good will, a light heart, and a radiant countenance; yet withal a man who entered deeply into the sorrows of others, visiting the sick and the needy, and ministering both to their temporal and spiritual wants.

"A poor woman, whom he had visited as a pastor, died happy in the Lord, leaving a little girl with no provision for her comfort. Brother Drummond adopted her as his own -- I believe her father was dead also -- and made arrangements for her rearing and education; though I think that from the pecuniary burden of this he was relieved by the liberality of the late Mrs. Dumars, of Pittsburgh, in whose bosom beat the kindest heart of woman, and who took the little girl, bringing her up as her own. The little girl used to call herself Mary Ann Cooper Drummond Dumars. She became a member of the Church, and is now a married woman, with a family of her own, and living in comfortable circumstances. This incident will illustrate one trait in brother Drummond's

character his kindness and benevolence -- the trait to which, perhaps, he fell a martyr in St. Louis during the cholera visitation there.

"Brother Drummond was the first stationed preacher in the station which I now occupy Morgantown, Virginia. The parsonage in which I am now writing was built under his superintendence. The trees in the yard were planted by him, from which succeeding preachers, since that time, have eaten fruit. He frequently laid off his clerical coat, and went to work at the parsonage himself; and so well was the financial part of the business managed, that when the work was done there was a dollar over; though some of the credit of this is also due to the well-known liberality of the Church here.

"Here, as in Pittsburgh, I have often heard brother Drummond spoken of in terms of kind remembrance. The families in which he boarded, especially, have a high appreciation of his worth. He was able in the pulpit, faithful in pastoral visitations, diligent in the instruction of the children, assembling them for catechetical exercises. He by no means confined his labors to the village; but had several appointments in the country round about, some of them as many as nine or ten miles out.

"There is a sweet little church a couple of miles out of town, now called Drummond Chapel, in memory of the fact that he was, perhaps, the first who established preaching in the neighborhood. The only week-day class that we have in the station is a female class, met by the preacher, composed generally of the older ladies of the Church. It was Drummond who formed this class, as he said, for his own especial benefit. There are some of the traces left by him in this, the last station which he occupied in the Pittsburgh conference.

"I am not aware that there was any great revival in the place during his labors; but the Church was in a healthy and prosperous condition. I am told that he studied law, and passed an examination on it while here. I know not that he intended ever to practice. It is more probable that his object was to qualify himself better for the work of the ministry, by increasing his knowledge of legal science."

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IV. A HUNTER HYMN BRAVELY SUNG IN DEATH

The HDM Sermon Illustration file, hdm1014, contains a sad account of the destruction by fire of a large cotton factory. Some girls were trapped and perished in the flames. Read below how those girls sang one of William Hunter's hymns as they faced imminent death. It is a hymn that many have sung with delight and gusto in church services -- pleasant circumstances quite different from those recorded in this story, titled in the Illustration file: "How Some Sunday Schoolers Faced Death":

On Jan. 10, 1860, the Pemberton mill, a large cotton factory at Lawrence, Mass., suddenly fell into ruins, burning the operatives in the debris. Some were rescued alive; others would have been, but a broken lantern set the ruins on fire and the rescuers were driven from their work. As

they turned away, they distinctly heard some imprisoned girls who had been brought up in the Sunday school singing the precious hymn of William Hunter's:

"My heavenly home is bright and fair."

And up from the flaming jaws of death there came the brave chorus:

"I'm going home to die no more."

E. M Bounds quotes the following verses of that William Hunter hymn, sans the oft repeated words following, "I feel like traveling on," and the refrain which also repeats those words. I think it likely that many who read these lines can easily quote the entire song with the words now used, for it is frequently used in holiness services under the title: I FEEL LIKE TRAVELING ON. However, you will note in the stanzas below that some words used in current versions are missing, and some words not used in current versions are included. I know not how to account for this, but the hymn, however sung, seems to reflect an "other-worldliness" -- a spiritual, heavenly-mindedness from William Hunter's spirit.

My heavenly home is bright and fair:
Nor pain nor death can enter there;
Its glittering towers the sun outshine;
That heavenly mansion shall be mine.

Let others seek a home below,
Which flames devour, or waves o'erflow,
Be mine the happier lot to own
A heavenly mansion near the throne.

Then fail this earth, let stars decline,
And sun and moon refuse to shine,
All nature sink and cease to be,
That heavenly mansion stands for me.

