

The revival began in the Baptist Church, and the preacher was the Rev. P. R. Foster of Nova Scotia. Mr. Foster was a total stranger on Cape Breton and he even dared to come to the Church without an invitation a bold venture indeed.

This was how it happened: The preacher's health had been impaired, and he was obliged to discontinue his ministry and resume his early trade as a carpenter. One day while reading a religious paper and noticing that the church in Margaree was without a pastor, he said to his wife that he felt the Lord wanted him to go there and preach the gospel; but on account of his nervous condition Mrs. Foster dissuaded him. Months later, however, on noticing in the same paper that the Margaree church was still pastorless, the conviction seized him that this opportunity to serve was his call, so he said to his wife, "I must go." All her efforts to detain him were futile. Away he went, taking the first train. He sent a telegram requesting that they open the church for him to preach on the following Monday night, for he expected to arrive at noon of that day.

This was the strangest news of a religious nature that had ever come to the people of Margaree. A meeting of the brethren was held, and after some discussion and hesitation it was decided to open the church. "We shall hear him once," they said, "and if he proves to be an unworthy minister we shall lock the church against him."

Seven o'clock was the hour for the service. It was in the early autumn, the business season with the farmers, for they were harvesting their grain, and no one had any desire to leave work undone and go to hear a stranger preach.

Mr. Foster arrived at noon, took dinner with Mr. George Tingley, who had charge of the choir in the church, after which he requested his host to accompany him that afternoon to the top of the Sugar Loaf mountain for, he said that he desired to get a view of the famous Margaree valley. 'Sugar Loaf was four miles up the river, and from its lofty summit of 1,000 feet the visitor could see one of the finest sights in eastern Canada.

Together they went to the top of the mountain, and here is Mr. Tingley's recital of that memorable experience: "I shall never forget that day. 'I must pray for the valley/ said Mr. Foster, and

instantly he dropped upon his knees. And such a prayer. It is too sacred to relate. For more than an hour he prayed, first for the aged, just on the edge of the grave, then for the middle-aged, then for the children. He labored like a man seeking to rescue the perishing from some overwhelming disaster. The perspiration rolled over his face as he pleaded for the people in Margaree. It was so solemn and sacred I moved away about one hundred feet so as not to disturb the man of God. Finally he arose and said: 'Come on Mr. Tingley, God has given me the valley,' and Mr. Foster led the way down the mountain at a rapid pace, with the tread of a conqueror going forth to further conquest."

The hour arrived and father consented to my going to the service. The attendance was small, only about thirty persons, mostly composed of the deacons and their families. But it proved to be a memorable hour in the history of that church.

The preacher entered and immediately went into the old-fashioned pulpit, high up against the wall, with its two winding stairways. He opened the service on the minute, and conducted it in a most

Becoming manner. His text was Isa. 21:11-12. "Watchman, what of the night? The Watchman said : The morning cometh, and also the night : if ye will inquire, inquire ye : return, come."

Mr. Foster was a man of striking appearance. He stood as erect as a British Redcoat and looked like a true prophet of God, though some critics said he would pass for an actor, or a patent medicine man. His forehead was intellectual, towering high over his twinkling grey eyes. He wore a light brown beard of foxy tinge which fell in graceful waves down over his chest. His shoulders were slender but square and hung on his back as if on swivels, and his arms were straight, tapering gracefully to his finger tips. In every inch, movement and expression Mr. Foster was a man of ease, grace and action.

After giving his text its historical setting, he plunged into his discourse, emphasizing every point with eyes, head, hands and beard. Each successive climax was most touching and tender, almost over-coming the preacher himself. From beginning to

end his little audience was spell-bound.

The crisis was over for Mr. Foster and the deacons for both were on trial that night and the problem was happily solved for the Baptist Church. The impression made was so unusual that the congregation walked quietly from the building without speaking a word, but they gathered in little knots outside to express to each other their delight over the sermon.

On the following day, throughout the entire valley and glens far beyond, flashed the news regarding the wonderful preacher in the Baptist Church. On Tuesday evening many of the farmers left their grain in the fields and the chores undone in order to get to the church by seven o'clock to hear the new strange preacher who came uninvited. The church was crowded and curiosity was on tip toe. Again the impression made was powerful. On Wednesday night many persons were unable to gain admission, and thus it continued for some weeks until the close of the revival.

Mr. Foster was not in any sense a sensational preacher. His sermons were plain, Scriptural, evangelical and delivered in a passion for souls. Christ was the substance of every message. No one needed to advise him, as an old saint once counselled the writer, after hearing him preach when a student, "Brother, preach Jesus." Nothing I received in the seminary was more valuable than that pointed rebuke. It stuck and from that hour I resolved to make Christ the substance of my ministry, and this has been the secret of any success I may have had.

