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**Lyle
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Stories of Cuba

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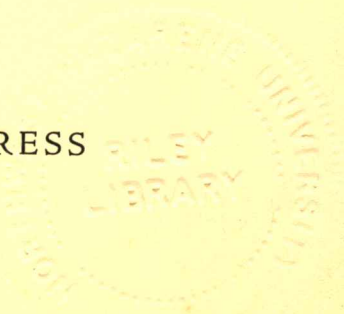
Stories of Cuba

A
by
Lyle Prescott

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Dedication

To my faithful wife, Grace, without whom I would be as
a bird without wings, this book is lovingly dedicated.



Preface

Where there have been no objections, real names have been used in the stories of this book. Where the stories involve persons who might object to the use of their names, fictitious names have been substituted. All names of places are real.

LYLE PRESCOTT
La Chorrera de Managua, Cuba
June, 1952

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CHAPTER I

Leona Gardner's Work Lives On

In January, 1902, among the pioneer missionaries sent to Cuba by the Pentecostal Mission of Nashville, Tennessee, was a slight little lady of tender heart and winning ways named Miss Leona Gardner. She loved the cause of holiness and she loved Cuba. When her group united with the Church of the Nazarene in 1915 she joined also and was known from then on as a Nazarene. She acquired an excellent command of Spanish and so adapted herself to the country that she hardly seemed like a foreigner to the Cubans. An estimation of her holy character may be gained from the remarks of a Methodist missionary in Cuba who came to know her. He said, "If all the Nazarenes are like Leona Gardner they are certainly a wonderful people!"

After the Cuban field was closed in 1920, Miss Gardner was sent to work on the Guatemalan field. Its missionary council sent her to open a work in the jungle town of Benque Viejo, just across the Guatemalan border in the colony of British Honduras. The work that she and her colaborers did there became the nucleus of the present missionary district of British Honduras.

When the Prescotts arrived in Cuba in 1946 they were providentially led to settle for a short period of language study in Trinidad, the very city that, unbeknown to them, had been the center of holiness efforts at the beginning of the century. There, twenty-six years after her departure, they began to find happy traces of the little pioneer missionary.

They encountered Leona Gardner's adopted Cuban son, James Jorge, on the train while moving to Trinidad (as told in the story "Where Trails Cross"). James was a grown young man with a responsible job in Havana with United States Steel. He offered his services to the Nazarenes, and when they opened a mission in Havana's Santos Suárez district, James visited them frequently and acted as their very first interpreter in the gospel services. That was, in a sense, the work of Leona Gardner living on.

Even earlier than that, while still at Trinidad, the Prescotts benefited from the work of Leona Gardner. A prominent citizen of the town came to them curious to know what church they represented and what sort of reception should be accorded them. By then the missionaries knew of his former acquaintance with "Miss Leona," as all the Cubans called Leona Gardner; so they asked, "Do you remember Miss Leona, the American missionary who used to live and preach in Trinidad?"

"Oh, yes," he responded quickly. "Miss Leona, she very leetle," and here he measured an imaginary person of very short stature, "but she very good preacher!" With this statement he gestured emphatically in the manner of the Cubans to show great pleasure.

"Well, we are missionaries of the very same church as that of Miss Leona, the Church of the Nazarene," we exclaimed.

"Oh, I am glad!" he replied with complete satisfaction. "I want you to take my boy and train him in your church."

One of the young women converted under the ministry of Leona Gardner in Trinidad was a mulatto named Mercedes. Mercedes persuaded her fiancé, Fernando Ortiz, to attend the Nazarene services, and soon he too found the Lord in a very definite conversion. Later, following their marriage, Mercedes died and Fernando moved to Havana and entered a business there, but he kept his religious experience. Many years afterwards, when the

Nazarenes again "invaded" Cuba, Fernando found the Nazarenes and was sanctified. Today he is a pastor in the church. The work of Leona Gardner lives on.

In her Cuban ministry Miss Gardner was greatly aided by a consecrated Cuban evangelist and his wife named Teófilo and Juliana Castellanos. After the Nazarene missionaries withdrew from Cuba in 1920, it was not known what became of the Castellanos. Thirty-one years later a Bible school class of Nazarenes was studying at the Nazarene Missionary Center near Havana, using the book *A History of Nazarene Missions*, by Roy E. Swim, when the teacher came across the name Teófilo Castellanos in the section on Cuba.

Fernando Ortiz, one of the students, spoke up and said, "I know Teófilo Castellanos and I know where he lives, too."

That spring the missionary superintendent and Fernando Ortiz made an exploratory trip down the island to the Province of Las Villas and found Teófilo and Juliana Castellanos in the town of Placetas. What a joyful reunion it was! Brother Castellanos, now over eighty years old, told how he had kept his Christian experience all across the years, though he had never joined another denomination. He had reared his children in the Protestant faith. The meeting in the Castellanos home was climaxed as the elderly couple again offered their names as members of the Church of the Nazarene, and the little group knelt for prayer. In the transcendent joy of that moment of prayer fellowship, the years seemed to roll away and Leona Gardner seemed to be kneeling among them, rejoicing in the salvation of her Cuban people and glad that her work was living on. Certain it was that the Spirit of the Lord hovered over those Nazarenes, old and new, and blessed their hearts in the union of Christian love.

CHAPTER II

Where Trails Cross

My first month in Cuba was a most hectic time of life in hotels, fruitless house hunting, numerous trips, considerable expense, and frequent illnesses among the members of my family. At last the searching ended when I rented a vast and antique house in the historical town of Trinidad. If the place had been as comfortable as it was spacious, it would have been far too nice for missionaries. But alas! its huge dimensions spelled only more space to clean and more water to drag from the ancient patio cistern with which to do the cleaning. Its dark interior was to prove the official headquarters of innumerable mosquitoes, centipedes, and cockroaches, a place where nightly conventions would be held to consider the important question of how to feed themselves and increase their worthy numbers. But that was a matter for the future. My present concern was to give the house credit for a low rental and a high ceiling to call our own. There was the further business of getting over a spell of fever and chills, so that I could get out of the Canada Hotel and return to my family in Camaguey. We must effect a move to this fabulous house in Trinidad before Christmas.

So I dressed shakily the next morning, boarded the slow train, that hauled everything from gamecocks to guitars, and returned to Camaguey. I found my family ill in bed, called a doctor, paid him five dollars, threw away all his hastily prescribed medicines, packed up, and returned to Trinidad.

As our little train with its outmoded wooden coaches painted blue or brown panted through the hills or puffed

past picturesque little villages of palm-thatch cottages, all the Juans and Marias of the community turned to stare or wave at the passing train, while all the Juans and Marias on the train leaned out the windows to stare or wave back.

At the frequent stops a quick plague of child beggars, dirty, uncombed, ragged, and barefoot, spread before the coach windows begging for pennies. "*Señor, dame un kilito!*" they begged, their eyes uplifted sadly, their dirty hands outstretched.

Sellers of the national lottery tickets paced back and forth before the windows shouting their numbers in hoarse voices. There were able-bodied men, village morons, and unkept old dames alike with a list of numbers on cardboard that looked like car license plates.

"Buy the number of the black cat," one would shriek.

"Buy the number of the Virgin," shouted another.

"Make your trip lucky with the number of the butterfly," croaked a third.

The train passengers satisfied their hunger from selections offered by the train butch or from trays of food hurried to the train windows by unsanitary-looking characters along the way. The butch offered Coca-Cola and native soda pops, all double price and not too cold. His box contained imported American apples, neatly wrapped sandwiches that proved very dry, and various kinds of crackers, cookies, and heavy cakes. The venders on the outside offered yellow, thinly sliced fried bananas in blue sacks. They salted the banana chips to suit the taste of their clients. There were fried cakes that looked lumpy with greasy blisters. Inside was a ground meat preparation that might originally have covered any kind of animal wont to roam the Cuban countryside.

Boys offered peeled oranges at two or three for a nickel. Youths tempted the better-dressed passengers with more expensive purchases of guava paste wrapped in cel-

lophane, or almond-filled Spanish candies in bright wrappers tied with straw.

The sugar cane fields gave way, the villages and towns disappeared, and the train began a climb through a series of low mountains. The vegetation was heavy and strange. Here and there was a clearing where a hill settler had built a rough cottage using long strips of royal palm bark for siding. Painted white, it contrasted sharply with the surrounding greenery; and, built low for storm protection, it enhanced the tallness of the dignified royal palms that graced the panorama as far as the eye could see. We learned later that the houses looked so white because they had just been whitewashed in preparation for the Christmas celebration, an annual cleaning customary in Cuban rural areas.

Naked brown children stopped their play to watch the passing train. Oxen stood yoked to great-wheeled carts beside the houses, or lumbered along rutted trails pulling carts loaded with huge sacks of charcoal. Mounted riders dressed in white *guayaberas*, the typical shirt of Cuba, riding trousers and leggings, and wearing wide-brimmed hats of straw from Ecuador, waited on their small horses at crossroads as the train chugged past. When the whistle sounded some of the men had difficulty controlling their frightened steeds.

We followed the course of a winding river whose waters were amazingly green. Where it ran more smoothly it was possible to see many large turtles lying at the surface. Along its banks were boys bathing their oxen or horses, but nowhere did we see boys fishing. Suddenly the train seemed to plunge right out into space; the hills fell away and we ran neatly through thin air, apparently. Then I looked quickly out the window and discovered that we were crossing a high bridge over the green river.

When we grew tired of the passing scenery we turned our attention to our fellow passengers. The women were

dressed generally in their best, their faces bright with cosmetics. The *guayabera* was very popular with the men. We admired their handsome straw hats and wondered at their long belt knives. They lounged in the seats, and smoked long black cigars that gave off a heavy odor like that of a prairie fire crossing a tar-weed patch. They talked in loud, friendly voices, halted momentarily when a pretty girl passed along the aisle.

Suddenly one of the passengers turned his attention upon us. He was a smartly dressed young man, evidently a Cuban, who came walking down the aisle from another coach. He slowed down when he heard us speaking in English and stopped before our seats to converse.

"Are you Americans?" he asked in good English.

"Yes, we are," I answered.

"What brings you to these parts?" he continued.

I explained that we had rented a house in Trinidad and were moving there to live.

"And why should you want to live in Trinidad?" he persisted.

I explained that we were evangelical missionaries and that we wanted to settle somewhere to learn Spanish so that we could begin church work.

"May I ask what church you are members of?" he inquired.

"We are missionaries of the Church of the Nazarene," I answered.

"What!" he exclaimed. "Why, my mother was a Nazarene missionary!"

Then it was our turn to be surprised. "Who was your mother?" I asked eagerly.

"Leona Gardner," he said.

"How wonderful!" I answered. "Leona Gardner was considered one of the finest missionaries in our church. But wasn't she a maiden lady?"

"Yes, that's right," he said. "My Cuban parents abandoned me when I was only three months old. Miss Leona took me in to raise as her own child. She called me Jewel. I have been educated both in Cuba and in the United States. I live in Havana, where I work for U.S. Steel, but I come as often as possible to visit relatives in Trinidad.

"I owe everything to Leona Gardner and the Church of the Nazarene. My name is James Jorge. Here is my address in Havana; if I can be of service to you there, let me know. And when we get to Trinidad I want to show you around. It is a fascinating place and I love it."

With these remarks, James moved on. We sat marveling at the way God had led us in our complete ignorance so that our pathway had crossed that of the earliest holiness missionaries in this part of Cuba. We had taken up again the trail blazed by pioneers of the Church of the Nazarene. God was leading us on!

CHAPTER III

Two Brothers Lead the Way

Mario and Alfredo were two brothers among a family of six children. Somehow they felt especially drawn to each other. Maybe it was because of Mario's sickness; none of the other brothers or sisters paid so much attention to him when the attacks came as did Alfredo.

