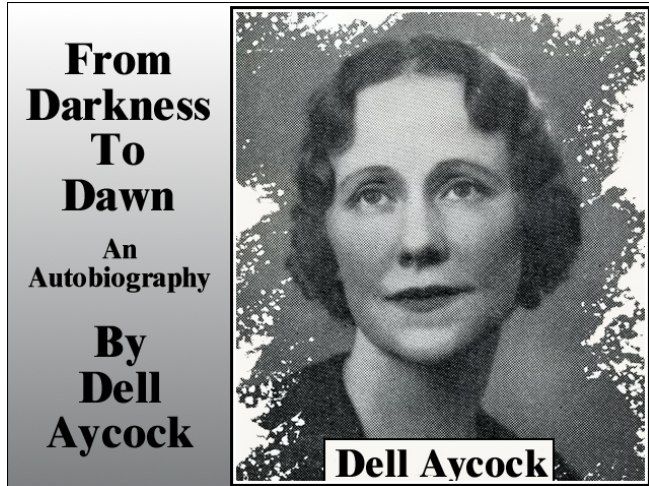


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FROM DARKNESS TO DAWN
An Autobiography
By Dell Aycock



Author of:
Listen, Girls
Listen, Girls, Vol. II
Birthday Autographs
Object Sermons
More Object Sermons

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DEDICATION

To my husband, Evangelist Jarrette Aycock, whose Christian life and sense of fairness to friend and foe alike have been the greatest inspirations of my life.

* * * * *

INTRODUCTION

During the years that I have known Dell Aycock I suspected that she had an extremely interesting childhood and youth. In fact, I was sure of it because of the occasional reminiscences with which she now and then would favor a group of fortunate friends.

It seemed to me that the workings of the Spirit of God in her life, leading her out of abysmal darkness into the glorious light of salvation, with little if any help from a human source, constitute another chapter in the annals of modern miracles. Because of this I urged her to have some of the incidents of her earlier years published in book form.

Doubtless this story will have an unusual appeal to young and old. I am praying that it will lead scores of young people into the full-orbed light of the gospel. No Christian can read it and not have increased appreciation of the love of God and the guidance of the Spirit.

To know Mrs. Aycock as some of us have been permitted to know her is a rare privilege. Her charming manners, her high ideals of Christian ethics and her untiring devotion to her Christ and His service -- all these characteristics combine to make her personality one that is continually stimulating to the best things in life.

May this book contribute more than a little to a life that already has touched and blessed many thousands in a ministry of loving service.

P. H. Lunn

* * * * *

01 -- MY FATHER AND MOTHER

My father, a big, six-foot, handsome man, was born in the state of Iowa. When a young man he went West and became a cowboy. Later he became a buyer for a large eastern cattle firm, with his headquarters at The Dalles, Oregon. After a number of years he returned East, where he met and married my mother, a beautiful, little black-haired schoolteacher from Rock Island, Illinois. They returned West and for a few years made their home in Tacoma, Washington, where I was born. When I was about two years of age they moved to Los Angeles, California, where my father engaged in the real estate business, which he followed until he passed away in 1935.

He built us a beautiful home right downtown, within a few minutes' walk from the heart of the city. There amidst the bustle and rush of the world's fastest growing city, I grew up. I have often heard the old song:

**"Oh, give me a home where the buffalo roam
And the skies are not cloudy all day."**

But it never appealed to me; the version I like is:

**"Oh, give me a home where the taxicabs roam
And the street cars are noisy all day."**

* * * * *

02 -- MY HOME, SWEET HOME

My home was not vastly different from that of many an American girl. I had two brothers, Frank and Harold, both a few years older than I. While my parents were not Christians and did not attend church, they had high ideals and standards of morality, and taught us to do right. We had a good home in which to live, plenty of everything we needed and were a very happy family. My father and mother were kind and good, and no girl ever had a home that was more peaceful and more congenial than mine. Some of the most pleasant memories of my life are of those days when we were a happy group at home together. It was indeed "Home, Sweet Home." And I can say with the poet:

**"A charm from the skies
Seems to hallow us there,
Which seek through the world
Is ne'er met with elsewhere."**

* * * * *

03 -- FULL OF LIFE

I cannot remember ever wanting to be mean when I was a child, but I had a morbid curiosity. I wanted to know how, where and why everything was made. I wanted to go places, see and do things, and I was so full of energy that I could hardly hold myself in. This spirit often got me into mischief and trouble.

