THE NEW MOVE
By Mrs. Paul E. King
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It was quite apparent that Clint wouldn't take no for an answer; there he stood, towering (almost) over me and saying, "Look Kurston, we need you on our team. One of the fellows didn't show up. Don't spoil our fun. Besides, it's a great way to get acquainted with who's who in the neighborhood."

Being new to the town, Clint's idea was a good one for getting acquainted, I agreed silently, knowing that a game of ball on the vacant lot
beside Huntley's This and That Shoppe wouldn't hurt me. But it was Clint, mostly.

I met Clint the day we moved into town. His house stood just three doors down the street from ours. In fact, Clint was the first to welcome us to Rushtonville. He was likeable, friendly, and personable. I felt great, getting to meet a fellow my own age so soon. He hadn't spoken too many sentences, however, when a little red light of warning came on in my soul. Talk about a vocabulary of slang words! I was shocked.

"Well, are you coming?" Clint asked impatiently and a bit gruffly as I stood before him.

"No foul language," I said quickly. "A game of ball's okay, but gutter language is not! Agreed?"

Clint merely mumbled something or other then said, "C'mon, let's go."

Following Clint, I made up my mind to one thing: I would take my stand for the Lord Jesus Christ if I never made one single, solitary friend of the bunch. I would do my utmost to be friendly and likeable without sacrificing or compromising my Bible-based convictions and standards.

"Fellows, this is Kurston," Clint shouted as I set foot on the big lot. "The last name's Wraney, spelled with a Wr instead of Ra. Make yourself known to him, then let's get on with the game."

I did my best to remember each name, tucking some little unusual something about each one back in the corner of my brain where association and recall would serve as a reminder for me later on, at the same time trying to decide how many . . . if any, of the players were Christians.

The game was not long under way, however, before I soon learned that only two boys (besides myself) seemed to have "clean" lips. They were brothers, I learned . . . Jeff and Kip Rutledge.

I played till the game was over then hurried over to them just as they were gathering their ball and bats and gloves together. "Where do you live?" I asked quickly. "I noticed that neither of you participated in the 'slang and foul mouth competition' on the lot," I mentioned.
Jeff smiled. "Thanks. I noticed the same about you. In fact, Kip said he sure was glad we had another one added to our ranks. Seems we're in the minority."

"Christians have never been in the majority, I guess," I told Jeff. "I mean, well, I guess you're Christians. I am."

"We go to church, if this is what you mean," Jeff answered.

"Going to church is good," I replied. "But this doesn't make one a Christian. Being a Christian means that one is like Christ, and this can only be after one has been born again..., converted. Then, as the Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:17, '... if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.' This is the new birth; what being born again means."

Jeff looked at Kip; Kip looked at Jeff. "And here we always thought being baptized was all we needed!" Jeff exclaimed to his brother.

"Wonder why the preacher didn't tell us," Kip said.

"Perhaps he doesn't know," I volunteered. "Many colleges and seminaries don't teach the Bible doctrine of salvation through Jesus' shed blood. But it's all there. Just as sure as I'm talking to you, it's in the Bible."

Without hesitation, Kip said, "Would you mind teaching Jeff and me? We're terribly ignorant; but we want to know the way. Our parents think we're odd and strange--like we've kinda' gone off the 'deep end.' They're not one bit religious. But after Darrell Schnelly died the way he did, well, it got both Jeff and me to doing some serious thinking about life after death. And there is one; this we know since watchig Darrell die. It was horrifying." Kip shuddered, remembering.

"He screamed, actually screamed!" Jeff exclaimed, taking up the story where his brother left off. "He said he was lost; that the flames were burning his feet! I hope I never need to see any more deaths like that one."

"Couldn't anyone help him?" I asked quickly. "Wasn't there anyone who could pray for him?"
"No one but us," Jeff replied. "And we didn't know how to pray. Never prayed a single prayer in our entire life. Not even the usual, 'Now I lay me down to sleep,' prayer that most children pray when they're tucked into bed for the night. Darrell was drinking. Kip begged to let one of us drive, but to no avail. He hit the abutment without realizing what he'd hit, I'm sure, and died minutes later, screaming that he was lost and was going to hell. Kip and I are miracles of God's grace and of His protective power."

"From that awful day to this, we've been searching," Kip said, "trying to find out the reason why we were spared and not killed like our friend. Perhaps we have 'gone off the deep end,' as mother declares and dad scolds; but neither of us wants to die screaming, like Darrell did."

"When can you come over to my house?" I asked quickly. "You'll like my folks; and my dad's a wonderful Bible teacher."

"How about tonight?" Kip asked. "Like I said, we want to know the truth."

"We sure do," Jeff said emphatically. "Kip and I have decided that when we find whatever it is that will get us ready to die unafraid, we're sticking to it. Sure, the fellows make fun of us, and we don't get invitations to their gatherings anymore; but we wouldn't go if we did; not after seeing how Darrell died. The devil was there; his presence was as real as if he'd have been standing there in bodily form. The fellows laughed at us when we told them this, but it's true."

"I believe you, Jeff and Kip," I said. "In fact, what you are saying is scriptural."

"Sure enough?" Jeff asked.

"In the book of Job, we find these words, 'He {the wicked} shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world' (Job 18:18). Then Luke 16:23 gives us the sad account of the rich man in hell's torments. One can escape this only by repenting of, and forsaking, his sins and being born again, of God."
"I'm so glad you told us," Kip said tearfully. "We'll be over tonight. Didn't Clint say you lived three houses north of his?"

"That's right. The house has yellow shutters at the windows. This will identify it, since it's the only one on the block like this."

I was amazed, but not too surprised, to see that the other fellows were all gone by the time Jeff and Kip and I separated and left for our respective homes. One thing was sure, God's children were indeed a "separated" people. Righteousness, and righteous living, was the dividing line between right and wrong, good and evil; the line of demarcation being so pronounced as to almost automatically do the separating. And while my new friends may not as yet be born again Christians, I knew they were not far from experiencing this wonderful and radically beautiful heart change: Didn't God's Word say, "seek and ye shall find," and "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."

"And I will be found of you, saith the Lord: . . ." (Jer. 29:13-14).

With a light step, I hurried home, feeling assured that Jeff and Kip would join the ranks of the new ones in Christ before the day was over. That would make three of us who could pray and fast and hold on to God for Clint and the other fellows' salvation.

I was whistling as I entered the kitchen. The new move wasn't all bad. In fact, it was good; I had a mission field all around me.