Señor Martínez and his wife *Nélida* became anxious over their boy Mario. His health was not improving; he was not outgrowing this strange illness as they had vainly hoped he would do. So they decided to try one more doctor. They had tried so many and none had given any permanent help. Their meager income was already drained pitifully, but the health of their boy merited whatever sacrifice might be incurred.

Thus Mario accompanied his parents to the office of a specialist in Havana and a long series of examinations and analyses was made. When the final report came in, the parents were more than heartsick as their doctor sadly explained that he could do nothing for their son. *Señora* Martínez wept brokenly while her husband cursed bitterly.

Some time after this, the dejected parents heard of a spiritualist medium in the city who was reported to have a strange power to heal the sick. They had tried so many different things that had failed that they did not rally immediately to the report. Still, when they saw their boy suffering in his next attack, they felt they must keep trying to help him.

Once again they set out with Mario, this time not headed for a doctor's office but for the home of the noted

medium. The outcome of the strange adventure was that the medium healed Mario through the power of spiritualism.

The overjoyed parents were convinced that there was nothing equal to spiritualism. Through a physical benefit they became its spiritual slaves. *Señor* Martínez at once entered a course of study and eventually became a practicing medium with seances in his own home.

Strangely enough, Mario himself was not interested in spiritualism. It was enough for him that he felt better; he did not delve into the why of things. But his heart, nevertheless, was hungry for God; and when an evangelical missionary pitched a tent in his community and opened a revival campaign, Mario and Alfredo joined the sizable crowds that attended the services. Mario went forward one night and accepted Christ as his personal Saviour.

He was sure that this new religious experience was the best thing that he had ever found. He began to work on his younger brother Alfredo, persuading him soon to accept Christ, so Alfredo became a real Christian too.

Señor Martínez and his wife began to notice a beautiful difference in their two sons, Mario and Alfredo. What was the meaning of it? The boys were not loath to explain their new faith. Why not? It worked wonders in their daily lives. The parents began to compare their spiritualistic practice with the boys' faith in Jesus Christ. They had to admit that spiritualism could not touch men's moral lives with a healing touch. Nobody lived cleaner or finer or happier for his faith in spiritualism. But faith in Christ—that was different. That was something that really seemed to transform men's hearts and characters. They saw it demonstrated in Mario and Alfredo.

Thoroughly convinced at last, *Señor* Martínez and *Nélida*, his wife, renounced spiritualism and yielded their hearts to Jesus Christ. Today *Señor* Martínez is an offi-

cer in the Salvation Army and, where he once conducted a spiritualist circle, today his large front room is converted into a chapel where he proclaims the Good News.

And what of the Church of the Nazarene in the story of these two brothers? When Nazarene missionaries first opened work in Havana, they came in contact with Mario and Alfredo, who attended their services and helped in the work. Alfredo sought and found the experience of holiness. God called him to preach and he pastored successfully in two Nazarene missions in Havana before he left for the States, where today he is attending one of our Nazarene colleges in further preparation for a continued ministry in Cuba.

CHAPTER IV

They Asked for a Spiritual Church

In the beautiful port city of Cienfuegos, located along the central Caribbean coast line of Cuba, lived a youth named Geraldo Gómez. His parents were Catholics of a liberal mind, so when their son early showed an interest in a neighborhood evangelical church he was permitted to attend. Soon Geraldo was converted and, having a bright mind and definite leadership ability, he found a place of responsibility among the young people of the church.

Geraldo enjoyed the activities of his church and proved a good worker, but his heart was not satisfied. His heart was hungry for something deeper; he longed for a greater power to witness for Christ. He found carnal tendencies in his inner life that upset him and made those about him suffer. What could he do about it? More conventions and rallies did not satisfy him; greater responsibility in the youth organization did not solve the problem. His pastor's preaching on continued Christian growth did not work out in a removal of the difficulty. When he observed his pastor and family and fellow members of the church attending the local theater and saw them smoking freely, he was convinced that here was a very low level of Christian living, if Christian at all.

About this time, Geraldo learned of the Church of the Nazarene, which had just opened a work in Cuba. What he learned about it sounded very good. It made him interested to learn more. When the Gómez family moved to Havana a couple years later, Geraldo quickly found the Church of the Nazarene and before long placed his

membership in its ranks. He found valuable use for his previous training in church activities and soon was pastoring a small mission in old Havana. His ministry enjoyed good success and the work grew commendably.

In the new fellowship Geraldo found his heart's need satisfied. He found that satisfying portion in the work of entire sanctification.

Now he is studying in a Nazarene college in preparation for a fuller ministry in his beloved Cuba. He is married to a Cuban Nazarene girl and together they are building a happy Christian home.

* * * * *

In Las Villas Province, where lived Geraldo in his boyhood, there also lived a young lady named Rosalía Morales. She was, in fact, a member of the same denomination as Geraldo, though they lived in different cities. She attended an interdenominational Bible school in her province and later went out into rural areas to pastor several missions for her church. She enjoyed fine success.

But neither was Rosalía satisfied in her church. She saw its American missionaries and its Cuban ministers attend the theater, the circus, play games of chance, dance, and smoke. She saw the large emphasis it placed upon Masonry. She was sickened at heart at times and asked herself, "How can I spend all my life in the ministry of this church?"

Then God changed her paths through a most heart-warming providence. She had fallen in love with a fine Christian youth in Havana named Alfredo (the same Alfredo mentioned in the story "Two Brothers Lead the Way"). Her sweetheart had come in contact with the Church of the Nazarene, had joined it, had been sanctified, had been called to the ministry, and was happily filling a post in its ministry. Naturally Alfredo wrote to Rosalía to tell her about holiness and his satisfaction in the Church of the Nazarene.

To make a long story short, Rosalía came to Havana, joined the Church of the Nazarene, found the glorious experience of entire sanctification, and served in a pastorate, where she pastored most capably and fruitfully until she went to the States to marry Alfredo, who had preceded her there to begin ministerial study. Together they are now attending a Nazarene college, where they are preparing mutually for a richer future ministry in their homeland, Cuba.

On her way to join Alfredo, Rosalía stopped off at Miami to visit the Church of the Nazarene. She spoke with impassioned zeal as she told of her experiences evangelizing in the country.

"Men and women came horseback for miles to attend the services when they learned that a missionary [all national preachers call themselves missionaries in Cuba] had come to their community. Sometimes their horses had to wade deeply through the mud and water, but they came.

"Here in America you have so many churches, so many pastors, so many revival meetings, so many Bibles, while in my country," she wept, "there is so little! The people are blinded by Roman Catholicism. They are kept in ignorance by the church, which discourages them from having the Bible. Their minds are fed upon fables and man-made doctrines. Their lives are full of superstition. Oh, my poor people that need Christ so badly!

"We deeply appreciate what the Church of the Nazarene is doing for Cuba! We love its dear missionaries. I want to better prepare myself to carry the story of salvation to my own people. I will always be indebted to this spiritual church which has brought the message of heart purity to Cuba!"

CHAPTER V

High Place in a Low Crowd

The saddest experience of a minister of the gospel is to see people make a good start in the kingdom of God, then turn back and be lost in sin. With great anguish of heart Paul must have written, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." But a consideration of the failures sometimes stirs us up to live closer to God and to be counted among those who make it through to heaven.

One of the most promising converts to be won in the ministry of the Church of the Nazarene in Cuba was Graciela Menéndez. She had a keen mind and a capacity for hard work. When she graduated from high school she made the highest grade of all graduating students in Cuba in the final examination. She is now about to receive her doctor's degree in philosophy from the University of Havana, having gone all the way through the university on scholarships.

When the Church of the Nazarene opened its first mission in Havana in Santos Suárez, its missionaries located the Menéndez family, who lived nearby. Graciela lived on the rear of a lot in a tiny apartment with her widowed mother and older brother. The mother was a seamstress and worked hard to supply the needs of her little family. The brother worked at odd jobs trying to help the family budget all he could. But Graciela was the scholar and everything was turned toward the end of giving her a good education.

Graciela had attended another Protestant church in the city and had a basis of Christian culture. However, she found no real satisfaction or change of heart in its formal ministry. When she came to the Nazarene mission

on Enamorados Street it was with a hungry, sincere heart. Soon she knelt at the altar and found a beautiful Christian experience. How bright was her testimony, how faithful her attendance, how lovely and modest her appearance!

Then Graciela enrolled in the University of Havana, where she became enamored of a new world. She fell in love with a student in her class, though he despised all religions and disbelieved in God. When Graciela still insisted on attending church services, her friend stood out on the sidewalk and waited for her until the meeting was over. He refused to listen to the messages.

Graciela's mother was a Chinese mulatto; her father had been a Latin. The brother showed the colored strain somewhat, but in Graciela the only indication was a beautiful waviness in her long, naturally blond hair. Her mother wanted her to climb socially and saw that with her blondness she might well win a white husband. So when Graciela brought her white friend home, though he was an atheist, the mother was highly satisfied. Later the family learned that Graciela's friend was also a Communist; but still the mother favored the proposed marriage. She was willing to make any sacrifice in order to gain a white husband for her daughter.

Now Graciela has turned Communist too! More, she is the secretary of a Communist youth league among the university students—she who was once a sincere, converted Nazarene girl! She who was once offered a scholarship in a Nazarene school in the States, but who turned it down because of her new-found boy friend!

This is the present picture; this is the scene that lies before the Nazarenes in Cuba. This is Demas who hath forsaken us, having loved this present world. This is the challenge to the power of the holiness ministry in Havana. This is the great need that confronts us: power to save the lost and the backslidden.

The case of Graciela Menéndez is a challenge to the prayers of Nazarenes everywhere.

CHAPTER VI

The Girl Who Didn't Want to Be a Fool

In a section of Havana called Santos Suárez lived Celinda, a beautiful girl of fifteen, with her widowed mother and younger sister. Celinda's home was one of the unattractive apartments that opened onto an ugly courtyard on Enamorados Street. None of the renters, and least of all the indifferent landlord, bothered to try to beautify the narrow patio. Instead of potted plants in neat rows stood odoriferous garbage collections in rusted lard cans. Instead of the lyrics of canaries or the tinkling of crystal waters from a central fountain, there was only the crash of garbage cans as stray goats pawed and nuzzled for food, or the anguished screams of mangy cats as they fought in the shadows. No matter how poor the families, each had a radio, and while the apartment occupants were home their several radios blared discordantly.

This is where Celinda lived. She was accustomed to it; it did not seem so bad. But she could not help noticing a difference in the home of the Nazarene missionaries a block away. Their house was white, their patio simple and clean, and the atmosphere of their home was peaceful. After they had lived in Santos Suárez a few months studying Spanish, they opened their home for public services and organized a Sunday school.

Celinda had a lovely soprano voice. People told her it was very beautiful and she believed them. She enjoyed showing off her nice voice. The Nazarene mission had a good piano and the pastor played. Even when folk would not enter the house to attend the services, many would

stand on the sidewalk or step upon the porch just to watch him play and to hear the people sing.

Celinda joined a group of young people who also liked music and began attending the Nazarene mission services. It was fun to sing with all one's heart. And the music was beautiful. Occasionally Celinda felt a wave of real inspiration lifting her up as she sang.

Celinda's mother was away from home working most of the time. She had to support herself and two girls. It was hard. She did not give much thought or time to the conduct of her daughters or to the places they went. She did not mind if Celinda attended the mission services; it kept her off the streets, and the girl seemed to be happy.

Then the mother began to notice a change in Celinda. She had been to the altar and had sought God. She was quieter; she no longer painted her pretty mouth large and bright with lipstick. She was always singing some hymn or gospel song about the house. And, worst of all, she began to question the family custom of placing flowers before the saints and praying to the plaster images.

One day the mother began to scold her daughter: "Celinda, what's the matter with you? Have you gone crazy over religion? You are just carried away by those Americans. Why don't you use lipstick any more? You're making yourself ugly!"