Now to the part of this publication that was originally email-published apart from most of the preceding material. If you have been less than moved by all that you have read herein thus far, please read on anyway, for I have saved the best till last.

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V. THE HYMN OF THE HALLOWED SPOT

The William Hunter hymn focused upon quite entirely by this publication as originally written was apparently titled either, "There is a Spot to Me More Dear," "A Spot More Dear," or something similar. I am not sure what the exact wording was of the first title placed upon it. But that is of little significance or interest to most. For the sake of consistency in the following I used

the longer of the above titles throughout the remainder of the article. By whatever name this hymn has been sung, it seems quite apparent that its words have been cherished by numerous saints of God who have quoted its lines -- perhaps even including outside of the ranks of Methodism and the holiness movement.

It seems to me that Ann Baldwin, who is quite widely known among conservative holiness people for her gospel recordings, sang that hymn on one of her records, and as I recall, the music seems to fit the words and hallowed mood of the hymn. It was perhaps the most cherished hymn that William Hunter wrote -- sung in sweet worship, and quoted by older saints as they reflected upon, or revisited, with brimming eyes the place of their conversion in a year long past, but in a "hallowed spot" fixed indelibly in their memory.

"THERE IS A SPOT TO ME MORE DEAR" seems to have been written as William Hunter's personal testimony -- a deeply moving reminiscence of the time and spot of his own conversion, -- for I doubt that he could have penned its lines without having first experienced its story. Besides being well-worded, its testimony has the ring of reality, and that, coupled with the blessing of God's Spirit on its singing and recitation, is doubtless why so many others used it to express what they too experienced and felt.

Found in the HDM Library, are 13 quotations by 12 different writers from that cherished old hymn. In some of the testimonies related to the hymn, the writer describes his deep feeling when revisiting that "hallowed spot," and by the manner in which the words of the old hymn are quoted, I get the impression that the hymn itself was also cherished, for it so aptly and vividly describes what they experienced at the "the spot to them more dear than native vale and mountain."

Below, I will present material from the eleven of the twelve writers who quote the hymn in our HDM Library. C. L. Wireman's account is given by T. P. Roberts, and Wireman has that account in one of his books also. I have chosen to use only the account found in Roberts' book. I will leave their quotations of the hymn as they worded them, although some of them apparently are not exactly as the hymn was written. In presenting this material, I have purposely avoided placing quotation marks inside of quotation marks, except where this is done in the book text. In only one instance did one of those eleven writers quote all of the words of "There is a Spot to Me More Dear," and so I will first present material from his book.

* * *

1

JOHN THOMAS HATFIELD

Following is the context of his quotation of "There is a Spot to Me More Dear" taken from his book, "Thirty-Three Years a Live Wire. Like most of the accounts I will present in connection with the hymn, Hatfield's is a moving account of the time and place of his conversion:

When my uncle and the doctor arrived, they found me in a corner of the room with my head against the wall, the tears streaming from my eyes, my body wet with perspiration and my breast heaving. As soon as the doctor saw me he soon had my case diagnosed; the symptoms were so

marked that it did not take him long to locate the trouble, and he apprised me of the fact that my suffering was caused from a very malignant form of sin-sickness, and prescribed prayer and confession for my sins and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

He had no trouble in getting me to follow the prescription and take my medicine. There was nothing that savored of hope that was too hard for me to do. I was glad to confess all, to make restitution, to say "yes" to any field of labor. I spent about six hours on my knees, and they were hours of as great anxiety as I ever spent on this earth, and they are fresh in my memory today, and when I get to Heaven I look down and sing that old song:

"There is a spot to me more dear
Than native vale or mountain;
A spot for which affection's tear
Springs grateful from its fountain.

"'Tis not where kindred souls abound,
Tho' that is almost Heaven,
But where I first my Savior found,
And felt my sins forgiven.

"Hard was my toil to reach the shore,
Long tossed upon the ocean;
Above me was the thunder's roar,
Beneath, the waves' commotion.

"Darkly the pall of night was thrown
Around me, faint with terror;
In that dark hour how did my groan
Ascend for years of error.

"Sinking and panting as for breath,
I knew not help was near me,
I cried, 'Oh, save me, Lord, from death,
Immortal Jesus, hear me!'

"Then quick as thought I felt Him mine,
My Savior stood before me,
I saw His brightness round me shine,
And shouted 'Glory! Glory!'

