Doug closed the door to the bedroom quietly; then he fell to his knees beside the bed and wept. What could he do to ease the strain and the tension that seemed to be ever present when he and his brother were together? Why did Brad resent him so dreadfully? When did the estrangement begin and what had triggered it?
Question after painful question presented itself and left the fifteen-year-old feeling more miserable and deeply grieved with each presentation. Jesus, in Matthew's Gospel, had stated pointedly that the "blessed" one was a peacemaker, and he had tried his very best to be just that—a peacemaker. But Brad seemed to resent anything and everything he had done, or tried to do. Worst of all, Brad resented him, Doug.

The thought of Brad's resentment toward him and for him, sent a flow of fresh tears coursing down Doug's ruddy, sunbrowned cheeks. His brother seemed almost to hate him. Or, maybe it wasn't an almost case, maybe Brad did actually hate him.

Shivers of fear traced each vertebra "along the length of the fifteen-year-old's spine. That was a serious offense, he knew; one which, under the Bible's scrutiny and information and illumination, was classed as murder. Again he shivered with fear, recalling Cain's hatred and jealousy for his brother Abel and how that intense and deep hatred actually and ultimately led to the murder of the innocent, namely, Abel.

Doug lifted his eyes toward heaven; his hands, too. Then he began to pray. It was no mere parrot-like prayer, no, indeed. His soul was too crushed and grieved and burdened for anything light and wordy. From the deep anguish of his soul, he prayed. Interceded. Groaned. And wept. It tore his heart that his brother resented him and treated him to massive doses of frigidity and coldness.

It was as though they were strangers, he thought. No, that was not a comparable figure, strangers didn't treat one another in such a manner. Nor, even, did strangers hurt and wound each other: they were strangers. There were no ties or bonds attaching them one to the other. They had no memories of everyday happenings and doings -- they were strangers. And, being thus, they could not wound, cut or slash one's inner heart. But family members. . .! This was something else.

Brad was almost eighteen years old. Maybe this had something to do with their relationship. Doug knew that his brother disliked his company when he wanted to go out with some of his friends. "Get lost," he often told Doug. "You're a little squirt, leave me alone. Who wants a kid brother tagging along everywhere? Not I, that's for sure! Now get lost!"
Doug recalled how the terse remarks had hurt him. But he loved Brad. How he loved him! Admired him, too, and wanted to be like him, until God gripped his heart and soul with old time Holy Ghost conviction and, running to an altar for prayer, he repented of his sins and was gloriously converted. What a wonderful change was wrought in his heart that glorious night. Doug knew he would never forget it. He was changed; radically so. Inside and outside.

He had gone to Brad immediately afterwards and, thinking that Brad, too, would want to find the Lord and serve and worship Him, he had told his brother of his wonderful transformation, asking him to give the Lord his heart and to become converted. Brad had lashed out at him vehemently, declaring that he, Doug, had embarrassed him dreadfully, and telling him to mind his own business.

From that day on, Doug felt that his brother and he became even more like strangers. Try as he might to get close to Brad, he couldn't: his brother kept him at arm's length, it seemed.

He had talked to his father and mother about the painful situation and each had told him to say no more to Brad about his soul unless God's Spirit had told him to specifically do so, adding that in a case such as Brad's, prayer and fasting was one's mightiest and most powerful weapon. He had learned, during all the months of Brad's rejection of him, to run to his "secret closet" and, there, to unburden his heart to the Lord. What solace and comfort and joy it was to his soul! The bitter pain of rejection and of being despised had served only to bring him closer to God.

Doug's soul became an impassioned well of tears and groans and intercessory praying for his brother, whom, he knew, was doing things that were wrong; things which their parents would be greatly displeased with if they knew.

He prayed until he knew he had touched Heaven and made contact with God, remaining thus for a long while, reveling in the presence of the Divine. When he arose from his knees he had a fixed purpose in his heart—he would go the "second mile" with his brother and leave the results with God. He knew what to do, and how, to get Brad's attention and turn him aboutface. He was the Mover of mountains; the miracle working God, was He not?
His mother, seeing the tear-stained cheeks as he emerged from his bedroom, slapped him lovingly, lightly, and understandingly on his fastly-broadening shoulders. "Don't grow discouraged," she said softly. "Keep holding on. And, above all else, have faith in God when you pray, Doug. I know this is hard on you. . . .

"I'm learning a lot by it," the youth declared, smiling. "But what I can't understand is why Brad treats me to such massive doses of utter contempt and . . . and seeming hatred. If I had done something to incite or induce such behavior I'd understand. But I haven't."

"You are forgetting something, aren't you, Doug?"

"What's that?"

"Noah condemned the world, according to Hebrews 12:7. He believed God, when he was told to build the ark. In so doing, that same verse declared, he 'became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.' He no doubt was ridiculed. And spurned by his friends and many acquaintances, too. But little matter, that: he saved not only himself but his family, as well. No small accomplishment, this, Doug. You, too, have entered the 'ark,' figuratively speaking. You heard and you heeded the Spirit's wooing and pleading. Today, because of being obedient to His Voice, you are safe in God's ark, saved and sanctified wholly. Because of your new life in Christ, your brother is miserable around you. In a sense, you, like Noah, bring a feeling of condemnation upon him and his way of sinful living."

"But I never 'preach' at him, Mother. Nor even to him. I have told him what the Lord has done for me, yes, but that's about the extent of it. Brad's not one to be pushed into a thing."

"That's true, son, and you are wise in this respect. You would only drive your brother farther away, from both God and yourself. Why not go out and play ball with the Burtons? Randy called a little while ago. I told him you were praying."

"Thanks, Mother, I'll go. But first, I'm going to straighten up Brad's side of the clothes closet. He hates doing this, and since I told the Lord I'm willing to go the second mile to see him saved, I'm going to start now. I came out for
a glass of cold milk, then I'm going to begin my 'second mile' works and I'll leave the results with God. Thanks for your encouragement, Morn." And he hurried to the refrigerator.