I played with boys most of the time because, having two brothers and no sisters, there were more boys than girls around our place to play with. I enjoyed flying kites, playing ball, skating and swimming. I cannot remember when I learned to swim; my brothers taught me when I was very small. I liked to play hockey, marbles and mumble-peg and I could spin a top almost as well as a boy. I had lots of fun hunting trapdoor spiders and enjoyed catching polliwogs and keeping them in jars until they turned into little frogs.

* * * * *

04 -- THE POLICEMAN

I loved to go with my brothers to the foothills and nothing gave me more fun than building a little fire and roasting potatoes in the ashes. But there were times when the boys wanted to go alone and I would have to stay at home. These were very unhappy days for me. One such day, when they had gone to the hills without me, I lay flat on the sidewalk and cried as hard as I could. As I lay there I heard someone singing. I raised my head and through my tears saw a big policeman on a horse, singing:

"There, there, little girl, don't cry,
They have broken your doll, I know."

He wanted to know the trouble and I told him I wanted to be a boy so I could go all the places boys went and do all the things they did. My, how he laughed!

* * * * *

05 -- PLAYING ON THE RAILROAD TRACK

One summer while we were spending our vacation at the beach, I was scouting around with my brother Harold and several other small children. We came to a railroad track and at once bantered one another as to who could walk the rails the farthest without falling off. It was lots of fun, and when one stayed on a long time another would run up and push him off.

After a while we came to a big curve where the tracks were double. As we were going around this curve, my foot slipped off the track and caught between the rail and the guard. I pulled but could not get it out. In those days, little girls wore high top laced shoes. I worked my foot up and down, pulled and pulled, but it was held fast. Harold tried to get me loose but could not. The other children tried to help but no amount of pulling or jerking could release my foot.

* * * * *

06 -- THE TRAIN IS COMING

Then we heard the long, low whine of a locomotive. The children screamed, "The train's coming, the train's coming!" I was almost paralyzed with fright and so was Harold. We both began to cry while he pulled at my foot trying to get it loose. Again we heard the sharp whistle of the engine. We looked back and saw the train coming, the smoke puffing and curling toward the sky. Harold put his hands over his face and ran down the embankment to where the other children were in a huddle, crying. Again I looked over my shoulder and saw it coming closer every second. I could feel the vibration of the rails and the trembling of the ground.

* * * * *

07 -- IN THE NICK OF TIME

I screamed again, and in a flash, Frank, my big brother who had been playing with some boys, came running from around a sand dune he had heard that last cry. Up the side of the right-of-way he dashed, reached down and quickly unlaced my shoe, pulled my foot out, and together we rolled down the bank to safety just as that great locomotive came rushing past us.

He had come just in the nick of time and knew the right thing to do. How often since I have been a Christian have I found Jesus to be like a big brother, always coming in the nick of time; always knowing just what to do; always "mighty to save and strong to deliver."

"Just in time my Savior found me,
Banished all my sin away;
Broke the cords where Satan bound me,
Changed my night to endless day."

* * * * *

08 -- A TRIP TO THE PHOTOGRAPHER'S

A day was set to take Frank, Harold and me to a photographer's for some pictures. One was to be a group of the three, and one was to be of me, alone.

Selfish little girl, I wanted to have mine first, but the photographer had different ideas -- he wanted the group first. He also wanted to place Harold and me in front and have Frank, who was much taller, stand in back. But I had ideas too, I wanted to have the three of us in a row with myself in the middle. But of course the man won out; they usually do. After he had arranged and rearranged us, he said, "Now, I am ready, smile like nice children," and he held up a little monkey. I did not like him nor his monkey. In fact I had not liked his looks from the first and liked them less as time went on. So when I thought he was about ready to press the little black bulb I reached both hands up and ran them through my hair. He turned almost purple.

* * * * *

09 -- A PATIENT MOTHER

My sweet, patient mother took a comb and curled my hair over, kissed me and told me to please be sweet. I wanted to be good for her sake, and if she had been taking the picture I would have; but when that man got out in front of me again, the same old feeling of dislike came over me; and when he thought he had us fixed again and started to press the little black bulb, I ran my hands through my hair again and made a face. Again my mother combed my hair and the photographer told us to smile, but by that time I was far from smiling. Realizing that mussing my hair was the one thing he disliked, I did it again. Then Mother said, "Take it anyway," and he did. They had the picture enlarged and one of my brothers still has it. I do not like it; it reminds me of that photographer.

* * * * *

10 -- TWO LITTLE FRIENDS

Two little girls with whom I played, both came to a tragic end while very young. One, when about five, was run over by a team of horses and died almost instantly. My father took me to the funeral which was the only one I was ever allowed to attend as a child. After that my parents urged me more than ever to be careful crossing streets and to look, not for automobiles, but for horses, buggies and wagons.