"Oh, sacred hour! Oh, hallowed spot!
Where love divine first found me:
Wherever falls my distant lot,
My heart shall linger round thee.

And when from earth I rise, to soar

Up to my home in Heaven,
Down will I cast my eyes once more,
Where I was first forgiven."

While I was gasping and choking for breath, I thought I had thrown up my heart, and I opened my eyes and looked at the floor to see if it could be possible. I fully expected to fall to the floor, a dead man, and drop directly into Hell and be utterly lost forever. I was unconsciously clinging to life and was not aware of it, and nothing but physical exhaustion could solve the difficulty; and when I reached the point of human weakness my head dropped upon my heaving breast, my voice ceased to give utterance to the cries of my soul. I reached the place of complete surrender, the struggling ceased, and I said, 'Live or die, I am the Lord's,' then looked up, and, by simple faith, I claimed the promise, and the light of Heaven flashed instantly in upon my soul, the burden rolled away, new life sprang up within, angels struck their golden harps and broke forth with rejoicing. The heavenly melodies burst upon my soul, and I was as light and free and happy as a bird in springtime. I sprang to my feet fairly submerged in the billows of glory that swept over my newborn soul.

* * *

2

JOHN S. INSKIP

In the biography of Inskip by William McDonald and John E. Searles, some of the words of "There is a Spot to Me More Dear" are quoted in connection with the time when after many years he visited once again the spot where he "was first forgiven." It is a moving story.

There was no spot to which Mr. Inskip made more frequent public mention, and none to him "more dear" than the old "Meeting House" at Marshallton, Pa., where he "was first forgiven." After becoming settled in his Chester Country home, he availed himself of the first favorable opportunity to visit this, to him, sacred spot. The visit was full of interest, both to him and the people. We will allow him to describe it in his own language.

"A Precious Season.

"We have often heard people sing:--

"There is a spot to me more dear
Than native vale or mountain;
A spot for which affection's tear
Spring grateful from its fountain.

"Tis not where kindred souls abound,
Tho' that on earth is Heaven;
But where I first my Saviour found,
And felt my sins forgiven.'

"Our sympathy with the sentiment here expressed was always ardent, but we knew nothing of its real strength until last Sabbath. This day we shall remember forever as one of the most wonderfully precious seasons we have ever enjoyed. When the early morn dawned we were rather sad and disappointed, on account of the threatening aspect of the weather. But soon the clouds dispersed, and the bright sun shone forth with amazing splendor. As we passed along the way, riding in rural country style, with our beloved companion by our side, a thousand precious and pleasant reminiscences crowded into our thought. We saw much of beauty to admire, both in nature and art, as we journeyed onward together. But the great topic of conversation was of the past, and related to personal experiences of the gracious providences of God, and the wonders of grace.

"Our object in leaving home this beautiful Sabbath morning was to visit our spiritual birthplace, Marshallton, Chester County, Pa, distant from our present abode some eight or nine miles. We had long and earnestly desired to do this, but never before could find time or leisure to enjoy the privilege. An absence of over half a century, of course, would be supposed to have made many changes. Frequently the thought came into mind, 'Will they know me?' The revolution made by time and toil in the topography of the country we found to be so great that it was difficult to recognize or determine any particular locality with which, in former times, we had been so familiar.

"Now and then a hill, or creek, or building, looked somewhat as in 'days of yore.' As we approached the village, we asked a young man the question, 'Is this Marshallton?' He politely answered, 'Yes, sir, this is Marshalltown.' We inquired, 'Where is the Methodist Church?' He responded, 'The first you come to on your left hand, sir.' A moment brought us to the time-honored sanctuary. To make sure we were not mistaken, we made further inquiry of some gentlemen standing in front. As we cast our eyes upon the little stone edifice, we felt profoundly grateful that it looked much as it did in the days of our youth.

"We have no language at command that would convey to our readers any adequate idea of our feelings as we entered this humble 'meeting-house,' and glanced at the place where we bowed to seek the Lord, and were led to a knowledge of the 'truth as it is in Jesus.' We knelt as near the sacred spot as we could, and offered praise and thanksgiving for the gracious Providence which had brought us once more to the spot at which we commenced the 'heavenly pilgrimage.'

