Harold settled himself wearily on the top porch step and crossed his legs in front of him. The perspiration rolled fast down his ruddy boyish cheeks. He took a rough calloused hand and wiped it quickly away. A sudden unannounced tear rolled out of the corner of his eye as he buried his face in his hands. Everything was so different and so changed since Ella came out to the porch that day and whispered tearfully into his ear: "She's gone,
Harold! Mother's gone! She'll never . . . speak to us again. Never!" and his blonde-haired sister had run away somewhere to cry the hurt out of her own aching heart.

He never fully realized how changed things could be until after they laid Mother's cold form in the cemetery on top of the hill that overlooked the small town of Briggsdale and he, his father, two brothers and three sisters went home to the once beloved, familiar house that now seemed nothing more than an empty, hollow shell. That was two months and five days ago, to be exact!

He sighed deeply and drew his breath in a quick, hurt sob.

"Harold!" His father called strongly. "Come on. Get busy. There's more cabbage to be shredded if we're going to fill the barrel and have it ready for market."

Always an obedient child, the boy jumped quickly to his feet and started to the cellar.

"I do wish Father was kind-spoken like . . . Mother," Ella whispered softly to her youngest brother as he passed her.

Harold brushed the tears aside and smiled wanly at his sister who had the full responsibility of the house upon her shoulders. He knew she, too, felt the change keenly: her own life taking on greater and greater responsibility as the irate father took her out of her last year of schooling and laded her heavily with ever new and greater responsibilities.

"Is the bread finished and are the pies baked, Ella?" the father asked crossly.

"The bread's rising, Papa. It won't be ready for another couple hours, though. But the pies are all finished. They're cooling on the cupboard shelf."

"You're going to have to get up earlier," he bellowed at her. "I wanted to be on my way to market by this time."

"But . . . you never leave before one-thirty or two and. . . ."
"You'll have to get up earlier. . . ."

Ella heard no more. She rushed to her bedroom upstairs and threw her weary body across the bed where she wept herself to sleep.

Every day was much the same as the one mentioned and the children, whose lives should have been intertwined and knit around that of their father, were growing more and more restless to be on their own and get out from their present miserable surroundings. When the county fair time drew near, their father, who loved to attend better than anything, urged his entire family to "go and have a good time." He even gave each child a sizable amount of spending money to use in whatever manner he desired.

"The fair's on five days and we're not going to do a single bit more work than we have to," he announced at supper one evening. "Ella, take to the fair and forget all about this cooking . . . for five days. We'll everyone help ourselves . . . if we're home. And Harold, you've shredded and cut enough cabbage to do you for awhile. The barrel's full of fermentin' cabbage for sauerkraut. I want you to have a big time at the fair, too. Run along now and no need to hurry coming home. Five full days of freedom and fun for all of us!"

Harold slipped out the back door and down through the meadow. His father would never know (nor care). He crossed the little gurgling stream of water where he had always loved to play and wade when Mother was living and he wasn't forced to work constantly. He settled himself on the creek's edge where he watched the silvery shining minnows dart crazily and carelessly about in the cool waters. It would be wonderful to be free like they!

A sudden tear found its way to his eyelashes then spilled coldly into the water at his feet and was lost as suddenly from sight as it had dropped.

He stood suddenly up . . . straight and erect. He would be a man! All the way through, a man! A Christian man! No matter which road his father was taking he needn't be like him! Not when he was traveling the wrong road!

His bare feet raced like hind's feet across the verdant green meadow, through the tall, dark-green acreage of corn (already brown in tassel), out into the brown stubble of the harvested wheat and across a dusty lane where wild roses grew in profusion and abundance, to a small but neat dwelling at the
edge of a small woods. He tapped lightly on the door then stepped back as he waited.

"Why, Harold! How nice to see you! Do come in. Or will your father be angry if you are not working?" and the clean little old lady took her apron and wiped the perspiration from her face as she untied her big-brimmed sunbonnet.