One day the father of the other little girl was working in a building about two blocks from their home. At noon her mother fixed a lunch for him and sent my little friend to take it to him. She sat with him on the curb of the sidewalk while he ate, talking to him. When he had finished she took the lunch-box and started home. That was nearly forty years ago and she has never been seen or heard of since. A city-wide and state-wide search was launched for her but she was not found.

* * * * *

11 -- LOST IN THE CITY

Not long after this I went shopping in town with my mother. I became tired of the store, and she let me go stand by the front door while she was in a dressing room. I did not stay by the door long until I decided to go home.

I walked down the street until I came to the street car track that passed near our home. I stayed on the sidewalk but followed the car track. It was not far to my home, but it took me a long time to go because I loitered along, stopping to look in show windows and playing by the way.

When I got home our cook was surprised to see me alone, but I assured her it was all right and that I was hungry and that my mother said for her to give me something to eat.

While I was eating I heard the front door open and my father came in calling to the cook, "Clara! Oh, Clara! Dell is lost somewhere in the city and In... he never finished, for by that time he had reached the dining room door and saw me sitting safely at the table eating. He ran to the telephone and called the police station where my poor, frightened mother sat waiting for word from me. The entire Los Angeles police force had been notified to be on the lookout for a little girl with blond curls. Friends had started searching for me and my parents were frantic.

I shall never forget the white, drawn look on my mother's face when she arrived home and took me in her arms. I had not intended to hurt her, but it seemed I was always getting into things that turned out differently from what I expected.

* * * * *

12 -- PLAYING BARBER SHOP

One day a little neighbor girl came to see me and we decided to play barber shop and cut our hair. I was to cut her curls off first because she was company; then she was to cut mine. We went into my mother's bedroom, put a box on a chair in front of the dresser, and she climbed onto the box. I tied a big towel around her neck and got a pair of scissors and started in.

She had, I believe, the most beautiful long, dark curls I have ever seen. They were thick and shiny, and hung below her waist. Her hair was the pride of her family.

I was innocent of doing wrong and of doing it for any other reason than to have a good time and I fully intended to let her cut my hair as soon as I had finished hers. I took the first lovely curl in my hand and with some difficulty held it tight and began cutting. At last I succeeded in cutting it off. All that was left was a short stub of hair at her temple. Then I went after the second curl. Off it came. I kept cutting until I had reached the center of her head at the back. Then we heard her mother

calling her. Together we ran out on the front porch. She still had the towel around her neck and I had the scissors in my hand. There was no doubt that the evidence was against me.

* * * * *

13 -- MOTHER TO THE RESCUE

When her mother saw us she raised both arms over her head and screamed as though she had seen a ghost and ran toward me. I was old enough to know she was angry and was going to hurt me so I took my turn screaming, "Mother, Mother, oh, Mother!" I started back into the house as my mother reached the door. She took the situation in at a glance, and put me behind her and tried to talk to the enraged woman but that was useless. The poor woman was beside herself and I can almost see her now going down the street leading the little girl with her long curls hanging on one side of her head and the other side clipped and shorn. The next time I saw the little girl, her hair was cut like a boy's, but her mother never allowed her to play with me again.

* * * * *

14 -- REFUSING TO BE SAT ON

It was a holiday and we were all going to the beach. We went often but it was always exciting to me. I wore a stiffly starched, white dress and wanted to keep it that way, at least until I got to the beach. While we waited for the big interurban car I wished for a chance to sit on the one small seat just behind the motorman. Here you could see straight down the track and imagine that you were operating the car. When the car stopped for us you may be sure that I was the first one on and the prized seat was empty. I took it with eagerness and delight.

Soon the car became crowded and a woman got on with a baby about a year old. The woman looked around, and seeing me, put the baby on my lap saying, "I know you will be glad to hold my baby." But I was not. I did not want it there for I knew my dress would be rumped. How was I to get rid of it? Then, I remembered that I had a pin in the end of my belt and cautiously slipped it out. I held the baby with one hand so it would not fall and gently stuck the pin in him. He screamed like a little Comanche. His mother reached down and took him in her arms and soon quieted him. Then she tried to put him in my lap again but for some reason he cried, stiffened like a board and refused to be put on my lap, for which I was glad, and I arrived at the beach without a wrinkle.

* * * * *

15 -- NOT ON THE FENCE BUT ON THE ROOF

I could climb any tree a boy could and there was not a house in our neighborhood but what I had climbed to the top. However, there was one high comb on our house I had never been able to reach though I had tried many times.