"What a moment of pure, unalloyed and tearful bliss it was! Not a single face we saw was at all familiar. Our old friends had nearly all passed away. There were, however, a few still remaining here below. How many questions we had to ask them concerning the departed, we cannot tell. There were many names mentioned, and the retrospect was truly thrilling.

"The Lord graciously aided us in preaching on the declaration of St. Paul in the Epistle to the Roman, first chapter and sixteenth verse: 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to ever one that believeth.' The sermon was followed by a highly spiritual communion service. The pastor, Rev. Mr. Dungan, received us with the greatest cordiality, and everybody seemed to have a 'God bless you' for both of us.

"From the church, or, rather, 'meeting-house,' where we communed with the living, we went into the 'grave yard' to have sweet fellowship with the dead. There is much hallowed human

dust sleeping there, and waiting for the 'full manifestation of the son of God.' We lingered at the graves of Joseph and Sarah Burton and John Mills. Brother Burton was the class-leader, and was at our side when we found salvation. He asked us the following questions: 'My lad, dost thou believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?' 'Dost thou believe that he is able and willing to save thee now?' 'Dost thou, my lad, believe that He does save thee now?' To each and all of these inquiries we returned an affirmative answer, and salvation was the result that followed.

"We also visited the graves of Dr. Parish, long years since the earnest steward of the society, and of Rev. Alban Hook, a devoted local preacher whom we often heard proclaim the 'glorious gospel of the blessed God.' We paused at the resting-place of the youth who sought to hinder us from making a start on our heavenward journey. He, too, with his kindred, sleeps the sleep from which there is no waking until the morning of the resurrection.

"On every hand in the 'place of graves' we noticed the names of old and familiar friends who have 'gone on before.' Our interview with the 'sainted dead' was so pleasant and profitable we repeated it, and the second time found it even more suggestive than the first. Both the living and the dead contributed to the interest and joy of the occasion... On the whole, it was truly 'a time long to be remembered.' We returned to our quiet hillside home, determined to be more in earnest than ever in our endeavors to promote the glory of God and the salvation of men."

* * *

3

MILTON LORENZO HANEY

M. L. Haney quotes words from "There is a Spot More to Me More Dear" in giving the account of his conversion in his autobiography, "Pentecostal Possibilities, or Story of My Life."

Reuben Plummer and Richard Walters were our ministers in 1840 and 1841. They were esteemed as messengers of God, and a great work was accomplished at various points on that wide circuit. During the holidays, Mr. Plummer was in a battle north of Knoxville, and the junior preacher was to hold a watch meeting New Year's eve at Harrisonville (now Hermon), Knox County, Ills. It was twelve or more miles away and the weather cold; but my anxious, weary soul could not refrain from going. A niece of my mother, Miss Eleanor Hull, accompanied me. She was a devoted girl and had often prayed for my salvation.

The services up to that time from the first settlement there, had been held in Father Long's dwelling. He was a good old local preacher, and Mother Long one of John's elect ladies. I went, all the way hoping I would not return in my sins, that the long-looked-for time when it would be easy to yield to God would come. I was seated in the farthest corner from the preacher, on the steps leading to the stairway, wanting to find God and so deeply convicted I hardly heard the sermon; yet by subtle devil power put myself where it would be most difficult to find Him!

For years the demand of the Holy Ghost had been plain that I must come out publicly and identify myself with God's people. The Methodists urged all penitents to unite with the church on probation as seekers. I had refused to do it, being wiser than my teachers, as sinners generally are.

The preaching being ended an invitation was given to all penitents to come to the altar, but I delayed in tears. A brother came by and asked me to go, but left me on my seat. A young man came and asked me if "I wanted religion."

I timidly answered that I did. He suggested that I "go at once to the mourners! bench," but to me it seemed nearly impossible. He put his arm around me and said: "Come now, and I will go with you." Those words of love seemed to put strength into me, and in a moment I decided to go and never to leave that spot till I was born of God!

The decision of that moment was more than equal to all those years of struggle. The preacher had said if any would come, he would remain with them till sunrise, if need be. The Holy Spirit threw light on the pathway of my life, till my past sins rose as mountains before me. Others found Christ, but my sins, as a deep, dismal cloud, obscured everything but the displeasure of God. Midnight had come and the minister was anxious to close, and made several proposals for all the seekers to rise. I remembered his promise and did not obey. I had come to stay till I heard from heaven. All who were seeking had found, and my condition had never seemed so terrible as now. There was a period when it did appear the pains of hell had taken hold upon me and I had such a view of the damnation of the wicked that it has never been erased from my mind. Despair had seized my spirit as though my feet had entered hell's door and all was lost!