On Thursday night, for the first time, an invitation was given to men and women to confess Jesus Christ by simply standing and speaking that which their hearts prompted. There was no mourner's bench nor after service, but there in the audience the people were asked to make their confessions. No such sight had ever before been seen in Margaree. There was, apparently, no excitement; the service was quiet and dignified; but it was evident that the power of God had laid hold on men's minds and hearts most marvelously. Many arose among whom were not a few of the most outstanding sinners in the community, and men of the greatest physical strength. The families were large in Cape Breton and in not a few cases whole households sons and daughters gave themselves to Jesus Christ.

There was manifest in this and in one or two subsequent services a remarkable phenomenon. It was seen that about a dozen strong men, when they arose to ask for prayer completely lost their motive power and in some cases fell helplessly over the pews where they were sitting. A number of these at the close of the service had to be carried bodily out of the church and assisted to their homes. Moreover others, who when in the church did not thus manifest a lack of physical control, did lose their motive power when they reached the main road and had to be assisted to their destinations. In these cases the sense of sin was overmastering and they fell to the earth almost as helpless as dead.

And during all this glorious operation of the Spirit of God there was a silence that was profound and glorious. Neither before nor after the service were men and women seen visiting or conversing in the usual manner. Not a few of the "seekers" were so dead in earnest over their salvation that for days they abandoned their work on the farms and, with Bible in hand, betook themselves to the woods or quiet pasture lands to meditate and pray. And nightly in the services some of these would announce the glad tidings, that they had "found Christ," or had "come into the light." The latter was the common phrase used to express conversion, and was quite expressive and true to the facts. There was heard at every service these words : "I have come into the light."

But the "Foster revival," as it was called, was not confined to Margaree. Several male school teachers, natives of the valley, who had been teaching in neighboring settlements, some twelve miles distant, on hearing of the revival came under conviction of sin and were converted without the aid of any preacher, but as a result of prayer and reading the Bible. These new converts held services in their own communities and thus the glad tidings of salvation spread far and wide.

Mr. Foster served in the Baptist Church, then in the Congregational Church, then in several other communities in Big Baddeck, Whycocomagh, some twenty-five and forty miles distant, and everywhere he labored many were led to Jesus Christ.

From among the converts in Margaree alone it has been said that seventeen young men went forth to study for the ministry.

The Baptist Church gave a unanimous call to Mr. Foster to become their pastor and he accepted and remained with us for four years. That was the happiest and most prosperous period in the history of the Church.

It was during these meetings that I made the great discovery of God in Christ as my personal Saviour. I shall attempt to describe it without exaggeration.

In my early life, while I did not talk it, yet I was inclined to be skeptical, though at times I had a feeling that I should like to become a preacher. Prompted by this strange desire, I used to "play church" with my sisters and brothers on Sabbath afternoons, standing on a high chair with the family gathered around me for a congregation. I would announce a hymn, read a Scripture and then make a pretence at preaching. The performance was quite amusing to my audience, yet I did not think of it as funny, nor did I "play church" to make sport. I felt inclined to do this because of a strange desire to preach. Nevertheless I was inclined to be skeptical. What is the significance of this conduct before I was thirteen years old? Did it show that God was shaping my life for future service as a minister in His Kingdom?

"There is a Divinity that shapes our lives
Rough hew them as we will."

I knew nothing about religion, was not interested in family worship, often played "killing pig" behind the stove when father was praying, for which conduct he frequently administered a well deserved flogging. On one occasion, as a punishment for refusing to accompany my parents to church, my mother put me in a hot oven and kept me there until I promised to go. Swearing was my great sin, and during quarrels with my school chums I used to chase them through the woods cursing all the way. During one of these school wars I literally swore for a mile and thought nothing of it. And passing strange, mingled with all this deviltry I had a secret feeling that perhaps some day I would be a preacher. I was christened in my father's church before I experienced consciousness, and so far as I knew, or any one could see, this solemn service did not effect in any way a change in my young life. I was, however, like most of the boys I knew, irreligious, with my good and bad points always in evidence. And

this was my state of mind during the first week of the revival. At one of those services, when unable to gain admission because of the crowd, I looked through the church window and made faces at some of the girls I saw inside, for which I was called before the preacher the next day and severely reprimanded. No, I was not religious. As father told me, and rightly, that I was "in my natural state," and, withal, was strongly inclined to be skeptical.

During the second week of the revival I began to think earnestly on my relation to God. I was not excited or emotional, but began to reason thus : If all this is true and there is a God who sees and understands He must think of me only as a sinner.