"I'm going to be a man, Aunt Mary! A Christian man! I was down by the brook when it hit me hard that I don't need to be like my father. And Aunty Mary, something within me wants to be good and do good. Father gave us all five days off to go to the county fair; but something in my heart doesn't want to go. Can you help me, please? I remember Mother telling me to pray, and praying with us while she lived; maybe that's why I want to be good and do what's right."

Now Aunty Mary wasn't anybody's aunt for miles around; but she was known to be a most devout Christian and was a very close friend to Harold's deceased mother.

"I have really been praying for your family, dear boy," she said, with tears brimming full in her faded blue eyes. "Especially so since the Lord saw fit to take your precious mother. Sit down while I fix you a bite to eat."

"Could we just talk, Aunty Mary?. Please? Maybe you can help my heart. It feels so hungry for something that I can't understand."

"What time must you be home?"

"Father said to take our time and to enjoy ourselves. He didn't set a time limit, but I shall see that I get home before dark."

"Very well. We shall have all afternoon to talk and to read and pray. Did you ever hear the story of Samuel, the prophet?"

"No, Ma'am."

"Well, I shall read it to you then. It seems to me like the Lord has His hand upon you to keep you from doing any evil."
"That's what I want . . . God's Hand upon me. Oh, if I just knew what to do to satisfy my heart. It feels so hungry and heavy!"

"Harold, maybe we'd better pray first. You want to be saved, I'm sure that's what you mean."

"I want to be something . . . something different than I am, Aunty Mary."

"We'll talk to Jesus about it. You pray and tell Him just what you've told me and invite Him into your heart to live, rule and abide."

"I sure will."

The sun laid its hot August rays caressingly upon the back of the penitent seeker and that afternoon became the turning point in the life of a boy who was determined to be a "real man . . . a Christian man." He became a transformed soul, redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb of God!

"How was the fair?" his father asked that evening. "I . . . I . . . wasn't at the fair."

"You weren't?" he bellowed. "I told you to go and to have a good time. You don't appreciate what I'm doing for you. Where were you?"

"I . . . I . . . got saved, Father."

"You what? Oh, no you don't! No boy of mine's going to be a sissy like his mother!" and the angry father reached for the long whip he kept in the pantry.

"Don't touch that, Dad!" It was Ronald, the oldest of the boys. Quickly he stepped between his father and the younger brother. "Our mother never was a sissy! Harold can't remember her as well as I. She was a wonderful mother . . . a good woman! She is rejoicing today at what her youngest boy has done, and I think it would make her rejoice more than ever if all of us did the same thing. She prayed a lot for us."

The father closed the closet door silently and sat down in the chair nearest the door. "You may go to your room, Harold."
"It . . . it's wonderful to be a Christian, Dad," Harold said softly as he started up the stairway.

The following morning each went his separate way to the county fair and, since no more was said, Harold ran quickly across field, stream, and meadow and was soon in front of Aunty Mary's neat little place again.

"You mentioned something about entire sanctification yesterday," he said eagerly, "and I'd like to know how to obtain it. What must I do to be wholly sanctified and to be cleansed from this 'inbred sin,' as you called it?"

"Well, Harold, you've already done the very first thing . . . you got saved from your sins yesterday. And only those who are saved and in a good first work of grace are eligible for heart cleansing, or Holiness of heart. We'll pray together again and you ask the Lord to cleanse your heart from all the old carnal nature and to possess your life completely. He wants to become King of your life. When a King rules, everyone is subject to the King. So you must want your heart and life to be subjected to God, your Heavenly King. Ask Him to come in and to purge out all the carnal traits and He'll do it. Shall we pray together, and you continue praying until you know that He has cleansed your heart with His burning, cleansing fire of the Holy Ghost."

That day and two days following were spent at Aunty Mary's seeking a pure and clean heart, and on the third day his seeking was rewarded, for the Blessed Comforter came in to abide and to be his Comforter continuously and constantly.

The week of the county fair turned out to be a blessed week in the heart and life of the boy who was determined to be a man, a Christian man . . . the boy who felt God's hand upon him from his youth! That boy is today a man . . . a Christian man!