At that juncture the minister said: "The Methodist Church is an asylum which receives wounded souls and all who have got religion, and any who are earnestly seeking, can now be taken into the church on probation by giving me your hand and name," at the same time drawing near to where I knelt. The Holy Spirit suggested, "Will you now obey?"

I answered, "Yes, Lord I will," and, without rising, turned and gave him my hand, and in less than ten seconds was standing on my feet in the new heavens and the new earth, God's happy and forgiven child! The last point of disobedience having given way, Christ instantly came before me as my sin-pardoning Saviour. He had been there before but the door was closed; now He found it open, and He came in. Rev. 3:20. The change apparent to my sensibilities was the utter and instant removal of my guilt load. Not even a symptom of condemnation was left Rom. 8:1, 2. I found myself consciously possessed of a new life which I had never had before.

I stood in silence before God. Not a word did I utter. The quiet of eternity seemed to be within. The first active emotion was an unspeakable desire to put my arms about all that were there and bring them to Christ! Sixty-two years have come and gone, and I have never lost that desire. The peace then given was a new possession and a new love, never before possessed, flowed back to God and out to universal man. I was now consciously God's own child, as witnessed by His Holy Spirit, and He my Father. Since that time I have never had one minute's trouble about my conversion! Even the devil has never questioned that I was born of God! This great transaction took place in the first hour of 1841.

"O sacred hour, O hallowed spot,
Where love divine first found me,
Wherever falls my distant lot
My heart shall linger round thee,

And when from earth I rise to soar
Up to my home in heaven,
Down will I cast my eyes once more
Where I was first forgiven."

* * *

4

WILLIAM BAXTER GODBEY

W. B. Godbey quotes from "There is a Spot to Me More Dear" when giving an account of his conversion in his Autobiography:

A good Baptist brother came, put his arms around me and said, "Boy, my house is your home till you get religion." I was a cheap boarder, for I did not eat a bite or sleep a wink, but spent an awful, sleepless night expecting every moment to drop into Hell. I never in my life was so glad to see the day dawn as when it came peering in through the clapboard roof of that log-house up in whose garret I was bedded. I arose and dressed, ate nothing, but went to meeting, finding the house packed and jammed with women, and the men all out-of-doors, except a few saints who crowded in the nooks and corners. Therefore in my natural timidity I declined to make an effort to squeeze in.

Outside they were talking everywhere, and their silly, foolish jesting, mingled with ribaldry, obscenity and profanity, grieved my soul so terrifically that I was constrained to run away, as I found their society absolutely intolerable. I fled to the woods and wandered on through the primeval forest, that mountain getting heavier incessantly, till I fell beneath my burden, which I could no longer bear. There prostrate on the ground, crying to God, soliloquies raced through my mind: "Is it possible that after my baptism in my infancy and my good moral life, which I have lived from the cradle, yet Hell is my doom?"

The real trouble with me was self-righteousness; I was unconsciously depending on my good works, church membership, preaching father and sainted mother, and the praying Christians to save me. Here I reached a crisis and a culmination. A panorama passed before me, in which saw all of those Godly people pass away. The soliloquy came back, my hopes all fled and my doom was sealed. So I reached the point where.. "Our justification supervenes, i. e., when we utterly surrender all of our own resources and confess judgment against ourselves." Thus my soliloquy proceeded:

"O God, I am a wretched, lost sinner, all my works of righteousness are filthy rags, loathsome and stenchy in Thy sight; and if Thou dost leave me to drop into Hell, it is all right. I never did deserve anything else." At that moment I reached an epoch which I never can forget. That mountain burden rolled away and I found myself leaping for joy.

"Hard was my toil to reach the shore,
Long tossed upon the ocean;

Above me was the thunder's roar,
Beneath the wave's commotion.

"Panting and fainting as for breath,
I knew not help was nigh me,
I cried, Oh, save my soul from death,
Immortal Jesus, save me!

"Then quick as thought I felt Him mine,
My Savior stood before me;
I saw His brightness round me shine,
And shouted Glory! Glory!

"Oh, hallowed spot, oh, sacred hour,
When love Divine first found me;
Wherever falls my distant lot,
My soul shall linger round thee.