One day when no one was at home but Mother and me, and there was not much to do, I got to looking at that high comb and decided a way to get to it. I took my shoes off and carefully climbed to it, little by little. After reaching it I became frightened and called for help. My mother came out and looked up, and though I know she must have been frightened, she smiled and said, "Sit quietly, dear, you are perfectly all right. Do not try to come down, I'll get someone to help you." Her calmness and poise took all fear away and I sat still and waited.

She searched the neighborhood for a man who could get me down but it was nearly two hours before she found one. A young man who lived next door came home. He had a much harder time getting to where I was than I did. While the neighbors stood around and watched, he tied a rope about my waist and lowered me, but his rope was not quite long enough and when I was about two feet below the eaves, I had to dangle until a step-ladder long enough to reach me could be brought.

* * * * *

16 -- THE MOUTHWASH

As small children will do, I learned somewhere a few bad words but had never used them. One day, while playing in a swing outside the dining room window, Frank came by and started teasing me. Over and over again I called him all the ugly names I had learned, and when I quit, I heard my mother's gentle, even voice say, "Dell, come in, dear, I want to see you." She had been sitting by the window, but I did not know it.

I went in and she took me to the washbowl and, taking a washrag, lathered it extra thick with old-fashioned Castile soap, saying, "Honey, your little mouth is very, very dirty. No little girl with a clean mouth would talk to her brother like you did and Mother is going to wash it real good." She did just that. She washed and washed and soaped and soaped until I felt like I was spitting bubbles. You may be certain I never did it again. But every time I see a bar of Castile soap I think of that mouth-washing.

* * * * *

17 -- THE SMOKESTACK

I remember when there was quite an excitement over the discovery of oil within the city limits, and they drilled wells in vacant lots in many residential districts. Several were drilled near our home and they were a great attraction to me.

I ran away every time I could and climbed up on the pump box or what I called the jack and rode it up and down. The men got to where they watched for me and took me off and sent me home and it was a sad day for me when they "pulled" the wells and left. But they did not remove the entire rig at once.

One afternoon my mother was having a group of select ladies and I was supposed to be on my good behavior. She dressed me and put me out on the front porch saying, "Dell, I want you to stay on the porch and keep clean until the ladies get here." Then she went back into the house. I fully intended to obey but the time seemed so long, and I did not see any harm in going down the steps into the yard. I walked to the gate and pushed it open just a little to see what was in the street. After looking out, I thought it would be all right to walk out on the sidewalk and look around, and I did.

* * * * *

18 -- COVERED WITH SOOT

I forgot about the company and about keeping clean and started for the place where the oil wells had been. When I got there I saw lying on the ground the huge smokestack that had been used on the boiler. I stooped down and looked in. I could see clear through and got down on my hands and knees and started through. It had been used so long the soot was thick. It fell on my hair and face but I brushed it aside and crawled on. When I reached the other end and stood up, I saw that I was in an awful mess. My hands were black, my knees were black, my pretty white dress was ruined. I looked like a little colored girl.

Then I remembered what my mother said about keeping clean. I started home, for there was no other place to go. When I opened the front door there sat my mother and her company. They all shrieked in horror, and my mother said, "Oh, mercy!" Then she smiled her charming smile and said, "Come with me, dear." Such a scrubbing I got! But it was soon over, and I was again ready for new territory to explore.

* * * * *

19 -- A REAL FIGHT

When I was small I had a little boy friend that I played with often, and I thought that when I grew up I would certainly marry him. He was a nice boy, not rough or mean, and we had lots of fun together.

I had a darling little puppy that looked like a ball of soft, brown fur and my friend had a large, old cat. One day, he brought his cat over and I had my little puppy out in the yard playing with him. The cat spit and fussed at my pup, and we thought it would be fun to tie them together and hang them over the clothes line

and see what they would do. I held my pup with his back to the cat, and he held his cat with his back to the pup and we tied the two together and hung them across the line.

That was a terrible fight! The poor little dog had no chance with the cat and, of course, when we saw what we had done, we ran for help. When we got back, the cat was gone and my puppy was on the ground, all scratched and bloody. We were too small to know that it would turn out the way it did. However, with good nursing, and you may be sure he received it, the little pup was soon as good as ever.

* * * * *

20 -- A THORNY LANDING

A man lived next door to us who had several fine horses. He kept most of them in the country but had stables at the rear of the lot where, at times, he kept a few. One day he brought in a fine young horse and, after putting it in the barn, came over to our house and said to my mother, "You had better watch Dell today and keep her away from the stables; that horse is wild and he might hurt her." I heard him and wanted more than anything else to see that horse.