She ranted on and on. It was almost impossible to get a word in edgewise. (Nobody has heard a deluge of speech until he has listened to an excited or angry Latin haranguing.)

"Those crazy Americans are making a fool out of you!" she screamed. "Do you want to be a fool?"

"Of course not," defended Celinda, "but . . ." There was no time to explain.

Her mother rushed on: "They're making a nun of you! That's what they're doing, making a nun out of you. You've gone crazy over religion!"

The girl resented her mother's attitude; she was unhappy. This sort of treatment continued. Celinda still went to services in the missionary home, but her interest was lessening. Then she quarreled with some of the other young people. Somebody said she was in love with Armando because he had a nice baritone voice. It was ridiculous. Armando came only to her shoulder, though his voice was changed. Somebody accused her of being a show-off; he said she sang only to hear herself. It was partly the truth and it hurt.

Both Celinda and Armando quit going to services. Maybe Celinda's mother was right; maybe she was making a fool of herself. And she certainly didn't want to be a fool.

Then Celinda fell in love with a young fellow. He was fat and colored while she was beautiful and white. However, that didn't matter because his parents had plenty of money. Didn't her mother always say that money was the most important thing in life? Was not her mother working herself to the bone for money?

Celinda and her boy friend, Lazaro, made their own plans. They were not good plans, but they would probably work. Each would get what he or she wanted. Lazaro wanted Celinda; she was beautiful. Celinda wanted money; Lazaro's folks had money. That would mean that she could get it eventually, she thought.

So Lazaro eloped to a hotel with Celinda one night. They hid away from their parents for three days. When they finally made their appearance, their shocked but relieved parents embraced them warmly. Lazaro's parents could see that Celinda was very pretty. Now she was theirs; their boy had made a good catch. And Celinda's mother could see that Lazaro's family had money; look at the beautiful new home they had just built. Celinda had done all right. So Celinda went home to live with Lazaro.

In a short while a wedding was arranged. It was a gala affair. There were many cars in front of Lazaro's house. There was much liquor served.

Not too long afterwards a baby girl was born to Lazaro and Celinda. Never again did Celinda attend the Nazarene mission services, though her new home was only a block from the church. Her heart was elsewhere and there was no time to sing. No, Celinda was not going to make a fool of herself over religion.

Then trouble entered between Lazaro and Celinda. They were not happy. He was interested only in her body; she was interested only in his money. It was a weak foundation upon which to build a decent marriage. It was a house built on sand.

Lazaro and Celinda separated and divorced. Lazaro's parents kept the baby girl. Celinda returned to her mother in the dingy apartment that opened onto the ugly patio where goats meandered slovenly during the day and cats slunk about at night.

Life was shallow and unsatisfactory; money was scarce. They needed more money. Celinda had not stayed long in the beautiful new home of Lazaro, but some of its more costly ideas had come back with her to the poor little apartment on Enamorados Street. She must have money.

Celinda began to entertain men in the apartment. It was rather exciting; there were so many different men. And it did bring in money. Some of the men had cars and took her out to places with brightly lighted exteriors and dim interiors.

Celinda's mother saw how easily the money was coming in. She left her job. Men began to visit her too, and more money came in.

And now? Now, surely, Celinda cannot say that religion has made a fool of her. But sin has! Vanity, avarice, lewdness, and harlotry have turned both Celinda and

her mother into the two biggest fools on Enamorados Street.

The last chapter of this story has not yet been written. Two different forces are seeking to write it. One force is composed of unhappiness and venereal disease and sin. The other force is composed of Christian love and holiness and missionary vision. Which will write the closing words?

May God save Celinda and her home!

CHAPTER VII

Three Brave Boys

In a newer section of Havana called Gavilán there live three boys who are members of the Gavilán Church of the Nazarene. Their story is interesting because it shows how even today there are young people willing to pay a price to be Christians.

Hernán is fifteen. He lives only one-half block from the Church of the Nazarene. When the property was first purchased and remodeled for services, Hernán began to attend. He came at first from mere curiosity; later, because he had nothing else to do; finally, because he became genuinely interested. And he keeps coming because he found the Lord and joined the church.

However, five years ago when Hernán first attended as a boy of nine, he was a naughty boy. He and his pals tried to make it hard on the pastor, and they pretty well succeeded. They brought stinkweed to services, they led their mangy dogs into the church, they fought one another during meetings. They imitated animal cries, talked and giggled during prayer, and crawled under the benches to pinch one another. Once they brought white mice to the meeting, much to the loud consternation of some of the girls. At times they turned frogs loose on the other worshipers, and frogs are feared dreadfully by most Cubans. In general, they completely ignored the pastor's requests for order and reverence. At times it seemed almost impossible to carry on further.

As long as the boys and girls were bad their parents took no note of their department. There seemed to be no objection to attendance combined with poor behavior. It was all a funny joke—on the Protestants. But as soon as the gospel began to take effect on the children and they grew more serious, their parents became aware of the

church as a spiritual force and, being Catholics or spiritualists, they began to oppose the church.

Hernán's parents are involved in a religion that is a popular blend of Catholicism and spiritualism, and in their home is an altar with the image of various saints. Hernán refuses to worship the saints and is disliked for that. He does not enter into the family habits of drinking liquor, smoking tobacco, gambling, and attendance at worldly amusements. He is ridiculed and lives under the constant strain of being like an outsider in his own home, except that he is not accorded the usual courtesies given an outsider. For his vital faith in Christ he is estranged from his own family.

Notwithstanding home opposition, Hernán is determined to live for Christ. He testifies that God has called him to preach the gospel, and he has begun studying in the Nazarene Bible Institute. May God keep Hernan strong and true!

* * * * *

René is a boy of sixteen who lives near Hernán. They are friends and began together to attend the Church of the Nazarene. Together they devised means of being naughty in the church when they were smaller. Together they seek now to live for Christ.

René's peculiar problem arises from the fact that his is a broken home. His parents separated and divorced several years ago. Now René works trying to help support his mother and two sisters, whom he loves sincerely. But his home ties are sorely taxed because his mother and sisters jeer and mock at him for his interest in the gospel. Every move he makes to draw closer to Christ becomes the occasion of much ridicule at home. When he kneels at the altar seeking to be sanctified, he knows that his family will soon know of it and will sneer at his serious spiritual interests.

But God is on René's side!

* * * * *

Orlando, who is eighteen, began attending the church later than the other two boys. From the first he manifested a hunger for salvation and soon came to the altar, prayed through, and gave a clear testimony. None of the young people have been more faithful in attendance than he. Orlando loves music, sings well, and contributes to the musical program of the church.

Orlando's problem is similarly a domestic one. His parents separated, his father later died, and the boy was sent to live with a domineering grandmother who, fortunately, lived only two blocks from our Gavilán church. When the Catholic grandmother observed how seriously interested Orlando was in the Church of the Nazarene she began to smolder with anger. When she learned that he had actually been converted and joined the evangelicals, she was furious.

"I'd give half my right arm to see that church burn down!" she screamed.

Life at home is not pleasant for Orlando, though by now the grandmother is beginning to appreciate the happy change that Christ has wrought in Orlando's life. If she has not made it more pleasant for Orlando, he has at least made life more pleasant for her.

The three friends, Hernán, René, and Orlando, have found friendship in their Nazarene missionaries and tranquillity in the Nazarene Missionary Center that they fail to find in their respective homes. They come to our home to visit our own young people, to work on the grounds, or to work at hobbies in the carpenter shop. They go swimming in the nearby Chorrera River. Frequently on Saturday afternoons they go along in the mission station wagon to help in the services at the fishing villages of Rincón de Guanabo and Boca de Jaruco.

It is no mere chance that they love to sing: "I've found a Friend in Jesus; He's everything to me!"

CHAPTER VIII

I Saw a Gangster Die

I was returning from a funeral wake on the outskirts of Havana one night when I stopped at Tamarindo Corner to make a bus transfer. It was eleven o'clock and fairly cool, but I was thirsty, so I stepped up to the counter of the corner restaurant to ask for a Pepsi-Cola. Informed that there was none, I walked across the street to inquire at another soft-drink counter. While I stood quenching my thirst it began to rain, and the rain fell in such torrents that I could not recross the street to catch my bus.

Suddenly shots sounded close at hand. Some man shouted, "*Tiroteo!*" which means "a shooting." With that cry consternation seized the bystanders and they fled abruptly in every direction, fanning out into the rain seeking protection from the flying bullets. Clerks ducked behind their counters; men fell flat upon the floor, lying still as pancakes. Others dodged behind thick columns, while still others fled around the corner and down the street out of sight.

In no time at all I was the only person left standing around. Then shots continued. Quickly I too got into the spirit of things and ducked behind the nearest counter. When I looked at my defense I found it was only a glass showcase full of cigars. A lot of help it would have been had a bullet been sent my way!

There was a lull in the shooting. I peeked over the counter but could see nothing in the direction of the shooting because a big blue sedan had driven up to the curb.

Suddenly the shooting began again. I dodged behind the barricade of tobacco and waited. Then the shooting ceased. I looked up just as the big blue sedan veered across the street and stopped at the crosswalk awaiting someone. There, walking along the sidewalk with apparent calm, was a well-dressed young man with a large nickel-plated revolver. He held the gun against his right leg so that it was not seen from the opposite side, and thus he approached the waiting car.

Then a uniformed policeman, holding a black revolver at ready, came running along the intersecting sidewalk approaching the young man and the sedan. He evidently saw guns trained upon him from the waiting car because he ignored the young man and turned to the right in the direction of the previous shooting. As the policeman turned away, the rear door of the sedan opened, the youth leaped in, and the automobile sped down "Jesus of the Mount" Boulevard and was lost to sight.

With the disappearance of the sedan, people quickly converged upon the scene of the shooting. From the emptied streets a hundred people suddenly appeared, all talking rapidly and loudly. I left the questionable shelter of the cigar counter without a word of thanks and hurried across the street, where a crowd was gathering.

Crumpled up on the walk lay a long figure, motionless but breathing in short gasps. His chest and abdomen were riddled with bullets. In his right hand he still clutched a black automatic. On the wall behind him and across the column in front were the scars of the recent hail of bullets.

Somebody suggested carrying the dying young man to the nearby *casa de socorro* (emergency hospital). Gingerly several men bent to pick up the red-stained figure, which became a corpse by the time they arrived at the emergency station a block away.

I caught the next bus going toward my home. I was like one walking in a horrible dream. I had seen a man

shot to death on the street. I had been out of the line of fire only because I had crossed the street to buy a certain brand of soft drink. I had not returned to the point of danger because it had begun to rain. The dead had stood waiting for the same bus that I had waited to catch. He had died; I lived.

The next morning's paper stated that the dead had been a member of a certain notorious revolutionary gang. He had died shooting it out with members of a rival gang. The paper did not lament his passing; the crowd at Tamarindo Corner did not mourn his death. But a soul was lost forever in hell—a soul for whom Jesus Christ had died in vain!

My heart sickened. I prayed: "O God, don't let the death of Jesus be in vain for the people of Cuba! Mightily help these people, to whom life seems so cheap, for whom death comes so often. Use the Nazarenes to save these poor, lost hearts. Give us a sweeping revival in Cuba, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen."

CHAPTER IX

Alicia Dies Singing

A little boy at Arroyo Hondo, Pinar del Río, became ill with a persistent fever. He began to complain of pain in one leg and soon his parents noticed that when he walked it was with a noticeable limp. It was never pronounced infantile paralysis, but the case was very suspicious.

Not long after this case, a young mother among the Nazarenes became very ill with fever. Then with horror the family discovered that her body was paralyzed from her throat down. They could do nothing to relieve her pain or overcome the paralysis. A doctor was summoned from the nearest town as quickly as possible. He ordered the patient to be removed at once to the hospital at Pinar del Río. Rapid preparations were made to get Alicia, the patient, to the hospital. A brother rode horseback to the highway and hired a car to come get the patient.