Several things impressed me powerfully during this revival :

(1) The song and prayer services held by the converts on the country roads as they gathered in groups late in the night, after the church service was over. On the four or five principal country highways the singing could be heard for a considerable distance. I attended some of these services and heard young men pray who a few days before were as tough as any in the valley.

(2) The prayer meetings that were held in a partly finished house, owned by Dan Carmichal, were most stirring. The converts felt loathe to go home at the close of the service in the church and so they gathered in this house to pray. They had no light except that furnished by a borrowed tallow candle. The two floors were laid and the roof was finished, also the stairway to the second floor. This house was literally packed with earnest souls, including the stairway on which I was sitting, with my feet hanging down over the edge just above the jam below in the hallway. It was while here, sitting in this precarious position, that I offered my first public prayer. The prayer was brief, for someone who was sitting on the same step moved a bit and the pressure pushed me off the stairway, down on those who were kneeling in the hall. But the service went on as if nothing had happened.

(3) Another event which made a profound impression on me was the story told by two young men who were school teachers on the coast, down near the Cape North country, about sixty miles from Margaree. These teachers were serving in adjoining school sections. They knew nothing of

the mighty revival of religion in Margaree. But

strange to say, they had become restless, so much so that they could not continue their work as teachers. Meeting frequently, they told each other of their strange feelings. They had only begun the fall term a few weeks before, but they declared that they could not teach, and so informed the trustees of their respective schools. The trustees thought the teachers were homesick in that far away lonely part of the island and refused to grant them permission to abandon their work. However, they said they could not continue longer, so they started for their home in Margaree.

It was a long journey by foot across the mountains of Cape Breton, but, finally, on reaching a French settlement on the coast of Margaree Harbour, on the west side of the island, they went into a farmer's house for dinner. On learning of their home in the Northeast valley of Margaree, their host said: "Have you heard of the revival of religion in Margaree?" "No," they replied. "Well, they have all gone crazy up there over religion," said the Frenchman.

The boys arrived home and on that same night told their thrilling story to the congregation. They declared that they knew nothing of the revival, but that God had called them home, and there they yielded their lives to Christ. These two teachers returned to resume their work in their respective schools, but later they entered the Christian ministry.

No psychology can explain this moral phenomenon. It was God at work in answer to prayer, and in this, as in many other events that, occurred in this revival, there was found unanswerable proof of the supernatural fact of Christianity and that God does communicate Himself to men.

I attended all the services during the revival, but it was not until the second week that I decided to pray and seek salvation. I had a chum whose name let us say was Frank and nightly we went together to the services. I urged Frank to take a stand and confess Christ, but he always replied: "No, if you will, I will." I would nudge him in the ribs, boy-like, with my elbow and say, "Go on, you are older than I. When you get up and confess Christ then I shall." Frank nudged back and said: "No, if you will then I will." Night after night the nudg-

ing continued with the same result. Finally I decided that Frank was not in earnest and that I must take my stand alone.

I spent much of the time, during the days of this week, digging potatoes in an obscure part of the old farm where I was unseen by the neighbors. It was a narrow wedge-like patch coming to a sharp point at one end and the rows of potatoes ran crosswise. I began to dig at the narrow point and at the completion of each row knelt down in the ground to pray for light and leading, promising God that if he would give me strength to confess His Son before men I should do so that night. Prayer was answered and that night without speaking a word to my chum I arose in the service and said : "Pray for me. I desire to know Jesus Christ." It was no easy cross to bear, nevertheless, in resuming my seat I felt much relieved. I believed that a good service was performed, that I had put myself in the way of blessing.

Mr. Foster's text that night was : "For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, . . . the Son of man also shall be ashamed of him when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." I knew I had done my duty, my best, so far so good, but I experienced no special change in my life. Converts had told of how they "came into the light," but I could give no such testimony.

On returning to my home I left my chum at the wagon road and took a short cut across the backlands over a small footpath. It was one of the great nights in that northeastern clime. The milkmaid's path was in full bloom, the sky was ablaze and the myriads of stars seemed like gimlet holes in the sky to let the glory through.

Coming along on the path to where a cherry tree lay across the way, I sat thereon, removed my homespun cap, and looking up I worshipped the good Creator for having made such a wonderfully beautiful world for men.

I thanked God for His marvelous Universe and for, His goodness, but I had not "come into the light." What is that light of which I had heard so much in the revival? My worship, I fancy, was like that of a devout Jew, or Unitarian, or Moham- medan, or member of some secret society, who with the mind seek to worship the great Creator through

His works by the aid of those symbols which may suggest in some way the fact of God. I think I was in about the same attitude of mind and heart toward God as are many of those who in their churches worship by means of symbols or ritualism only.