They had been working on the roof of the barn and I thought if I could get up on it I could peek through the opening and see him. So, when the way was clear, I climbed up on the barn, crawled over the shingles until I was directly over the new horse's stall. Just as I started to look down, I heard my mother call. I looked toward the house, lost my balance, fell through the opening and centered the horse's hips. The frightened horse jumped and kicked, catching me in the curve of his legs and lifting me through the window at the back of his stall. I did not touch either side and landed safely, as far as the horse was concerned; but my landing field was a bunch of prickly pear cactus.

As I went through the roof, I saw my mother's hands go up; and as I landed in the cactus, I saw her running toward me. The horse did not hurt me, but the cactus did. It took days for the rest of the family to pick the tiny cactus thorns from my body but before long I was as good as new and ready for new exploits.

* * * * *

21 -- HUNTING FIRECRACKERS

It was nearing the Fourth of July and our father gave us each an allowance to spend for firecrackers. We looked in the store windows near our home, but they were all five cents a package and we thought we could get more for our money elsewhere.

Frank said, "Dell, why not slip off to Chinatown and buy our fireworks? We can get two packages there for a nickel." So off we went. I was quite small, but I never thought about being afraid when I was with him.

In those days Chinatown had little, narrow streets and alleys, many of them not wide enough to drive through, for this was before the city of Los Angeles built a new and modern Chinatown. I had often heard a police detective, who was a friend of our family, tell of chasing men down those narrow alleys and how they would run into buildings and disappear through trapdoors in the floor or secret panels in the walls. But we were not afraid, never thinking harm could come to us.

It was nearly a mile to Chinatown. On arriving we found the little stores and shops gay with American and Chinese flags, and the windows filled with fireworks of all kinds.

* * * * *

22 -- NEARLY KIDNAPPED BY A CHINESE

We walked through the narrow streets looking in the windows and became so interested in what we saw that we did not notice how far down into the town we had gone. We stopped to look in a window by a narrow doorway that led back into a dark hall. There was an old Chinaman leaning against the wall in the doorway. Suddenly Frank grabbed my hand and said, "Run, Dell, run! Run, Dell, run!" We ran as fast as we could back the way we had come, up one alley and down another. Past store after store and on past the old Chinese temple. When we reached the edge of the town, he slowed down, looked back and said, "Oh, honey, come on. Let's run!" He held my hand so tightly it hurt, and I almost gave out several times but he urged me on. Finally we reached home, and he hurried into the house and falling on his knees by Mother's side, he began to cry. He told her where we had been, and how, while we were standing by this narrow doorway, he looked up and saw the old Chinaman slipping a loop or noose of fine wire over my head. He evidently intended to slip it down around my neck, draw it quickly and carry me back into the building.

Frank is now over fifty, but he says that he shudders even yet when he thinks about our trip to Chinatown in a quest for firecrackers and what might have happened if he had not seen the old Chinese in time.

* * * * *

23 -- ON THE WAR PATH

Not far from us there lived a little boy whom my brothers nicknamed "Sissy." As a child I did not like him because he looked and acted like a girl. I had short,

blond curls and when he could find me, he always pulled them. It angered me every time and one day I told him if he did it again I would shoot him.

Not long after that he came over and I tried to send him home but he would not go. He kept chasing me around trying to pull my hair. At last he caught me and pulled it hard. When I got away I ran into the house and found Harold's B.B. gun. When I came out he ran toward home. I chased him, shooting at him several times but hitting him only once. It struck him in the back of the neck and lodged there. My, how he yelled! He thought I had really killed him. The shot buried itself deep enough to have to be picked out, but it did the work. That was the last time that he ever pulled my hair.

* * * * *

24 -- AUNT SADE

I had an aunt who lived several blocks from us and sometimes after school I would telephone to her and ask if I could come to see her. She usually told me that I could. Then I would tell my mother, "Aunt Sade wants me to come over." I was never allowed to go alone, though I wanted to ever so much. Harold would go with me and when he saw that I was safely in the house he would go back home.

I would find out what my aunt was going to have for dinner, and if I liked it, I would ask her to let me stay, then I would telephone home and say, "She is going to have such and such for dinner and wants me to stay." My mother often allowed me to stay but would say, "I'll send Frank for you."

* * * * *

25 -- THROUGH THE DARK

About eight o'clock, he would come for me. When we first started I was not afraid for there was a street light on the corner and I would walk a little ahead. After the first block we came to a place where there were no street lights and I would get close to him and bump into him once in a while so he would not forget that I was there. Then there was one block where we had to walk between two long rows of large pepper trees and there seemed to be no light anywhere.

