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

Vol. II -- Unnamed Accounts

ACCOUNT #066

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All this is but an introduction to a curious circumstance which took place five or six years ago in one of the Southern States. The main party concerned was a minister of the Gospel in the Presbyterian Church. For years he had been an active, zealous servant of God, when the great temptation of his life arose, began its assault, siege and sapping work.

While no criminality stained his soul, yet an infatuation had set in, drawing his thoughts and affections in forbidden directions, until a frightful moral peril, increasing daily in danger, threatened his character and salvation.

The mutual weakness of the two began to be observed, and some, with watch and almanac in hand, placed themselves, so to speak, to note the expected crash and downfall.

At this critical time the preacher, now almost vanquished, retired one night to his room. He was sitting in a chair near a center table, upon which rested a lighted lamp, when, happening to look toward the fire-place, he beheld to his unutterable horror, an agonized human face just over the mantel and thrust partly out from the wall! It was the countenance of the man whom he was on the verge of wronging in the darkest and most dishonorable manner. The face was convulsed; the eyes were turned upon him with such fury and hate that they looked as if they would burst from the head; the veins were swollen and the whole appearance that of a man longing to murder the being upon whom he was gazing.

The spectacle was so horrifying to the guilty conscience that the convicted man drew a large knife from his pocket and drove the blade into his breast just over the heart. As he did so he fell upon the floor, face uppermost, with the blood gushing from the wound, while the knife handle quivered and shook with the beating of the heart just beneath.

Momentarily expecting death, the unhappy preacher was afraid to look toward the mantel lest he should see again the dreadful apparition there, but, in a kind of mingled despair and supplication, cast his eyes upward, and to his amazement beheld a face, holy, pitiful and yet aggrieved, looking down upon him from the ceiling.

The lamp from the table threw a ring of light on the wall above, and right in this circle, which seemed like a halo, appeared this loving, melancholy, rebuking countenance. There was a peculiar glory resting upon it, and he felt in his inmost soul that it was Christ who was casting upon him that sorrowful, reproachful gaze. The face, while showing compassion, yet had also a commanding, protesting expression. Translated into language it would have read, "Do thyself no harm."

At this moment the wounded man lost consciousness, and the next morning was found by the members of the household lying on the floor and weltering in blood which trickled slowly from the wound, while the knife thrust up to the haft in the breast was still giving that quivering, oscillating movement in answer to the throb of the miserable heart close by.

The stab was not a fatal one, and in the course of a few days the subject of this sketch was out again, but bearing a deeper wound on his soul than the blade had given his body.

Up to this time he had been a great ridiculer and opposer of holiness, insisting that no man could live without sin in this world. But there was something in the two faces that looked upon him that night which made him wish to leave all sin forever. He conceived an unutterable horror of going to a world where agonized spirits glare on each other, and came into as great a longing for a country where the King's face, in its love, purity and truth, is the light and glory of the land. The fight against sanctification and sanctified people was all taken out of him, and he became the most thoughtful and melancholy of men.

At this time the papers announced the holding of a holiness convention in a large city not far from where the preacher lived. Without declaring his intention to any one, he made his arrangements to attend, determining, if there was truth in the doctrine and experience, he would find it out, and get rid of a "body of sin and death" which seemed to be located in his spirit somewhere, and that kept him bowed down as with a load almost continually. He had before this received pardon for his sins of thought and desire and for his attempted suicide. It was not forgiveness he wanted now, but deliverance, freedom, purity, holiness!

So he came to the city, arriving on the third night of the meeting. As he took his seat in the Tabernacle, he heard the people speaking in whispers around him of the power that had already come down. He found arising in him a strange interest in and desire to see the evangelist who was conducting the services. The building began to fill up rapidly, while the hands of the clock were approaching the minute when worship would begin. Preachers and laymen came in and took seats upon the platform, while whispering people would say, "There he is," "No, that is not the man," etc., etc.

At last, just as the hands pointed to half-past seven, a man walked upon the platform from a side door, and knelt for several minutes by a chair, with his head bowed low. For some reason the

visiting preacher felt his eyes riveted on the kneeling figure. He could not account for it, but his interest was almost a breathless one in a person whose face he had not yet seen. He felt without being told that the man praying was the evangelist, and there was a strange thrill upon him that this man was to affect his life in some powerful way.

Suddenly the evangelist arose and took his seat with his face toward the congregation and fronting in a straight line with the visitor. To the preacher's unspeakable amazement he saw shining on the countenance of the evangelist the same peculiar light and glory he had beheld on the face which had gazed upon him from the ceiling!

His emotion was so great that he could scarcely control himself, and but for the opening volume of song would have doubtless cried out. Little by little, however, the strange fact translated itself to his mind after this manner:

"God is in all this. There is His servant and he will bring me a message. The light and strange glory I see upon him is the Lord's endorsement and introduction of His messenger, and is a bidding to me to listen, believe and receive. By the grace of God I will."

And he did. As the sermon proceeded and the truth was unfolded, he saw the human need and the divine supply, the plague and the remedy of sin. He saw the possibility of obtaining a pure heart filled with perfect love, not as a development, but as an instantaneous work of grace wrought in the consecrated and believing soul.

At the conclusion of the sermon, he came all broken to the altar, and went again and again, until, on the fourth night of his public seeking, he found the pearl of great price, full salvation from all sin.

This was six years ago; and it was only last summer that we met him and had his story from his own lips. And, judging from the light in his face, the gladness in his eyes and voice, and the unmistakable peace in his soul, he was undergoing no regret whatever, that he had sought with all his heart, and given up all that he was and possessed, and had received in exchange the blessing of a restful, holy heart.

Source: "Remarkable Occurrences"
(Chapter 17 -- "The Face In The Ceiling")
By Beverly Carradine

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THE END