While others were hushed with fear and heavy with heartache, Alicia was peaceful, though suffering intensely. Her three children stood sobbing while they watched their mother lifted painfully into the car. Alicia began to sing to express her strong confidence in the Lord.

*There is power, power, wonder-working power
In the blood of the Lamb;*

*There is power, power, wonder-working power
In the precious blood of the Lamb.*

And why not sing? Had not she been converted recently under the ministry of her own brother? Did not she believe that Jesus would go with her and take care

of her? And somehow her singing comforted those whom she left behind. When the little car had worried itself over the rocky trail on the first steep hill and had dipped out of sight beyond the horizon, the Nazarenes went back into their homes and fell on their knees and prayed.

Alicia was examined briefly at the Pinar del Río hospital, then hurried on to a hospital in Havana. Various doctors examined her but were uncertain of the nature of her paralysis. A Nazarene missionary, accompanied by several national pastors, anointed her with oil and prayed for her healing. But God had other plans. Before the special nurse arrived, God called Alicia home to be with Him. She left this world the same way she left Arroyo Hondo, singing the praises of Jesus. Only by the time of her death had the doctors diagnosed her case as a very malignant form of poliomyelitis.

The body was shipped back to Arroyo Hondo for burial. Two hundred people gathered at the little palm-thatch home for the customary wake. It was hardly believable that the house would contain so many. Sympathetic friends and neighbors came all the way from little farms on the pine-clad hills to the large tobacco plantations along the highway. Even the mayor of the town of San Juan y Martinez, twenty miles away, attended the wake.

The pastor of the Nazarene church, whose sister it was who had died, and the missionary superintendent held a gospel service at the wake. Nazarenes nowhere would let an opportunity like that go by without presenting the gospel claims and comfort.

The sad-faced Cubans, all of Catholic background, could not understand why the family of Alicia was not hysterical with grief. Especially they could not understand how the women folk were so contained and tranquil. The missionary was grateful for the opportunity to explain to them that it was the peace that Jesus gives

that made the difference. He told how Alicia came to accept the Lord as her personal Saviour. He told how she went away to die singing the praises of Jesus.

It was amazing, scarcely believable; none of those Catholic country folk had such rest and joy in their hearts. None of them in similar circumstances could have gone away to die singing. What was this power that put a song in dying lips? It was the power of the risen Lord.

So Alicia was buried.

A month later, as the missionary traveled by bus through Pinar del Río city en route to Arroyo Hondo for his regular monthly visit, the bus encountered a great crowd of people gathered before a large house in the city. The cars and people blocked the usual route and the bus had to detour. Why all the people? What had happened?

This was the wake for the mayor of San Juan y Martinez, the same mayor who, less than a month ago, had attended the wake for Alicia and who had heard a gospel message in her parents' home. And now his body lay in state at his parents' home. But there was no gospel message, and there was no spirit of tranquillity. It was unmitigated sadness. Here women wept in a hysteria of grief. Here was Catholicism offering all that it could of solace, with hearts left bare of peace and rest.

The mayor had attended a public cockfight, entering one of his own prize birds in the ring. Amidst the gambling, the shouting, and the bloodshed of the gamecocks, the mayor became so excited that he suffered a heart attack and fell dead in the ring.

The rich casket of the mayor stood over a beautiful tiled floor in a fine city house. The simple casket of Alicia, the cheapest obtainable, had stood over a crude earthen floor in a poor thatch-roof cottage in the country. The mayor died screaming as he gambled over a cockfight, while Alicia died singing, "There is power in the blood of the Lamb."

CHAPTER X

Ramón Prays Through

At Arroyo Hondo, Pinar del Río Province, in a tiny palm-thatch hut beneath a mango tree lived a barefoot old man with his thin little wife. Their names were Ramón and Emérita. Near the home of Ramón was a new palm-thatch Nazarene chapel with cement floor and comfortable benches. It was called the Johnson-Southwest Oklahoma Chapel for its donors. All was painted neatly; the pastor planted flowers in a small plot in front. It was unquestionably the nicest building in that farming community, and it set a standard of improvement.

Other houses nearby were being sided with better material, or painting up, or adding a front porch. Ramón caught the spirit and began to work on his house too. He took the wide skirts of pliable bark at the base of the royal palm fronds and dried them after cutting them into large sheets. These he applied as siding for his house. He collected Sunday-school papers and papered the inside walls. He added a front room to his house and smoothed out the dirt floor, tamping it down solidly until the red clay earth looked almost like red cement flooring.

The Nazarene missionaries announced that there was going to be a camp meeting at their missionary center at La Chorrera de Managua in Havana Province. All the Arroyo Hondo Nazarenes were talking about it, and all wanted to attend. But there was little money to buy suitable clothes and no money for transportation.

Almost at the date of the camp meeting somebody sent a gift to the missionaries and it was shared with the Arroyo Hondo Nazarenes to help them get to camp. Among

the half dozen or so who finally arranged to attend was Ramón. His preparations were simple: a bath in the shallow stream near his home, the purchase of a new pair of work shoes, and the act of putting on his wide-brimmed straw hat, of a type called *jipi-japa*, popular among Cuban country folk. He wore no coat because he had none. He rolled up no bedding because there was only enough for his thin little wife, who must stay at home.

In company with the others of the chapel, he set out walking the five miles to the San Juan y Martínez highway, where they could catch a bus going to Pinar del Río. There at the provincial capital they could transfer to a bus going to Havana, and at Havana they could catch a third bus going out to the Nazarene Missionary Center.

Ramón was very accustomed to this hilly, red-soil country with its generous greenery of wild guava patches, mango groves, and multitude of sentinel-like royal palms. The scenery he hardly noticed. He thought of it only in terms of productivity, distance, and difficulty of travel. Its gracious artistic aspects never registered on his mind at all. He hardly saw the colorful gradations of rose that embellished the heart of the jagged wild pineapple lining the narrow ox trail along which the travelers hiked. He did not know that many an American tourist would have been charmed by the sight of the unique *guira* tree, with its octopus-like branches covered with close-lying leaves and adorned with numerous hard, green gourds. He paid little attention to the swift, gray lizards that dashed across his path, then topped a boulder or dashed up a fence post to send a bright challenge, blowing out their red and cream throat skins. He gave scant attention to the birds that lived in his country, though he recognized the *mayito* that flitted black and yellow across his path, the little *tomiguin* that country boys trapped to sell as house pets, the *toti* that dropped dates from up in the seed clusters of the royal palms, and the *judío* that cleaned ticks off the cattle in the fields.

Today Ramón was thinking of other things. He was going to Havana. He had never seen his capital city before. Never had he seen a streetcar or a steamship. It was certainly exciting, even for an old man. And he was going to camp meeting, too. What was a camp meeting like? And would God really satisfy his heart hunger? These were the things he thought about that day as he traveled to La Chorrera de Managua.

* * * * *

Camp meeting had begun. All the Arroyo Hondo group sat well toward the front of the simple farm building converted into a camp-meeting tabernacle. They joined in the singing with all their hearts. Ramón was not much of a singer, but what he lacked in music he made up in smiles. The evangelist, Dr. C. Warren Jones, arose to preach. To his right stood the interpreter, the missionary superintendent.

Dr. Jones began: "It certainly is a treat for Mrs. Jones and myself to be with you good people!"

Ramón, with others, murmured softly, "The same to you!"

Dr. Jones went on to announce, "Now you know, I have only two themes that I preach on: holiness and missions. So you may expect messages along these two lines all through the camp meeting."

Soon Dr. Jones warmed up to his subject and preached with all his heart. His interpreter could hardly keep up with him. Sometimes he didn't. Ramón leaned forward in his seat eager to catch every word.

At the close of the message when Dr. Jones gave an altar call, Ramón was one of the first to come forward to the altar. He did not pray through at the first service, but he did not become discouraged.

The first night of the camp meeting it turned cold. January in Cuba can be quite chilly, especially when there is a cold wave on the East Coast of the United

States. Of the two dozen or so who came to stay on the grounds, only one person had brought bedding, and he brought only one sheet. The missionaries scurried about, hard pressed to find bedding for all. They stripped their own beds and slept beneath overcoats.

The next morning they found most of the Arroyo Hondo Nazarenes wandering about the grounds without coats and hunched over to ward off the cold. Mrs. Grace Prescott remembered a gift box of sweaters and raincoats that had come from a missionary society on the Southwest Oklahoma District. Now was the time to use that clothing. What could be more appropriate than helping to clothe the same people for whom that society had helped build a chapel? So it was not long until Ramón was snugged into a new raincoat. He grinned happily as he offered his thanks. Until the end of camp meeting he wore the coat constantly, then took it home to Arroyo Hondo.

At last came the closing service of the campaign. Others had prayed through, but not yet had Ramón gained the victory for which his heart was hungry. Surely a camp meeting ought to mean more than good meals, a good raincoat, and good preaching! God's special blessing rested upon the closing service. Dr. Jones preached with all his heart. Christians prayed earnestly during the message. Conviction settled down heavily; there was an atmosphere of salvation in the tabernacle. The house was full; hearts were hungry. And best of all, the Holy Spirit was working.

When Dr. Jones opened the altar for seekers, Ramón came forward quickly and knelt far to the right side. A line of kneeling seekers formed clear across the front of the building, then a second line knelt behind them. How they prayed! There was an intensity of desperation of spirit. Some prayed through and arose to praise God for the joy of pardon or purity. Others prayed on.

Suddenly five people prayed through at almost the same moment. And one of them was Ramón. What ec-

stasy of joy swept over him! He could not rise to his feet, but rocked back and forth on his knees, his eyes closed, his face lighted with a beautiful smile, his hands raised in praises to God. The joy intensified and Ramón wept with happiness. His eyes still closed, he grasped the first person within reach and embraced him fervently, praising God, crying and weeping for joy. He could not praise and thank the Lord enough. His fervent embraces could not express all his new-found happiness.

Holy joy swept over the congregation. Weeping, shouting, and testifying blended harmoniously together in a beautiful spirit of Christian love. It was like a taste of heaven.

Never could the Cuban Nazarenes be the same again. Never would they forget their first camp meeting with Dr. C. Warren Jones, when the blessing of God was poured out upon them. And it would not be the same Ramón who would return to Arroyo Hondo to testify that he was a new creature in Christ Jesus.

CHAPTER XI

The Story of Faithless Abraham

It was my habit to visit the large Havana tuberculosis hospital called "La Esperanza" once a week. Usually I called there on Sunday afternoons, giving out tracts, Gospel portions, and Sunday-school papers. Where possible I talked personally with the patients about their soul welfare and had prayer with them.

One afternoon at "La Esperanza" I stepped to the bedside of a young man about thirty years of age whom I did not know, and I offered him a Sunday-school paper.

"What's that?" he demanded rather sharply.

"It is literature from my church with an interesting Bible study," I replied.

"Ha!" he ejaculated with a sardonic smile, "what's the Bible? Just a man-written book. I don't believe a word of it. And who is God? Ha! There is no God!" he exploded, breathing heavily.

"What makes you so sure there is no God?" I asked.

"If there were a God, why would He make me suffer so?" he asked accusingly.

"God, in His mercy, lets some people suffer in order to bring them to repentance and salvation," I explained.

"I don't believe it!" he retorted. "There is no goodness in God, and there is no God. Here, take this paper back! I don't want it and I won't read it."

With that he pushed the paper at me. I took it, feeling very sorry for him.

"Tell me," I said, "what you depend upon in life. Everyone is leaning upon something or someone greater

than himself. What satisfaction do you get leaning upon atheism? Don't you know that doubt never created enough inspiration to build a single church or paint a single great picture or write a single hymn or erect a single hospital?"

"I depend on nobody," he answered. "I depend only on myself."

I looked at him closely. He was not over five feet five inches high. He was thin and emaciated. His chest was noticeably sunken and his shoulders drooped pitifully when he walked. His voice was raspy and he coughed with a deep, racking cough. A bitter smile played upon his pallid face. His beautiful black eyes burned with fever and hatred of his circumstances.