I would say, "Frank, it's awful dark tonight, isn't it?"

He would answer, "Oh, not very."

"Yes, it is," I would contend. "I know it's darker than it ever was any night we have come home alone."

I would look back over my shoulder and about the time I thought someone was going to grab me, he would reach down in the darkness and take my hand in his. It seemed that he had the nicest big hand anyone ever had and he would say, "Honey, it isn't nearly as dark as you think it is and no one will hurt us. Let's run a little," and we would break into a dog trot.

Again he would assure me it was all right by saying, "Look, see the light ahead; can't you see it filtering through the trees? It will not be long until we will be out from under the trees, then under 'our' street light, up the steps, into the house where we'll shut the dark all on the outside." He would no more than say that until it seemed to me that we were safe at home again.

* * * * *

26 -- ANOTHER BIG BROTHER

That was many years ago and since that time I have come down many dark streets in my life; so, perhaps, have you. It has seemed to me the light would never shine again; that it had gone out forever. But just as the big brother reached down in the darkness and took my hand in the days gone by, so Jesus has reached down and taken my hand and I could almost hear Him say, "Child, there is nothing to fear. Lo, I am with you always. It is not as dark as you think it is, look, look ahead, see the light coming through the trees. It will not be long now until we will be beyond the last row of trees, under the last street light and in through the gates of the city where we will shut the world with its sorrow and sin, with its turmoil and strife, on the outside forever."

"I've seen the lightning flashing,
I've heard the thunders roll.
I've felt sin's breakers dashing
Trying to conquer my soul.
I've heard the voice of my Savior
Telling me still to fight on.
He's promised never to leave me,
Never to leave me alone."

When I was yet a little girl several children moved into our neighborhood who attended Sunday school. I had never been to Sunday school and did not know what it was like. The children asked me to go time and time again, but because my father and mother did not attend, I would say, "No, I wouldn't go to a place like that." I wanted to go and see what it was like, but I did not want the children to know it. They told me there was a baby organ at the Sunday school around which the children stood and sang songs. Of course, childlike, I wanted to see that little organ, and I wondered why we, as a family, did not go.

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27 -- THE LITTLE BROWN CHURCH

I asked my parents several times to let me go to Sunday school, and one day my mother told me that I could go. There were two churches near us, both located in the same block. I went up the steps to the nearest one, but before I opened the door I heard a bell ringing, and looked down the street and saw the dearest little brown-shingled church with a bell ringing merrily in the belfry that seemed to say, "Come on down here, come on down here." I left the church where I stood and hurried down the street to the other. I thought that it would be much nicer to go to a church that had a bell.

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28 -- THE BABY ORGAN

I walked in and looked around. No one noticed me so I kept going until I reached the front seat and sat down. The people sang but there was no little organ and I said to myself, "Those children did not tell me the truth." Then the people got up and started walking here and there, and I thought they were going home when someone came to me and said, "Would you like to go into the room with the other little children?" And they took me to a small room filled with boys and girls standing about a baby organ singing the most beautiful little songs. I had never heard such songs and could not sing them but I was happy to stand and watch the others.

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29 -- CHILDREN'S DAY

I attended Sunday school for several weeks and one day the teacher told me that they were going to have a Children's Day Program, and asked if I would like to take part. I did not know what it was like and she kindly explained it to me. I was delighted with the idea of speaking little poems and singing songs from the platform. I thought how wonderful it would be if my father and mother would come to hear me.

The teacher gave me my parts and my mother taught them to me perfectly, and I could give them without mistakes from the first practice. Some of the children had to be prompted every time we practiced and teased me by saying, "What difference does it make whether you know yours or not? Your parents won't come to hear you. No one cares whether you do well or not." How I wanted my parents to go. I begged for a promise. One thing I knew, if they said so they would be there. Neither of them ever broke their word to me. At last they told me "Yes," and what a happy little girl I was!

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30 -- FATHER AND MOTHER IN CHURCH

The big day arrived and even though it was sunny southern California, it was pouring down rain, which was quite unusual. My mother dressed me in a stiffly starched white dress with a blue sash tied in the back with a big bow, and a large blue bow of ribbon on the side of my head. She covered me with a cape, gave me a parasol and started me out saying, "I want you to stay in the church when you get there. Do not run in and out and get wet; if you do you will be a sight." I intended to obey but when I got to church I kept watching for my parents. I became so anxious that I walked out on the steps to watch for them, forgetting about the rain and my mother's advice to remain inside. I stood in the rain watching, but at last I saw them coming and hurried back to my place. My ribbons had wilted and they hung like rags and my dress was wet, but I did not notice it I was so happy that they had come to see me as I spoke and sang.