"And when rise from the vile world
Up to my home in Heaven,
Down will I cast mine eyes once more,
Where I was first forgiven."

That wood was soon afterward cleared up and turned into a corn-field, but my heart, in all my wanderings these fifty-seven years, three times traveling in Europe, Asia, and Africa, and once around the world, has ever turned back to that hallowed spot, dearest to me in all the earth. I verily expect to remember it through all eternity. There the battle of long and weary years between faith and doubt, grace and sin, Christ and Satan, Heaven and Hell, culminated in glorious victory for my poor soul.

* * *

5
PHINEAS FRANKLIN BRESEE

As with John S. Inskip, P. F. Bresee quotes part of "There is a Spot to Me More Dear" when giving an account of a revisit back to the scenes of his youth and the place where he was "first forgiven." E. A. Girvin, author of the Bresee biography, "A Prince in Israel," from which the story is taken, quotes Bresee under the sub-topic: "Childhood Scenes":

"Here we are among the scenes of our childhood, to look once more upon the places where we played and worked and hoped; where we looked out upon life with childhood and youthful expectancy, and where, more than all, we found the pearl of great price.

"It brings a strange feeling to be a stranger in the land of one's childhood. The hills are here, the streams flow as of old, the same stars shine overhead, but the people are strange. Here

are two villages, about three miles apart; each has a Methodist church. In one Mrs. Bresee was converted; in the other I was privileged to find the Lord. This was in our early youth. Both of these churches are in one charge, preaching being at one at 10:30 a. m., and at the other at 1 p. m.; so that we were permitted to worship at both.

"The occupants of the pews were strangers, the pastor a stranger, all things strange. All that we could do was to find our way to the altars where we knelt so long ago, and with tearful memories and holy trust, and heaven-lit hopes, worship and adore, and preach the Word. As we closed our eyes, how the vanished forms seemed to fill the pews again, and the loved faces to smile anew. But, as we opened our eyes, there were the strangers; only God over all, who seemed even nearer and more precious than in other days. It was a joy, though shaded by many sorrows, to kneel again where the eternities dawned in divine love and pardon.

"There is a place to me more dear
Than native vale or mountain;
A place for which affection's tear
Springs grateful from its fountain.

"Tis not where kindred souls abound
Though that were almost heaven;
But where I first my Saviour found
And felt my sins forgiven.

"But better than that, is to know Him now in the fullness of His love."

* * *

6
KENNETH H. FAY

In his book "The Salvation of God," Ken Fay quotes from "There is a Spot to Me More Dear" in relationship to what must follow in order for one to maintain the experience of salvation:

A poet once wrote:

"There is a spot to me more dear
Than native vale and mountain;
A spot for which affection's tear
Springs grateful from its fountain.

'Tis not where kindred souls abound,
Tho' that is almost heaven:
But where I first my Savior found,
And felt my sins forgiven."

That is indeed a cherished memory. But however precious, a question now arises. How is this new life to be maintained?

* * *

7

STEPHEN MERRITT

In his sketch of Sammy Morris, Stephen Merritt quoted from "There is a Spot to Me More Dear":

After reaching the coast he went to work on a coffee plantation, and for his services received his board and such simple articles of clothing as are worn by the natives in that region. It was here that he found Christ and entered upon that religious life which, though it proved very brief, was, in the simple yet sublime development of its consecration and faith, the most wonderful I have ever known. It seems that a boy from his own nation worked on the plantation with Sammy, and this boy had become a Christian.

He told Sammy of Jesus and one day took him to church. Sammy could not then understand a word of English; he could not comprehend the significance of the church, the Bible, the preacher and other things that met his staring eyes, but he says that he felt that God was in that place and that, in the presence of the pure and awful being who filled that house, he was sinful and undone. He went from that first service with an aching heart and an inquiring mind. He was groping his way like the Ethiopian eunuch and needed a Philip to guide him. He had heard his companion pray and asked him what he was doing. He told him he was talking to God. "Who is God?" asked Sammy. "He is my Father," answered the other boy. "Then," said Sammy, in his practical way of putting things, "you are talking to your Father."

Ever after that Sammy called praying "talking to his Father." As soon as he was brought under conviction by attending church that day, he, too, began to "talk to his Father." His conviction was not of that mild and evanescent type that is becoming so popular in these days. It was the conviction of the old-time revivals. It was not remittent and hence it led him to talk to his Father at some very unseasonable hours, and it was so deep that it led him to talk with a very loud voice. His agonizing cries sometimes broke the stillness of the midnight hour. At last his fellow workmen declared him a nuisance and notified him that if he "couldn't keep still he must leave the quarters."