I thought, You poor, poor fellow! What an empty heart and broken frame you are depending upon. I told him good-by courteously and went home to pray for him.

When next I visited the sanitarium I made a special point to visit the atheist. He greeted me with courtesy and fair friendliness, but still refused to take any Christian literature. I learned that his name was Abraham—Abraham! faithless Abraham! How awful!

I learned later that Abraham railed at the visiting Catholic priests worse than he did at me. Always he argued hotly with them, trying to embarrass them. It was a kind of game. When a priest offered a small crucifix to each patient, Abraham accepted one, then pinned it to the cuff of his pajama trousers to insult the priest.

In the following visits I endeavored to cultivate Abraham's friendship in order to win him to Christ. One day I wore a new tie as I made my calls at "La Esperanza." It was a recent gift from a friend in the States. It bore the hand-painted figure of a beautifully colored tropical bird. Nobody seemed to notice the tie except Abraham.

"What a beautiful tie you are wearing!" he exclaimed, smiling. "Where did you get it?"

I explained that it was a gift from the States.

When he understood that I was to leave soon for a summer in the North, he pleaded, "Would you buy me a tie just like yours, while you are there? One can't get such nice, heavy material here. I'll pay you for it when you return."

"I'll surely try," I promised.

Soon I left Cuba with my family and was gone for the summer. I looked a number of places but never found another tie the same as mine. When I returned to Cuba I sent my tie to the cleaners, then my wife wrapped it attractively in a gift box. I took it to "La Esperanza" and presented it to Abraham, apologizing because I had been unable to buy him a new tie.

"How much do you want for it?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing," I replied quickly. "It is a gift for you. I'm glad that you enjoy it."

"Very many thanks!" he exclaimed, smiling broadly. "I am very indebted to you."

Somehow, after that, he was more friendly. He would receive my offered literature, though he made no promise to read it. Perhaps he read it secretly. Once he permitted a serious talk about his heart need. He listened and did not fight back. I dealt with him prayerfully, yearning to see him saved and filled with glowing faith. The young people at the Mantilla church, where I pastored, began to pray for him also.

One day Abraham was granted a four-day leave of absence from the hospital to visit his family in Havana. He seemed to be improved. But he must have greatly overdone, for he returned to the hospital before his pass had expired, hemorrhaging badly. His attending physician could not get the serious lung hemorrhage checked.

It was two o'clock in the morning. Most of the patients in the ward were asleep. A few were disturbed over

Abraham's condition and lay awake listening to the sounds of activity at his bedside. A doctor and a nurse worked over him.

Suddenly Abraham called out in a loud voice that carried down the long ward: "So-long, for I'm going!"

He choked, then cried out, "O Lord!" Those were his last words. Abraham was gone.

It was not his habit to use the name of God. He hadn't believed there was such a Being. Then why did he call out, "O Lord!" at the last? Was it a prayer? Was it a confession? Was it a great leap of faith? Was it a poor soul at last yielding to God in that one last, stark cry?

The Judgment will reveal whether he at last became faithful Abraham.

CHAPTER XII

Prayers That Reached God

Have you ever been in prayer when the presence of God seemed so close that you felt you could reach out and touch Him with your hand? Have you had the experience, while yet praying, of receiving a sweet, mystical assurance that your petition was being heard and that the request would be granted? Have you at times found communion with Christ so graciously satisfying that you asked nothing at all, but cared only to continue longer in the melting sweetness of His divine nearness? Have you knelt before the Lord and sensed a humbling of your soul until you could not remain upon your knees, but must lie prone upon the floor or the earth, while your whole heart was so yielded that the will of God was the most delightful and satisfying thing in all the world? Then you will sympathize with the following sketches of prayer experiences in Cuba.

1

It was evening on the Isle of Pines. The golden sunset light spread meltingly through the horizon of dark, slender pines. High overhead a swarm of twittering night-hawks flew against a background of pale blue sky, happy in their avian freedom as they gyrated and swooped. I sat on a packing crate in the cool shade of a grapefruit tree, sharing the box with Alfred Egers, pastor of our Santa Barbara church. We sat quietly a minute contemplating the peacefulness of the scene about us, then we began to pray.

Brother Egers led, his voice low and earnest. It did not seem appropriate to shout, as if trying to fill all that

immensity of earth and sky with one human voice. Besides, God was there right beside us, yea, inside of us.

"O God, our Heavenly Fodder, you knows how glad we is to come to Thee in pra'er," he began. Then he continued at length with sweet thanksgiving. When he began to adore the Lord for His divine goodness and great salvation, his soul became so broken up that he sobbed aloud, unable to frame words for the torrent of joy that overflowed in his heart.

I felt that I could stay there forever, there in the mellow evening light, seated upon a packing box on the edge of the grapefruit grove, with nighthawks wheeling above like approving angelic hosts, and God bending close and blessing our hearts with overflowing joy. This experience must have been a little like that of the three disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration.

2

I had driven my car over extremely bad roads and across rocky fields going to Arroyo Hondo to preach the gospel. I knew that the station wagon had taken a number of rough jolts but did not suppose that serious damage had been done.

The day after the trip to Arroyo Hondo I set out from home driving toward Nazareno to conduct a service. I was spinning along a stretch of smooth pavement bordered with large tippit trees, doing about forty miles an hour, when suddenly my car gave a mysterious lurch, something gave way in the forepart, and the car careened to the left out of control, grinding along the pavement like a road scraper.

I tried to maintain the car in the highway, pulling hard to the right. The steering wheel seemed to have no relation at all to the direction the car was taking. I saw that the car was skidding rapidly toward the stout trunk of a tree; a crash was imminent!

Then I cried desperately in a loud voice, "O Lord, help me now!"

And He did!

The car veered neatly between two large trees and ground into the soft earth below the shoulder of the road. It stopped smoothly just short of the second tree. I slumped limply in the seat and said in a small but sincere voice, "Thank You, Lord! You did help me! You did help me!"

I got out and examined my car. The front springs had broken, lowering the steering gear of the right front wheel until it had scraped a furrow in the pavement for about a hundred feet. Nothing else seemed damaged.

The very first car that passed was that of a mechanic of one of the nearest towns. He agreed to repair my station wagon.

He exclaimed, looking at the tree trunks I almost hit, "How lucky you were!"

I say, "God helped me."

3

I sat on a white metal chair in a hospital ward at "La Esperanza" sanitarium, Havana. Before me lay a man named José, dying of tuberculosis. His case was pitiful, as to his physical health, but he knew the Lord. He was not afraid to die.

I leaned forward to catch what José was saying. He whispered hoarsely, "Do you remember the other afternoon when that Nazarene evangelist and you came to visit me?"

"Yes," I answered, "I remember."

"Well," he continued, "when you anointed me with oil and the evangelist prayed for me, I saw Jesus come up to the foot of my bed. I saw Him dressed all in glowing white and His face was wonderful. I don't know what it means. I was so happy and felt somewhat better for

several days. At first I thought that God was going to heal me and send me out of here. I should be glad to spend the rest of my life just witnessing for Him. Then I became sicker than I have ever been before. The doctors give me no hope."

"José," I said, "God wants to demonstrate to this roomful of wicked, lost, sick, and dying patients that His grace is sufficient to keep you victorious through all that you or they can pass. You are God's demonstrator. While you are dying you are a living witness of His grace and power and love."

"I want the will of God to be done in me," José responded sweetly.

Then, while other patients played their radios loudly, shouted over their card games, or stared at us, we prayed together. God heard our prayers.

A few days after this José died; but he died loving the Lord and choosing His will.

4

Between Catalina de Guines and San José de las Lajas there is an open stretch of the Central Highway that always seemed very long and tedious to me. I rarely enjoyed driving it. Coming home after night services in the country I was sure to become sleepy along this interval of road.

One night I preached at Catalina de Guines in a revival campaign. A heavy burden settled upon my heart for the indifferent folk of Catalina. The pastor and his wife, Fernando and Emilia Ortiz, drove home with me after the service. As we left the town and began the long drive toward San José de las Lajas, the next town en route to Havana, we broke into prayer. Our souls yearned for the salvation of the people to whom we had just preached. Oh, they were so hard! They were so satisfied with the shallow forms and the easy morality of the

country's popular religion. They needed God so badly. If each of our heart cries had been a pearl thrown out the car window, that highway would surely have looked like a giant, jeweled necklace lying across the throat of the Cuban countryside.

We prayed on; it became so easy to pray. None tired of praying nor of hearing the others pray. It seemed that Jesus was in the station wagon traveling with us as a Fourth Person.

Suddenly we drove into San José de las Lajas. What a surprise! How had we gotten there so quickly and so pleasantly?

It was wonderful to travel with the Lord!

5

The moon was full and in its quiet light the structure of our new district tabernacle at Nazarene Missionary Center showed plainly. The construction was newly begun; only the main hardwood timbers of the walls were in place. In the moonlight they looked like a geometrical design of huge fence posts.

I walked alone through the grass of the field toward the site of the tabernacle. My heart was full of gratitude to God for His goodness in giving this tabernacle to the Cuban Nazarenes. It would not be very large in comparison with the churches and camp-meeting auditoriums in the homeland, only forty by sixty feet, but, oh, what a great help it could be to our work! It would not be large enough for all the crowds that we would have in the future, but its location had been chosen with an eye to future expansion.

With these thoughts in mind I entered the circle of construction and walked toward what would be the future platform. Then I paced off a measurement to find the location of the future altar. There I knelt in the grass and began to pray.

My heart welled up with thankfulness and God seemed pleased with my poor offering of gratitude. I felt His presence as really as ever I would in the finished building. I asked God to make that altar location a place of great spiritual victory. In my imagination I saw young and old coming to kneel, confessing their sins in true repentance, believing on Christ for pardon, and rejoicing in newness of life. I saw believers consecrating their all to God, then by faith receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I looked yet beyond and saw young people eagerly, gladly dedicating themselves to Christian service. I felt that there, below my knees, was a mysterious place of tremendous spiritual possibilities for the kingdom of God.

Always beneath the tile floor and altars that now cover the place where I knelt alone in the moonlight to celebrate my private dedication of the tabernacle, there will remain the memories, if not the marks, of my solitary prayer meeting.

Perhaps my prayers are saved up in heaven. I think so, because some of all that I asked has already come to pass. Praise be to the Lord!

CHAPTER XIII

The Plane Goes Down

Returning home to Havana from the city of Santa Clara, I was pressed for time in order to make an important engagement for the church. If I traveled by bus the trip would require eight hours; if I traveled by plane, only ninety minutes. I decided to take the plane.

My son Robert was with me, but we had no difficulty buying our tickets. The difficulty arose at the airport when we boarded the plane, for its starter motor failed to function. Soon the stewardess came walking down the aisle from the pilot's compartment ahead and announced that all passengers would have to disboard the plane and await repairs. The Santa Clara airport radioed to the Havana airport at Rancho Boyeros for replacements and was assured the parts would arrive with the next scheduled flight. That meant a wait of several hours, but it still promised a quicker trip to Havana than by bus. We decided to wait for the plane.

When the next plane arrived, on it was a young American mechanic. All admired the dispatch and precision with which he worked. In short order the replacement was duly installed and the plane tested and ready to take off.

There followed the problem of how to distribute the passengers between the two planes, for by then a number of additional passengers had arrived at the airport wanting passage to Havana. It was decided to fill the later arriving plane first, then send the extra passengers on the repaired plane.

Bobby and I entered our plane and found so many seats taken that I had to hold him on my lap, an irregular procedure for plane travel. Even so, we were allowed to remain while others just behind us were transferred to the repaired plane.

We took off and sailed toward a darkening afternoon sky. Cuba's summer afternoon skies are often obscured by showers, but this proved to be no ordinary rainstorm. After a period of veering about the heavens seeking a clearing through to Havana, our plane returned to the airport at Santa Clara. The sky was blue-black, the wind was high, the rain was pouring by the time our plane taxied in.