I went to Sunday school off and on for some time; then one day Frank told me that no one went to a Sunday school except little girls and sissy boys, and I decided that I was too big to go any more.

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31 -- THE RANCH

The years came and went, and when I was in my early teens my father purchased a ranch thirty miles from Los Angeles at Garden Grove, to which we moved. I enjoyed this ranch very much. There were horses to ride and things to do that were so different from the city. Nearby lived a group of young people with whom we became acquainted, and we had many good times together.

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32 -- MY FIRST REVIVAL

One Sunday the group came over to our ranch to spend the afternoon, and as they were leaving one of them said, "Dell, there is a revival going on at the Methodist church at Garden Grove. Would you like to go tonight?"

I was not certain what he had said, and I asked, "What did you say?"

Again he said, "There is a revival at the Methodist church at Garden Grove. Will you go with us tonight?"

I answered, "Oh, yes, I should like very much to go."

I had never heard of a revival, did not know what it was, but did not want them to know that so I asked no questions.

We arrived at the church, the people sang and a man preached. I did not pay very much attention to what was said; it seemed like any other service to me, and I wondered where the revival was.

When the man finished his message the people stood and he said, "Now, I want everyone who will to come down and shake hands with me."

I did not say a word to those with me, but I thought it was the queerest thing I had ever seen; people walking down the aisle, shaking hands with the preacher and going back to their seats.

Then he said, "There is a certain young lady here, and I have been praying all week for her to step out and take me by the hand."

I almost laughed aloud. I thought it was the silliest thing I had ever heard of -- a man praying for a woman to come down and shake his hand. I did not know what it was all about then; I do now. He was having them shake his hand as a witness that they had accepted Christ.

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33 -- A LITTLE HEATHEN

Suddenly I felt a hand on my shoulder and turned to see a woman standing beside me. She very kindly asked, "Are you a Christian?" I was never so amazed in my life. I suppose that I looked at her as though I thought she was crazy, and said, "Why, certainly, I'm a Christian. Where do you think I came from? Africa? I was born in America and, of course, I am a Christian." I was so angry that I did not know what to do. I wanted to get out as quickly as I could. When I looked around at the people near me, I decided that I looked as well as they did. When the service was dismissed and I was once again outside, I was glad I did not have to go back, ever.

When I got home and told the family, they thought it was a big joke on me. My little mother threw her head back and laughed and laughed and thought it was very funny for them to think I was not a Christian and said, "Where in the world did they think you came from?"

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34 -- THOUSANDS HAVE NEVER HEARD

Often Christians who have been reared in the church become critical of boys and girls who seem so bound to the world and so indifferent to the things of God. If

we knew the religious background of the gay, careless youth we see passing us by; if we knew their hearts our judgment of them might be vastly different. I am persuaded that there are thousands like I was; they do not know; they have never heard. All my life I had a longing in my heart but did not know what for until I found Jesus.

"Tell them the story of Jesus,
Write on their heart every word;
Tell them the story most precious,
Sweetest that ever was heard."

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35 -- MOTHER PASSES AWAY

After a time we moved back to our home in the city. I had a good time, with nothing to worry about; a wonderful father and mother and two splendid brothers; a lovely home and many friends. My life consisted of a round of parties, dances, shows, and many good times at our southern beaches.

Then there came a sad day in our home; one we never expected -- at least, not so soon. Our beautiful little mother was taken very ill with pneumonia; and, after a brief illness, she died. We buried her in the lovely Forest Lawn Cemetery at Glendale, California, by the side of the Church of the Flowers. Then we tried to pick up the broken threads of life and carry on.

There was a great, aching void in my heart that could not be filled. Mother was the perfection of love, gentleness and kindness. How we missed her, only those who have had a similar experience can know. The grass did not look as green as it had before; the sky not so blue; and the roses in our yard seemed to have lost some of their color. Nothing seemed right. I did not want to go anywhere nor see anyone. My heart was breaking. I had no God nor anyone to go to for help. I did not know the "Man of Sorrows" who said, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." I had never heard the song:

"Are you weary, are you heavy hearted?
Tell it to Jesus, tell it to Jesus.
Are you grieving over joys departed?
Tell it to Jesus alone."

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36 -- A CHILDHOOD FRIEND

One day about three Weeks after Mother passed away, a ring came at the door. There stood a girl named Alice, who had gone to the same little Sunday

school that I had attended as a child. She came in and visited with me, telling me she had seen an account of my mother's death in the papers. She was so kind and understanding that I was sorry when she left.