He then transferred his prayer meeting to the woods, and there he wrestled with the Angel night after night, as did Jacob at Peniel. One night he tarried in the woods praying until after midnight, and then came to his humble quarters, weary and heavy-hearted, and lay down to sleep, but he could not sleep. He said his tongue was still but his heart went on praying. All at once his room appeared to grow light. He thought at first the sun was rising, but everyone was sound asleep around him and the room grew lighter till it was full of glory. At the same time his burden disappeared and his heart was full of joy and his body seemed as light as a feather. He said he thought he could fly. He began to shout and leap and praise God like the lame man who was healed at the beautiful gate of the temple. He soon awakened everybody in the quarters and there was no more sleeping that night.

Some thought he had gone crazy and some, remembering their old heathen superstition, thought a devil had gotten into him. This was his conversion -- plain, positive, powerful. He could not doubt, and with his limited knowledge he could never have been satisfied with anything less. Ordinarily Sammy was not demonstrative. He was unusually quiet for one of his race; but whenever he spoke of his conversion his eyes flashed fire and his whole frame quivered with emotion. His appearance was that of the poet when he sang:

O sacred hour, O hallowed spot,
Where love divine first found me;
Wherever falls my distant lot,
My heart shall linger round thee:

And when from earth I rise to soar
Up to my home in heaven,
Down will I cast my eyes once more,
Where I was first forgiven.

* * *

8

C. M. DAMON

C. M. Damon quoted the fewest words from the hymn of all in our Library that quoted from it. His account is taken from his book, "Sketches and Incidents":

These convictions culminated during a day of sap-gathering in the old home sugar-bush that spring. As best I knew I yielded my heart to God, began attending class, and in June following united with the church, and was baptized with Frank Warren, Edwin Weaver and others, under the ministry of Rev. Milo Scott of the Methodist church. An opportunity to ramble through those woods, and trace the old sap roads more than thirty years after was fruitful in solemn memories of that day, and I knelt amid the thick hemlocks surrounding the once beautiful spring, whence we procured water for sugar-bush purposes, and poured out my heart in grateful remembrance of the past and praise for all the way the Lord had led me.

"There is a spot to me more dear
Than native vale or mountain."

* * *

9

AMOS L. HAYWOOD

Haywood's quotation from the hymn is taken from his autobiography, "My Life Story," and is preceded by quotations of two other stanzas of poetry:

At last I became desperate and said to myself something like this, "When I get this chapter read I will get down on my knees even if I can't pray very many words. I will do the best I can, I will try." When sinners go at it like that God will save them no matter how wicked they are. At last, I closed the Book, went down on my knees, opened my mouth and began to try to pray. Before I had uttered five words something unearthly happened. Almost to my surprise and to my great joy, that heavy burden rolled off and my soul was filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory. I arose a brand new creature. Old things had indeed passed away and behold all things became new. The transformation was so definite, radical, and real, God never had to do it over again. The grace of God has proved sufficient. He took the love of the world out of my heart and gave me a great love for my Lord and His work and I could say with the poet --

"Let worldly minds the world pursue,
It has no charms for me;
Once I admired it's trifles too --
But grace has set me free."

"I'm satisfied with Jesus here,
He's everything to me;
His dying love has won my heart,
And now He sets me free."

Amen, praise the Lord. Some said at first it would wear off, but instead it has been wearing on for over forty years, and we have proved the following text true:--"But the path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Proverbs 4:18.

I will ever thank the Lord for a definite, positive, know-so experience, I will ever be glad, I can say with the poet:

"There is a spot to me more dear,
Than native vale and mountain.
A spot from which affection's tear,
Springs grateful from its fountain.

"'Tis not where kindred souls abound,
Though that is almost heaven,
But where I first my Savior found,
And felt my sins forgiven."