"Where is the other plane?" we asked at once.

"We are expecting it to return also any minute," answered an employee of the airport. "It took off about twenty minutes after your plane did."

We returned to Santa Clara by the airport bus and sought a room in a hotel. By then we had lost our opportunity of making the important engagement in Havana; we might as well rest overnight and take the first flight out in the morning, we thought.

In a modest hotel we took a room off a patio balcony on the second floor and lay down to rest before eating supper. A full day of waiting had proved most tiring. When we awoke from a long nap, the storm was still raging. The fierce wind slapped sheets of falling rain against our door. It was impossible to walk even along the covered balcony without getting a thorough soaking. As we stood at the partially opened door contemplating the watery scene, a plane was heard flying low over the city. Around and around it flew, like a pigeon seeking its roost.

What, I thought, is a plane out in this storm for? I wonder where it came from.

Then as the sound of the motors grew fainter I stood at the door still and offered a brief prayer to God for the protection of the plane and its passengers.

The next morning, very early, Bobby and I were awakened to go to the airplane office to catch the bus out to the airport for the early flight to Havana. When, after a brief walk, we arrived at the office, we found everything in a strange state of hushed excitement. Few talked and none talked loudly. Most of the passengers had abandoned their plan of plane travel and had proceeded by bus or train. The stewardess wore dark glasses to hide her tear-reddened eyes. The manager of the airport had changed his natty blue and white uniform for a hiking outfit that was stained liberally with red clay soil.

"What's the matter?" I inquired fearfully, addressing my question to a Swiss passenger with whom I had visited the day before during the long wait at the airport.

"Don't you know!" he exclaimed in surprise. "Why, the other plane, the one in which we first tried to take off for Havana, went down last night with all lives lost!"

I was shocked. I could hardly believe my ears. Then that was the plane which I heard as I opened my hotel door and tried to pass along the balcony to the dining room in the hotel the night before. That was the plane hunting the airport through the stormy night, like a poor lost bird seeking its nest. That was the plane for which I had prayed.

"Tell me about it," I requested of the Swiss.

"Well, it seems the plane took off about twenty minutes after our plane yesterday afternoon, encountered the same storm that we did, and returned to Santa Clara to land. But it turned back too late! By the time the plane was over Santa Clara it could not find the airport in the blackness of the storm. Its radio equipment went out of operation and it was impossible to guide it down. It cir-

clad over the city during the night until its fuel supply was almost exhausted, then headed away from the city and tried a crash landing, evidently hoping to come down in an open field. Instead, it crashed into three palm trees and went all to pieces. The pilot, copilot, stewardess, American mechanic, and three Cuban passengers were all killed. The airport manager here has been up all night in the storm working at the scene of the accident."

As I stood there on the sidewalk in front of the plane office I felt all alone and very small and very unworthy. Gratefully I considered the fact that God had spared Bobby and me from places on the fateful plane. We had almost had to take seats on that plane. Somebody else had taken our places and had died. Why had it not been we?

I was as one who had been born again, one who had been given a new entrance onto the stage of life. Surely I owed my life to God in a new sense. Surely He had a purpose for Bobby and for me.

I bowed my head as I stood on the sidewalk in Santa Clara and dedicated my life anew to God.

CHAPTER XIV

The Storm That Brought Peace

In the year 1926 the Isle of Pines, a small comma-shaped island just south of Cuba in the Caribbean, and the supposed site of Robert Louis Stevenson's famous pirate novel *Treasure Island*, was surprised by a most devastating hurricane. People had been warned that a heavy storm was approaching but, because there was some hope that it would pass to one side, no serious precautions were taken. The fierce storm swept suddenly upon the little island.

Myriads of simple native houses were destroyed. Many lives were lost. Numbers of homes of wealthy American farmers were hurled from their concrete foundations. Many business houses were blown down. Orchards were stripped of their leaves and fruit or uprooted wildly. The grapefruit industry, principal stay of the island, was destroyed.

Among those who were shaken to the foundation of their souls by this great natural disaster were Alfred and Maude Egers, a young couple who had come from the Grand Cayman Islands to seek their fortunes in the Isle of Pines. Their thoughts turned seriously toward God and they began to recall the preaching and teaching that they had heard in their childhood in a holiness church back home.

The Egenses, especially motivated by Maude, visited a number of their fellow *caymaneros* (British subjects of the Grand Cayman Islands) and talked up the idea of organizing an English-speaking Sunday school. It didn't

seem right for their children to grow up with no Christian teaching. God was real; the storm had taught them that. Several families were favorable, but where would they meet? All were poor and had tiny little houses unfit for public meetings. But the Egenses were determined and sure that something could be worked out.

Then Maude heard of a woman who wanted to sell her house. She went to see her. The house consisted of only one room, but it was a big room; and the owner asked only five dollars for the house. Maude called the interested families together and said:

"I have saved five dollars from washing and ironing for a family of American farmers. It is all the savings I have. But we need this house in order to organize our Sunday school. If all of you will help buy the house I will advance my five dollars. If you can't help buy the house, I will buy it myself. We must have a Sunday school!"

What determination! And Maude Egenses was not a Christian either. Nor was there a saved person among the whole group. Surely the Holy Spirit was leading them.

The little group bought the house and equipped it for services. They met on Sunday afternoons for Bible study. There was no missionary, no preacher, no trained teacher. There were no Sunday-school quarterlies nor papers. There was no church to sponsor them. It was simply a neighborhood gathering of hungry-hearted colored folk reaching out toward God.

But God was not long in responding to their need. After a year, an itinerant evangelist from the States, touring the Caribbean in his private yacht seeking needy places to preach the gospel, stopped by the Isle of Pines. God led him to the Santa Barbara community, where the Egenses and their neighbors conducted the Sunday school. The evangelist-missionary held them a revival meeting

and people began to find God. Parents and children were clearly converted.

During this campaign, Alfred Egers was very definitely convicted of his need of Christ. In his own bedroom at home he was gloriously saved. What a marvelous change it made in his life! All across the island people heard of the revival and saw holy results in the converts. Alfred found an enemy whom he had recently thrashed for calling him a mean name, and he humbly apologized to the man. Only the grace of God could bring this about. Alfred was quick in thought and action and fortified his fiery temper with an amazing wiry strength. He had built up the reputation of being a bad fighter. Now all this was changed.

Some time later a visitor to the Isle of Pines returned to the States to inform the Pilgrim Holiness church of the struggling little independent holiness church at Santa Barbara. Soon the Pilgrims sent a missionary couple, who stayed on the island several years evangelizing and expanding the work. Then the missionaries were called home. But God did not leave the faithful flock without a shepherd. He sent them a fine old colored holiness preacher from Georgia, who pastored the church for ten years.

The Georgia pastor, known as "ol' Brother Williams," preached faithfully right up to the time of his death. Older members recall his ministry with great appreciation.

"My, that ol' darky sure was a preacher! What wonderful times of singing and shouting we used to have! We went everywhere around the island holding holiness meetings, and people got saved and sanctified," one elderly brother exclaimed.

Upon the death of Brother Williams the church was again without a pastor. The members then requested Brother Egers to serve as their pastor. And that is how God called him into the ministry. He has served most

faithfully for ten years and keeps a convincing experience of holiness. He has his own grapefruit orchard with which he supports himself while pastoring. Under his ministry the members built their present church building at Santa Barbara, and at present they are paying off the two lots on which the building stands.

After Alfred Egers had become pastor, the Pilgrim Holiness church sent another missionary couple, Rev. and Mrs. Fredrick Lyon, to the Isle of Pines. They settled at Nueva Gerona, principal town of the island, and opened a work there. Several years went by, then the Pilgrim Holiness church decided to close out its work in the Isle of Pines.

The little church at Santa Barbara still carried on, with Brother Egers as its pastor. Some of the members lost out in their Christian experience; others wandered off to other churches. However, a faithful nucleus held true to holiness lines and worked on.

During his ministry on the Isle of Pines, Mr. Lyon had become acquainted with the Nazarenes in Cuba. Upon learning that he must leave and that the field was to be abandoned by the Pilgrims, he requested that the Nazarenes take over the work. Formal discussion of the matter was conducted between the general offices of the two sister denominations, and in its January, 1952, meeting the General Board of the Church of the Nazarene voted to extend its Cuban field to include the Isle of Pines (already property of Cuba and under the jurisdiction of the Province of Havana). This action included an offer of missionary leadership to Brother Alfred Egers' congregation at the Santa Barbara community, and the purchase of a chapel at the McKinley community.

In March, 1952, the superintendent of the Nazarene work in Cuba visited the Isle of Pines and held a week's revival meeting at Santa Barbara. There were a number of very definite spiritual victories, members added to

the church, and a great uplift of spirit among the people. One old brother declared, "This is like old times when the ol' Georgia darky was with us!"

In May, 1952, the superintendent returned to the island, accompanied by his fellow missionary, Rev. John Wesley Hall, and formally received the members of the Santa Barbara congregation into the fellowship of the Church of the Nazarene.

It all began in 1926 when a terrible hurricane awoke Alfred and Maude Egers and some of their neighbors to the consciousness of their need of God. Step by step the Spirit led them, saved and sanctified them, gave them good pastors, and raised them up to be a witness unto holiness in the Isle of Pines.

CHAPTER XV

From Witchcraft to Holiness

Gilberto Pérez is a colored youth from a family of twenty-six children and he is the only evangelical Christian in the whole family. It was only through a miracle of grace that he became a real Christian, for certainly his background has not favored his spiritual choice.

Gilberto's godfather was the *babalao*, or high priest, of all the *ñañigos* of Cuba. *Ñañigos* are the Negro devotees of a pagan African cult called *ñañiguismo*, whose followers are chiefly descendants of the Lukumí tribe, one of the three principal African tribes represented among the slaves of Cuba's colonial period.

Ñañiguismo is a curious adaptation of African polytheism and witchcraft to modern, saint-worshipping Roman Catholicism. The various Catholic saints are accepted to be the outward manifestation or representation of ancient African gods and goddesses. By this trick of synchronization all the *ñañigos* appear to be devout Catholics while they are in reality worshipping demons. The most notable "double worship" in Cuba is that given to Santa Barbara, who to the *ñañigos* is Changó, god of war.

It is astute that *ñañiguismo* has this Catholic "front" because sometimes its bloody worship brings it into violent conflict with the law. In its milder ceremonies, Santa Barbara, or Changó, demands only the blood of a rooster or the heart of an ox. Even so, the worship becomes a scene of drunken orgies and base immoralities. In its most extreme forms, a child is sacrificed. Sometimes the child is hung upside down alive and its skin filled with needles, while the dripping blood is caught in a basin

below. Other times the child is slain with a knife and the heart is cut out and offered to the saint. A blond girl-child of three years of age or less is preferred, but in case of scarcity or fear of the law a Negro child will do. St. Peter and his African counterpart are also believed to demand at times the sacrifice of a child. *Nañiguismo* in Cuba is formally outlawed, but broadly tolerated.

Catholicism in Cuba raises a great hue and cry against the "horrible heresy" of Protestantism; but never, in the seven years that I have lived in Cuba, have I seen a finger raised or heard a voice lifted or read an article printed by the Roman Catholic church against the heathen, criminal, and heretical admixture of African idolatry among its own members. There is certainly work to be done in Catholicism's own back yard.

It was natural for Gilberto to participate in Lukumí tribal cult practices and at the same time to attend a leading Catholic school in Havana. In fact, Gilberto, with the approval of his family, decided to become a Catholic priest. He was an intelligent boy and made rapid progress in his studies. By the time he was eighteen, he was secretary of one of the leading Catholic youth leagues of the capital.

