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HOW THEY ENTERED CANAAN
(A Collection of Holiness Experience Accounts)
Compiled by Duane V. Maxey

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

RUFUS ALFONZO FRENCH
(Father of H. Robb French)

It was a long story which started way back with little Miss MacAfee down in Kentucky, a tollgate keeper full of the Spirit of God. People would fuss and quarrel at her as she collected the toll, but never a bitter word escaped her lips. She kept as sweet as though they had smiled at her and given her friendly words. The news of her heavenly spirit spread. People talked about it, marvelled at it. Finally a reporter from the Louisville Courier heard of the sanctified tollgate keeper and went out to interview her.

"Yes," she told him, "I gave my heart to God, and He's kept me converted ever since. After He converted me, I gave myself to Him, just abandoned everything to Him, and He cleansed my heart and sanctified me wholly!"

The reporter went back to his office, chuckling to himself. He would have a good time writing this up to make people laugh. He wrote it in burlesque, and the paper gave it front-page prominence with glaring headlines. Folk did laugh, some of them, but there was more to the story. A copy of the paper drifted down into Mississippi and into the hands of a Mr. Hopper, hungry for something he did not know how to obtain. He read about Miss MacAfee and was convinced she had what he wanted.

"Wife," he exclaimed, "I'm going up to see her!"

The next train found him on his way. It was not long until the little tollgate keeper was praying with Mr. Hopper, exhorting him, quoting the promises to him. God met the hunger of his heart and sanctified him wholly.

When he returned to Mississippi, he started preaching holiness, and, as he did so, Dr. Carradine, pastor of the largest church in southern Methodism, but dissatisfied with his own spiritual condition, came under Mr. Hopper's influence. Soon he too rejoiced in sanctification of heart.

According to his own testimony, Dr. Carradine had been ordained after having answered in the affirmative the questions, "Do you expect to be made perfect in love in this life? Are you groaning after it?" "I did groan after it until I got it," he later said laconically. "Then they made me groan because I had it. They turned the fire on me." He was obligated to locate and go out into evangelistic work.

Dr. Carradine's travels once took him as far as Colorado, into a little mission hall in Denver. In the providence of God it so happened that when Dr. Carradine was in Denver, Father was there too, six hundred miles from home, bringing a lawsuit against a company. He would get big money out of the suit, and that was what Father lived for then.

Mother had prayed earnestly for Father's conversion at this time, and before he left on this trip, she insisted that he go to Rev. Peck's mission at least once while he was in Denver. On Sunday evening he was on his way to hear Dr. Robert McIntyre, one of the great orators of the Methodist Church. He decided to go by the mission and listen to the singing. Then he would hurry on to the First Church.

Father was not interested in missions. He was a member of a big church, superintendent of the Sunday school, and a pioneer in the prohibition movement. He had even closed the brewery of the county in which he was county attorney. He confiscated the property and carried the case to the Supreme Court of the United States, winning the case in the interest of prohibition. It was the first case of its kind in the country.

Father had many good qualities, but still he was a proud man, and missions were farthest from his concern. Now, merely because Mother requested it, and because he did enjoy good music, Father stole into the mission, expecting to step out as soon as the singing was over. Then, Dr. Carradine rose to preach. Something about this man, his countenance, his bearing, caught Father's interest.

He thought to himself, "I believe I'll stay just a few minutes longer and see what he's going to talk about." And so he did.

Dr. Carradine began to preach full salvation. This was something Father had always fought. But as the preacher went on and unfolded Bible truth, Father felt that he had never heard the Bible preached before. He saw himself a sinner and a blinded holiness fighter, without God and without hope.

"What a fool I've been!" Father said to himself. "Why couldn't I see that before? Why, it's plain as can be. It's in the Book, Old Testament and New."

Forgetting the humble surroundings of the little mission, the First Church at home with its eloquent preacher, the lawsuit, and the neat little sum which he had hoped would soon fall into his lap, Father went to the altar and was converted. Then he went to the altar, seeking to be sanctified.

Now the Lord showed him that he was wrapped up in his business. He enjoyed the practice of law and he was making money -- big money. Covetousness -- that had always been his trait, and he did not deny it. He knew he was one of the most covetous men on the face of the earth. He was jealous of every banker on Wall Street. He did not want the Fords, the Rockefellers or the J. P. Morgans to have a penny.

"I'll never be satisfied," he had said once, "until I can fence in the whole world and own it."

Kneeling at the altar, Father knew that God was telling him he would have to close up his office and go and preach the Gospel. Preach the Gospel! Father had always felt a preacher was a fool. In college he had told some ministerial students, "You fellows are fools! Why, you'll starve to death!" And now God was calling him to be one of them!

Father could see an awful dark picture. He could see his children growing up without being educated. He could see them wearing old cast-off clothing. He could see their toes sticking out of their shoes. It seemed as though Father's heartstrings were tearing to pieces, but he looked up and said -- "Yes!"

Father stepped out on the promise, but did not have the witness of the infilling of the Holy Ghost as yet. After he had been seeking for five nights, he went down to the train to go home, got on a Pullman coach, and said to the porter, "I've been up five nights. I'm awfully tired. Please make up my berth in a hurry. I want to go to bed."

Father had no more than rolled over on his back until it seemed to him that the roof of the Pullman coach split, and the glory of the Lord rolled in. Down came a billow of holy fire, enveloping him completely and surging through his whole being. All night he rolled and tumbled and shouted. No doubt the other passengers thought they had a crazy man on board. No matter. Father had seen the Lord. God had taken the remains of sin and covetousness so completely out of his heart that he now lived for another world. He often testified later, "I got sanctified on a train speeding through the country and I have been on the move ever since."

Source: "H. Robb French -- Pioneer, Prophet and Prayer Warrior" Compiled by Anna Talbott McPherson

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