Though I did not feel that I was a great sinner, nevertheless, I had a consciousness of sin, and this was the thing from which I sought freedom. With an intellectual conception of God, I tried to thank Him for His goodness. But to me this was not salvation, for I had no sense of peace, no rest, no consciousness of freedom from sin. Someone has said that the greatest question that man can ask is : "How can a guilty man be just with God?" This was what I longed for to be right with God and to know this beyond a doubt.

While sitting on the tree across the trail, my mind turned to Jesus Christ. I had now ceased praying. I was quietly meditating on Christ, and in this I thought of His Cross. I lay no claim to having had a special vision, but I did visualize Jesus in the long ago dying on the Cross, robed in blood and awful agony as He cried: "Father, forgive

them It is finished." Christ was there on the

Cross, as real to me as if I was present when He died. And with this vision of Him I became aware for the first time of my unbelief, of the sin of not believing in Him who died as my Substitute, and instantly I cried aloud : "Lord, I believe !" As quick as the lightning flash there came a flood of peace, joy, full, satisfying, deep down at the bottom of my life, and I became as restful as the surface of a mountain pool. What was it? It was the voice of God in my soul giving me the new consciousness of forgiveness, salvation, free, full, complete, simply because I believed on Jesus Christ, as I was aided by the unseen Spirit to cast myself upon His finished work. Now I knew I was saved, "born from above," by the power of an endless life. I was completely satisfied. I know I met God, and I found Him, or better He found me at the Cross.

I arose and went on my way singing as loudly as I could in the silent solemn hour of that glorious night :

"There is a fountain filled with blood

Drawn from Emmanuel's veins,

And sinners plunge beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

"The dying thief rejoiced to see

That fountain in his day,
And there have I, as vile as he,
Washed all my sins away.

"E'er since by faith, I saw the stream

Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die,

"Then in a nobler sweeter song

I'll sing Thy power to save,
When this poor lisping stammering tongue
Lies silent in the grave."

On retiring that night I wondered whether I
should awake on the following morning with the

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former feeling of indifference towards God. I feared that the rest of brain and nerves might effect a change in my spiritual enjoyment. But on the next morn the consciousness of God was as real as the night before, and instantly on rising I dropped upon my knees to pray. I was as changed in the morning as on the previous night, and this confirmed me in the conviction that my experience in the backlands could not have been a mere gush of emotion, self-hypnotism, or the effects of mind influence resulting from my nightly contact with the services. Formerly prayer was forced, now it is perfectly natural, easy, delightful, glorious a very conscious communion with God.

Next to Jesus Christ whom I met on the foot-path, I thought of Frank and wondered whether he would give himself to the Master as I did. When Mr. Foster preached the final sermon in the revival from the text : "The harvest is passed, the summer is ended, and ye are not saved," Frank who was present was still rejecting God's call.

Time flew on at rapid pace. Frank, like hundreds of other young men, left Cape Breton for the

West. The last I had heard of him he was shot dead in the barroom of a small hotel which he was conducting, and his remains were buried just outside the place where the dear fellow met his tragic end. When I heard of the sad death of this most promising young life, for Frank was one of the popular and beloved of the youth of Margaree, my thoughts went back to that hour of momentous decision in the Baptist Church when I accepted and poor Frank rejected the invitation to become a follower of Christ. Here came the parting in the way. It seemed a very simple thing for a mere lad, only thirteen years of age, to take a stand for Christ in a religious service, nevertheless that act decided my future life and destiny, for it was the beginning of my acquaintance with God.

Such a decision on the part of children is often looked upon as of no special value. "Don't excite the children. Don't let them go to these revival services. It is only emotion and dangerous to the normal development of the young life. Revivals create false ideas regarding religion, therefore keep the boys and girls away from them."

Perhaps the reader has heard such counsel given, possibly by parents who refuse to permit their children to attend special gospel services. But the little children understand what they are doing; they are usually more normal and true in their desire to know Jesus Christ and follow Him than are full grown folks.

"Youth is the time to serve the Lord
The time to insure that great reward."

Let the children plunge out into the deep sea of God's love and know those rich soul experiences before their hearts become hardened by unbelief and sin.

Yes, that was the most momentous act of my life, simple though it seemed to be, when I publicly con-

fessed to a desire to know and follow the Lord Jesus Christ. Would that I had the power to impress upon those who may read these pages the rich rewards that result from helping boys and girls to a definite decision for the Master. Frank was as worthy, yea I often thought more worthy than I,

but he had made a fatal decision, while I chose the better way. Dear good friend Frank, "Shall we e'er meet again ?"