But God had other plans for Gilberto. That same year the boy met a missionary on the street near his school and was offered a Gospel portion. Gilberto roughly refused the scripture and asked to be left alone, but something in the sweet, persistent manner of the missionary attracted him. After further contacts with the friendly missionary, he finally accepted a New Testament. He retired to a solitary place, read the Word of God, was convicted in his heart, and accepted Christ then and there as his personal Saviour.

It was a tremendous decision; it was the dividing of the ways. Gilberto forthwith announced his conversion and left his school and the communion of the Catholic

church. Immediately he was cast out by his entire family. Even when he was ill he was not permitted to return home. He allied himself with a small group of believers in a mission in old Havana.

It was here that Gilberto came in contact with the Nazarenes. When the mission, of which he was a member, chose to join the Church of the Nazarene, he came along; but it was later learned that he was not fully in harmony with the doctrine of entire sanctification. In fact, unknown to the missionaries, he inveighed against the doctrine.

However, the Lord had a purpose for Gilberto and God did not give up easily. By now Gilberto had married and was the father of a little girl. His wife died. That was a great blow to him. But the more crushing blow came several years later when his little girl died too. All his love and tenderness had centered about her; she was all that he had. And now she was gone!

Lonely and broken, Gilberto turned more completely toward God. There he found solace for his heart amid his sorrow. One day while studying the forty-fourth chapter of Ezekiel he became suddenly convinced that there was a deeper work of cleansing for God's people. He saw that holiness was right and that it was for him. The twenty-third verse struck him with peculiar force. As he had been alone when converted, so again alone he found the Holy Spirit in sanctifying power as he read: "And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean" (Ezek. 44:23).

Now Gilberto Pérez, though that is not his real name, is one of our national pastors. He has humbly dedicated himself to preach holiness, and he is enjoying special success among the colored people. Almost all his neighbors are Catholics whose faith is a mixture of saint worship and African paganism. Gilberto sympathizes with their heart need and knows how to reach them.

May God richly bless the ministry of Gilberto Pérez!

CHAPTER XVI

Led of the Spirit

The story of Hermenegildo Paz, pastor of our missions at San Antonio de Las Vegas, La Ruda, and Batabanó, confirms the church's faith in the secret work of the Holy Spirit. Brother Paz's own story is as follows.

"I was reared in a Roman Catholic home. From an early age I was religiously inclined and felt a need of God. I learned the Rosary and said my prayers faithfully every night. My mother had an altar in our home covered with images of the saints. I was rather artistically inclined and for a while during my boyhood dedicated myself to the carving and painting of images. These I donated to my mother and to friends to be placed on their altars as objects of worship.

"I had made images for about eight or nine months when I became convinced that God was not pleased with the work of my hands. I even felt that God would punish me if I continued making images, so I made no more. I was about fourteen years of age then. Looking back, I can see that the Spirit of God was dealing with me.

"I was a grown man before I found the Lord, but many years before my conversion the Holy Spirit was dealing with me also in my practice of prayer. Over a considerable period of time I experienced a diminishing interest and faith in the saints. I became convinced that saints were merely good people who had died and gone to their reward, and who had no right nor power to receive prayers. I testified of this conviction to my family, and decided definitely to center my prayers on the Lord. I had never known a Protestant missionary nor attended

an evangelical service when I came to this decision. I believe it was God's Spirit dealing with me.

"At last missionaries came to our community and held a revival meeting. I attended and from the first was attracted by their spirit and teaching. One night they invited those who wished to accept Christ to come forward to the altar. I did not have sufficient courage to step out publicly and accept the offer, though in my heart I wanted to.

"Then the preacher said, 'Perhaps there is somebody here who wants to be saved from his sins but does not have sufficient courage to come forward tonight. Let me tell you what to do: go home and kneel beside your bed tonight and yield your heart to Christ, for He can save you anywhere.'

"That fitted my need. I slipped out of church and went right home alone and knelt beside my bed. I poured out my heart to God and He heard my prayer. He saved me there in my home. I knew that a great change had come into my life. I felt that I must publicly confess Christ as my personal Saviour, though I had lacked courage to seek Him publicly. So the very next night I testified in the service and told the congregation what God had done for me.

"There must have been something convincing and attractive in my conversion, for my mother became hungry for the Lord also. Soon she attended an evangelical service, and in this very first service yielded her heart to God. Upon returning to her home, she took all the images of saints from her altar, wrapped them in newspaper, and laid them away in her room. Then every two or three days she slipped out to the back patio and demolished a saint or two until all her idols were gone.

"In my youth I had never become addicted to the use of tobacco or liquor, but I loved to dance. Soon after my conversion I was invited to a dance. I attended and

danced all night, but somehow the dance did not seem so pleasant to me as before. I felt checked in my spirit.

"Afterwards a worldly young lady who had seen me at the dance accosted me with these words: 'What business have you going to a dance? Evangelicals don't believe in dancing.'

"Later I attended a second dance. As I entered, I felt very condemned in my heart. The affair no longer attracted me; it repulsed me. I asked for my hat and left, and I have never danced since.

"The Holy Spirit was also teaching me in regard to other worldly entertainments. I had always been greatly charmed by the circus. Following my conversion a circus came to town; I bought a ticket and entered as delightedly as anyone else in the crowd. The first act was a series of tricks presented by a magician. He produced a set of cards and invited anybody in the audience to name a card, stating that at the second tap of his wand the desired card would jump out of the tumbler in which he had placed the deck. Someone called for a certain card; the magician tapped twice on the table with his wand—and nothing happened. The apparently embarrassed magician tapped hard several times more. Still no card appeared. The crowd began to laugh.

"The magician shouted, 'What's the matter here? Satan, you are not co-operating with me. Help me now! Card, in the name of Satan, jump out of the glass!'

"He struck the table sharply twice with his wand, and the desired card suddenly flipped out of the deck of cards in the tumbler. The crowd was awe-struck, but I was frightened. I felt that I was in the presence of evil spirits. I saw that a Christian had no business being in the kind of place where people called on the name of the devil for help. Quickly I left the tent and went home, and never again have I had a desire to go to the circus.

"Not long after my conversion God called me to preach the gospel. In the same province of Cuba in which my

home was located was a Bible training school operated by the same evangelical group under whose missionaries I was converted. I decided to study in this school.

"This evangelical group did not believe in holiness, but occasionally a holiness preacher visited the school and was invited to preach in the chapel services. One such holiness preacher was invited to hold a week's meeting at the school. He came out clearly and strongly on sanctification as a second definite work of grace. It sounded good to me; I felt a need of such an experience. When the evangelist invited seekers to the altar one morning, I was among the young people who sought the experience.

"I made a full consecration to God. I simply trusted the Holy Spirit to cleanse my heart. A wonderful peace came into my heart there at the altar. My life was lifted to a new spiritual level.

"After the meeting was over and the visiting minister had gone, the missionary director of the school spoke against the doctrine of holiness and sought to suppress its emphasis among the students. For lack of encouragement and enlightenment I did not maintain a strong testimony along holiness lines. Yet I was sure that God had done something for me at the altar during the meeting.

"I graduated from this seminary and married a young lady who had been one of my classmates. She was also one of the students who sought and found the baptism of the Holy Spirit under the ministry of the visiting holiness evangelist. Together we pastored several churches of the evangelical group in whose Bible school we had studied.

"Then we heard of the Church of the Nazarene in Cuba. We attended its second camp meeting at the Nazarene Missionary Center at La Chorrera de Managua, where Mrs. Louise Robinson Chapman and Miss Fairy Chism preached clearly and continually on holiness.

“My wife turned to me early in the camp meeting and said, ‘Dear, this experience of entire sanctification is the same thing that we heard about and sought at the Bible school in Las Villas Province. This is the very experience that we found. Thank God! We are at last among our own people!’”

CHAPTER XVII

From Suicide to Sanctification

Andrés Morejón is a soldier in the Cuban army. He first came to know the Lord when his older brother Hildo, converted while a patient at the "La Esperanza" Sanitarium, led him to Christ. Andrés joined the Church of the Nazarene in Havana and attended its services as regularly as army liberties would permit. He lived a good life and gave a bright testimony and was unashamed to witness for the Lord. He assented to the doctrine of entire sanctification and began to seek the experience.

Then there arose a peculiar and well-nigh fatal test for Andrés. Near his army base, called Columbia, in the city of Marianao, there is a Protestant mission operated by a young Cuban who had spent a couple years in the States attending a reputedly holiness school. We shall call his name Juan. Juan knew all the holiness vocabulary and his florid preaching sounded good on the surface, but underneath there was not a framework of sound doctrine. He ridiculed the Church of the Nazarene, whose people had done him many favors both in Cuba and in the United States. Andrés rather frequently attended the services at Juan's mission because it was much closer to his base than was the Church of the Nazarene. He figured that it was better to attend here than nowhere, when he had a very short leave. Besides, he enjoyed Juan's booming voice and friendly ways.

While Andrés was seeking light on holiness and praying for the experience, he made the serious mistake of going to Juan for counsel on the matter.

"Look here," Juan began, "it's like this, Andrés. All churches believe the gospel and preach salvation. Isn't that so? All the churches are trying to get their people to heaven."

Up to here it sounded pretty good, though Andrés could recall many a religious struggle in his boyhood home in Arroyo Hondo over the intrusions of the Seventh Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses. He wasn't sure how close they came to preaching the gospel, though he supposed they did want to get to heaven.

Juan continued, more convincing by his manner than by his words: "Now every church has its own manner or style of preaching the gospel. The Nazarenes emphasize sanctification, but don't let that confuse you, Andrés. It is only a little peculiarity of the Nazarenes. It is only their special style. The main thing is to love the Lord and keep in the middle of the road and preach the gospel. Don't worry yourself over this matter of entire sanctification."

Immediately Andrés was thrown into a state of great spiritual heaviness and mental confusion. He brooded over the problem of entire sanctification day and night. Was it the gospel truth? or was it a mere ecclesiastical peculiarity of the Church of the Nazarene? His mind had no rest, he lost his appetite, he sickened and lost weight rapidly.

The commanding officer noted the illness of Andrés and called him in. He lacked the key to open the door of happiness for the boy. Various fellow soldiers talked to Andrés. They were sympathetic and in their way tried to help him.

"Something is eating on you," they said. "Here, take these five dollars that we want to give you, go to Havana, pick up a pretty *muchacha*, and go have a good time. Forget your troubles!"

Andrés thanked them for their interest but refused the money. In the darkest hours he did not go out into sin. But the boy grew worse and much thinner.

Satan came to him and whispered, "You have sinned! You have doubted God and backslidden. In fact, you have committed the unpardonable sin. There is no way out for you, except to kill yourself. You might as well end your life, for you will never know happiness again!"

Beneath the crushing weight of these merciless and untrue thoughts Andrés almost lost his mind. The thought of suicide haunted him day and night. As a precaution, he took off his army revolver, customary street equipment of all Cuban soldiers and sailors, and put it away.

One night Andrés obtained a few hours of liberty and caught a bus for the Nazarene Missionary Center. When his missionary-pastor returned home after an evening service, there was Andrés sitting cold and stony-faced in the living room. He had waited over an hour for the pastor's return and during that time had not moved or said over two or three halting words to the family. His face was ashen and he gripped the chair till his knuckles showed white. The pastor greeted Andrés, who did not rise but answered only in short, choking sounds in a low voice. It was difficult to understand what he said.

"I-must-have-help!" he faltered. "I-came-to talk-to you."

The pastor led Andrés out of the house, across the lawn to the privacy of a park bench under the great overspreading branches of a beautiful laurel tree. There they sat down side by side in the quiet darkness and Andrés began to unburden his weary heart.

At first he spoke brokenly and stiffly in that awful voice he had used in the house. It was like a voice from the tomb. Then he talked faster and faster while the pent-up thoughts and heavy fears struggled for expression.

The pastor spoke quietly quoting scripture and telling how many a Christian had gone through similar dark periods of heavy trial, assuring the brokenhearted soldier that God still loved him and sought to satisfy his longing heart. Then the pastor and the boy knelt together on the lawn beside the bench, and the pastor put his arm around the weeping boy and began to pray.