* * *

10
GEORGE B. KULP

We have two quotations from the hymn by George Brubaker Kulp in the HDM Library, and they are from separate publications. The first is from "Truths That Transfigure" and the second is from "The Departed Lord":

Do you know when you were adopted into the family? Do you know when, and where? I had an elect lady in my church one time, . and as she and wife and I were riding together one day she said to me, "Oh, Brother Kulp, you do annoy me so with your preaching." I asked, "Why, sister, how do I annoy you?" "Well," she replied, "you preach that unless you know when you were converted, and where you were converted, you never were. Now I do not know the time when I did not love God, I always have." She had been trained by a godly mother, and never knew the blight of sin as many do. I have met one other like her. Baxter, the author of The Saints' Rest, has left on record that back beyond where memory runs he gave his heart to God. Dr. Wentworth, an old Methodist divine, left it on record that he was saved in remote childhood, and had no recollection of time and place. We believe him, and yet I am quite confident that nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand know the time and place.

"There is a spot to me more dear,
Than native vale or mountain;
A spot for which affection's tear
Flows grateful from its fountain.

'Tis not where kindred souls abound,
Tho that is almost heaven;
But where I first my Savior found,
And knew my sins forgiven."

* * *

A lady was riding along a country road with her driver when they came to an old church. The shutters hung on one hinge, the cobwebs were over doors and windows, the weeds had grown up in the path, and yet she said to her driver, "I want to go in that old church for a little while." And getting out she went in and stayed for more than half an hour. The driver grew impatient.

"What does that woman want in that old church, with all its dust and decay?" and he made up his mind he would ask her when she came out. After she was reseated in the carriage, he ventured to ask, "Madame, will you please tell me what it was that kept you so long in that dusty old church?"

"Certainly I will. I am visiting back in this neighborhood where I was reared, after an absence of forty years. I never expect to return. I was converted more than forty years ago in that old church, and I wanted to go in and get down at the altar where I first met Jesus. I forgot you -- forgot the passage of time while I was there. I know you will forgive me for keeping you waiting."

That old altar was dear to her heart and she knew she was leaving it for the last time.

There is a spot to me more dear
Than native vale or mountain,
A spot for which affection's tear
Flows grateful from its fountain.

'Tis not where kindred souls are found,
Though that is almost heaven;
But where I first my Savior found,
And knew my sins forgiven.

* * *

11
CHARLES LITTLE WIREMAN
(Bulldog Charlie)

In his book, "Highlights of My Life and Ministry," Thomas P. Roberts records "Bulldog Charlie" Wireman's Account of his conversion, in which story Wireman quotes from "There is a Spot to Me More Dear." Roberts (dubbed "Night-Hawk Tom") was the preacher conducting the revival in which Wireman was converted. In his book, "Kentucky Mountain Outlaw Transformed," Wireman gives the same account again in slightly different words, but since the two accounts are so nearly identical I will include on that found in T. P. Robert's book.

The words below are those of Wireman as quoted by Roberts:

I went on and on, making one confession and restitution after another. The first at the altar in the day service and the last one to go away in the night service. Until one night, one never to be forgotten night, thank God, when I made an end of resistance, was lying flat on my back and they were singing, "I'd rather walk with Jesus alone," when my faith took hold. Pardon was written upon my wicked heart. The glorious salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ broke into my sin-benighted soul, dispelling the darkness with such splendor and grandeur that it made the chandeliers in that old Methodist church hide their faces in shame, Thank God. I was a new creature in Christ Jesus the Lord.

Now, there are two spots I always visit when I go back home. I go up to the graveyard in the outskirts of the little town and get on my knees between two mounds that hold all that is mortal of my father and mother. I held their hands as they crossed the great divide, and there on my knees I long for the eastern skies to split and these graves give up their dead that I might be changed in the twinkling of the eye and join them in the rapture. And then, I go hunt up the janitor of the old Methodist Church and borrow the key. On one occasion I took my precious boys and showed them the spot and told them about the great transaction. But usually I go alone and turn the key gently in the door, and walk softly down that aisle, for I am treading on holy ground and down to that old mourner's bench where I find

"A spot to me more dear
Than native vale or mountain,
A spot for which affection's tear
Springs grateful from its fountain.

"Tis not where kindred souls abound,

Tho' that is almost heaven,
But where I first my Saviour found,
And felt my sins forgiven.

"O sacred hour! O hallowed spot!
Where love divine first found me;
Wherever falls my distant lot,
My heart shall linger round thee.

"And when from earth I raise, to soar
Up to my home in heaven,
Down will I cast my eyes once more,
Where I was first forgiven."

Thank God, if it were possible I could take old "splitfoot" and rub his dirty nose on the very spot where God for Christ's sake pardoned my sins.

* * * * *

THE END