When he finished the soldier began to pray, sobbing brokenly. The family in the house heard the praying and crying, and the missionary's wife knelt and interceded for Andrés too. She knew that he had arrived at a critical place in his Christian experience, but she did not know that the victory under the laurel tree saved Andrés from suicide.

Andrés returned to Columbia relieved in mind and strengthened in faith. From then on he was a constant seeker after God, returning to the Missionary Center for further help in prayer, visiting the homes of fellow Nazarenes for prayer, or kneeling at the altar of the Gavilán Church of the Nazarene, where Andrés held his membership.

Then one Sunday night the pastor preached on the difference that Pentecost made in Peter, painting a word portrait of the carnal Peter before Pentecost and of the sanctified Peter after Pentecost. Andrés was present in the congregation. The message was a final, deciding factor in establishing his faith; he settled it once for all that there was such an experience as entire sanctification and that the experience was for him. From then on he became a definite seeker after holiness. He sought earnestly, frequently, and gladly, with a sense of happy anticipation.

Shortly after this, the Nazarenes conducted their second annual camp meeting at the Nazarene Missionary Center at La Chorrera de Managua. The workers were "the elect ladies" Miss Fairy Chism and Mrs. Louise R. Chapman. Having served many years themselves as mis-

sionaries, they readily understood the problems of the Cuban people. They preached and prayed with a zeal and abandon that was marvelous to see. Their messages centered about holiness themes and were exactly what the Cuban Nazarenes needed.

Andrés attended the camp-meeting services frequently. He brought a soldier friend with him, who gave his heart to Christ. Andrés himself was a constant seeker after sanctification.

At the close of a certain message on holiness, Andrés came forward and knelt at the altar, dropped his head, and began to pray. Mrs. Chapman knelt before him on the opposite side of the altar. Suddenly an awful burden of prayer fell upon her for the sanctification of the soldier. She wept before the Lord; she lifted her head and cried unto God for victory. The burden became more intense; it seemed that she would die if Andrés did not pray through. Christians began to gather around and joined her in prayer for Andrés. He himself prayed more earnestly. They all continued in prayer, building a wall of intercession together. Then Mrs. Chapman received an assurance of victory from the Lord. She exhorted Andrés to look up in faith and claim the victory. Strangely, he did not receive the blessing then, though the battle later proved to have been won in that prayer meeting. Andrés went away helped, but not yet clearly in the experience of holiness.

That night, at the close of the service, the camp-meeting congregation formed a chain of prayer and continued all night and all the next day up to the evening service in constant prayer. Many fasted as they prayed.

The night service after the chain of prayer marked the spiritual high-point of the camp meeting. There was unusual blessing in the song service, fine liberty in the preaching, and a full altar of seekers. Andrés was at the altar again. After a relatively short time of prayer, the

blessing of God began to fall upon the seekers and people arose weeping or testifying or singing to praise God for His saving or sanctifying grace.

Amidst the victories Andrés arose with glowing face. He asked to testify. With assurance in his voice and words of clearest meaning he told how the Holy Spirit had come in His fullness to his heart. It was a night of victory in the camp. Surely there were bugles blowing in heaven!

One looking at Andrés that night could hardly dream that it was the same soldier who had sat so thin and rigid in the missionary parsonage one night several months before, his hands gripping the chair, his face a death mask, his heart a weight of leaden fear. Now his form was alive with gestures of joyful testimony, his smile was radiant, his voice was clear and sure, his face was aglow, and his heart was as light as a feather from a bird of paradise. Such is the change that divine grace makes.

The story really does not end here; it only begins. After Andrés regained his faith in God and in himself, following the night prayer meeting under the laurel tree, he became a better soldier than ever before. His health improved, his conduct was without reproach, and his service became noteworthy. Five months in succession Andrés was awarded the coveted honor of Soldier of Merit in his regiment. For each month he gained the award he received a five-dollar bonus and a three-day vacation. Then Andrés was promoted from private to corporal with his salary almost doubled.

There is even a further note to this story, a note of heart-warming interest. Andrés found a lovely Christian girl in Santa Clara Province with whom he promptly fell in love. They are engaged to be married, and someday wedding bells will ring in Cuba for Andrés and the lady of his choice. May God grant them a happy home!

CHAPTER XVIII

Mission Memories

As I look back over my few years of missionary service in Cuba and recall the various missions where I have preached, certain impressions spring to my mind like a Jack-in-the-box. These mission memories are various in their character: happy and sad, satisfying and disappointing, comical and frightening; but all serving to show the variety of life in Cuba and lending color to my meditations.

At our Villegas Street mission in old Havana a red-headed Negress entered the meeting one night. It was one of those times when the blessing of God was felt in special liberty in the song and testimony service. Amidst various lively and inspiring testimonies the stranger arose and told us that the same day she had purposed to commit suicide, not knowing any other way to solve her difficulties. But an inner voice had spoken to her telling her to go to church. She had set out walking blindly and had come upon our mission, had entered and had found the Lord in saving grace during the inspiration of the song service. There was great rejoicing among the Christians over this testimony.

At another service there, we were somewhat disturbed by a drunken Turk who demanded to know what we were doing. Upon learning that we were worshiping God, he became very irate because we were not worshipers of Allah, like himself. Like many another Mohammedan, he resisted evangelization.

On still another occasion at the Villegas Street mission we were greatly amused and molested by an insane man.

He once had been a Christian worker and his father had been a noted Quaker evangelist in Cuba. Our visitor knew all the religious vocabulary, both in English and Spanish, and he sought to use it in repeated speeches and exhortations. His case was pitiable, but so was ours.

When I think of the Santos Suárez mission I remember my first altar call in Cuba. Five people came forward, but the only clear conversion seemed to be that of a blond Russian who took out his tobacco and placed it on the altar beside a box of matches, then prayed through to sweet victory. Also at the altar was a grandmother who still comes to visit us after seven years.

While we lived in the Santos Suárez property, three times thieves broke in and attempted robbery. They didn't get away with more than a small pile of bath towels and a box of Post Toasties.

Once, at Santos Suárez, my wife, in my absence, climbed over a board fence to rescue Bobby's fallen kite. On seeing her trespass upon his vacant lot, the irate and drunken owner rushed upon her, gave her a thorough shaking, and threw her upon the ground. While he turned to tear the kite to pieces, my wife fled back home. We learned later that he mistreated his own wife and children in a similar manner. Later his wife divorced him and his children left home.

The robberies of the Santos Suárez home were somewhat similar to the thefts carried on near the San Miguel mission where the Hall family lived. Two or three times the Halls witnessed scenes of purse-snatching, when a young Negro would snatch the purse from an old lady walking along the street. The thief would then race over the hill and disappear in a nearby Negro slum section called "Las Yaguas."

While living in the Lawton property we witnessed a bit of quick justice when a thief entered a house nearby, thinking nobody was home. The owner surprised the robber with a well-placed blow of a club on the head.

By the time he regained consciousness, police were standing over him and several hundred neighbors around him.

The Lawton mission was located next door to a courtyard surrounded by poor, one-room apartments. The inmates made their living by activities ranging anywhere from washing clothes to selling marijuana. In between they held African dances to the rhythm of native drums that beat from nine at night until two in the morning.

In the midst of the evil surroundings of Lawton, the Lord gave us converts. And He certainly taught us some lessons in patience.

In contrast to the light-fingered tendencies of our neighbors at the previously mentioned places, we found a district of quiet friendliness and normal honesty in Parcelación Moderna. If the children forgot to bring their toys in from the sidewalk at night, they were sure to find them the next morning in the same place. The neighborhood children respected one another's property rights. Parcelación Moderna did much to restore our faith in the Cuban people.

This faith was again attacked when a series of house robberies ensued in Parcelación Moderna; but after the neighbors had lost much money, jewelry, and clothing, the thieves were apprehended and sent to prison. The notorious robber band, when caught, had next on their list of planned robberies the Hall home in Parcelación Moderna and the Prescott home in nearby Chorrera de Managua.

One of the surprisingly serious struggles in establishing gospel work in Cuba has been the problem of child discipline. Few children are taught to mind their parents, so they care not to mind any other authority. This fact, coupled with parental indifference to their children's behavior in our services, creates a real difficulty. As a rule, the larger the city, the worse the discipline; and, inversely, the more completely rural the work, the easier the discipline. I recall that our greatest discipline problems have

been in Havana, city of a million population; our easiest discipline has been in Arroyo Hondo and Dedín, purely rural areas.

Once in Lawton a tyrant of a child began to disturb the meeting. Upon being asked to sit down and keep quiet, he stuck his tongue out at me and continued to pinch the children about him and to talk loudly. The second time he was requested to behave he again stuck his tongue out at me and made evil sounds. The other children thought he was quite a clown and began to laugh and encourage him. The third time he disobeyed, I walked from behind the pulpit, picked him up bodily, and set him down hard on the bench with a series of rapid repetitions. His suspenders broke, his pants started down, and the crowd began to laugh at him. He fled from the chapel saying some rather uncomplimentary things. For a while he behaved rather better.

We were surprised to encounter less problems of discipline in a slum section called San Martín than in Lawton. At San Martín the matter of crowding seemed little bother when we packed forty to fifty children into one tiny front room, for all the boys and girls were born and reared in extremely crowded conditions. Nor did they seem molested by the almost overpowering odors of several nearby outhouses. Whereas the missionaries sometimes turned to find each other gasping in the heat and foul air, they never heard the children complain. They probably never noticed any lack of sanitation.

For recreation the slum children waded and fished in an open sewer canal that ran in front of their houses. Even after the city built a covered concrete canal to carry off the waste, the boys would remove the manhole lids and crawl within to wade up to their knees in sewage. It is amazing what the human system can stand!

In contrast to the filth and stench and crowdedness of San Martín, I recall the natural beauty and peaceful setting of our mission at Ojo de Agua. Just behind the

mission location sprang a crystal river from the ground in twisting, curling fountains called *ojos* or eyes. Here large bass lazily cruised among the water lilies or shy zebra-striped *biajaca* darted among the moss-covered rocks. I thought of it as one of the most tranquil places I had ever seen until I surprised a large snake beside the mission slipping up on a brood of chickens. I gave chase to the *jubo*, then he gave chase to me. As I rushed at the would-be thief, the five-foot serpent suddenly rose tall and struck at me viciously. If all public speakers had the lung power that I suddenly demonstrated, microphones and public-address systems would be a thing of the past. The *jubo* continued toward the river while I remembered some business I had to attend to inside the mission.

However, my strongest memories center around people rather than animals. Still, there is a marked similarity, for some of the people acted strikingly like animals. At Juanelo our service was broken up one night when the next-door neighbor decided to thrash his wife. He dragged her by the hair from the side yard as he beat her. Her screams brought various neighbors and her father, who almost murdered the offending husband. Then at Madruga, where for a while we conducted services in a home where a son was unhappily afflicted mentally, we encountered special difficulties. The afflicted boy attended our services with an exemplary regularity. He beat time ecstatically with the music, pounding one fist into the other palm with a force that would have shattered my hands, chattering loudly, "*Be-bope, be-bope, beeeeeeep!*" Sometimes we were not a little disconcerted when this character wandered into the room dressed only in his shoes.

I remember how a group of our young preachers held an open-air service in Central Park, Havana, one night. They found a drunkard lying prone upon the walk, stood over him and preached while a huge crowd gathered, took

up an offering for him, then carried him unresistingly to the nearest emergency hospital. Those that stayed behind led a sizable group to our nearby Villegas Street mission, where one of the park audience was definitely converted at the close of the service. Today, seven years later, he is still serving the Lord.

These are some of the memories that we bear. May God so prosper our Cuban field with spiritual victories and heavenly blessings that our future memories will be richer and fuller and all to the glory of His precious name!