She had moved into the block where we lived. During the next few weeks she came several times.

One day she asked me to go with her to Sunday school.

I declined by saying, "Thanks, Alice, but I never go any more. Do you mean that you still go?"

"Yes," she answered. "I have always gone, right through the years; and there are many of the same boys and girls who still attend, and I wish you would come with me."

"No, not I," I said. "I would not know what to do or say if I were to go."

But she was so kind and so courteous and kept inviting me from time to time until finally I said, "I will go with you Sunday." I was sorry afterward for the promise, but I kept it.

When I had gone with her several times, she asked me one morning after Sunday school to go upstairs to hear her pastor; but I said, "No, Alice; one trip to church on Sunday is enough for me."

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37 -- HOW I HEARD OF THE HOLY GHOST

Each Sunday she would tactfully ask me to hear her pastor, until finally I could turn her down no longer, and I went with her into the main auditorium. I do not know what the preacher said nor what they sang about; I was only wanting the time to pass so I could get away.

When the sermon was finished they stood to sing. A person standing near me extended a book. I took hold of one side, but never looked at it, until I heard them sing, "Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost." I almost froze in my tracks. I had never heard the name, "Holy Ghost," and it nearly stunned me. I was so shocked that I rudely jerked the book from the one sharing it with me and looked closely. Yes, there it was, "Father, Son and Holy Ghost." I closed the book and put it in the rack, forgetting all about the one holding it with me, and turned and walked out with the crowd, wondering what it all meant. I cannot tell you how strange I felt at hearing that name for the first time. Oh, that I had known then how comforting and precious He would be to a human heart!

**"Why didn't they tell me sooner?
Why didn't they let me know?
Of the joy, the peace and comfort
He longed my heart to show."**

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38 -- I PLAY FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL

One Sunday morning when I entered Sunday school I was requested to play the piano. I had spent over six years of hard study at the piano, but had never played a hymn as we did not have any religious song books in our home. However I played while the children and grown people sang, and I enjoyed playing very much. After that I played nearly every Sunday and looked forward to doing so.

One morning Mr. Aycock came into the Sunday school. I did not know who he was and never dreamed that one day we would be married; that he would become a preacher and that it would be my lot to be the wife of an evangelist, traveling from state to state, and spend the rest of my days playing and singing religious songs. In fact I do not suppose I had ever heard the word evangelist. But I have heard it many times since, and this work has been the joy of my life.

**"God moves in mysterious ways,
His wonders to perform.
He plants His footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm."**

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39 -- GIPSY SMITH COMES TO TOWN

One day I saw large banners on the street cars announcing the coming of "Gipsy" Smith, a great preacher from England. I had never heard of him, but thought that he must be great since he was so highly and widely advertised. However, I had no intention of going to hear him.

The next Sunday, when I was leaving Sunday school, the pastor of the church met me in the aisle and said, "Miss Davis, how would you like to be a personal worker at the 'Gipsy' Smith meetings?"

I smiled, for I had never heard of a personal worker, and had no idea what a personal worker was. But to get my bearings, I asked, "What did you say?"

He repeated, "How would you like to be a personal worker at the 'Gipsy' Smith meetings?"

"Oh," I answered, "I'd love it. I think it would be fine."

Then he handed me a badge which read, "Personal Worker, Gipsy Smith Campaign."

"Now," he said, "you can have a special seat and get into the services any time you wish."

I thanked him and went home. I thought, My, this is great! To have this badge, and to be able to get a seat any time I want to go. I placed the badge in my bag, wondering what it was all about. I had no idea what a personal worker was supposed to do, but I said nothing about it at home, for I did not want the family to know.

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40 -- A PERSONAL WORKER

The meetings were held in the old Shrine Auditorium, which seated ten thousand people. I went the first night, but carried my badge in my handbag until I got off the street car; then I pinned it on the lapel of my coat.

It was over an hour before starting time when I arrived but the building was full and hundreds of people were standing about the entrance hoping in some way to get in. I walked up to the edge of the crowd, but saw there was no use in trying, for the people there might as well go.

I started to turn away when I saw a nice looking, young usher coming toward me smiling.

He said, "You are a personal worker, are you not?"

"Oh, yes, yes, I am," I replied. I had forgotten it for the moment, but now I could see that it was coming in handy.

"There is a special entrance for the workers," he said. "Let me show you where it is."

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41 -- IN AT LAST

I followed the usher around the building until we came to a large door with a sign over it, "Personal Workers' Entrance."

As I walked in I thought, "Oh, this is good; all that crowd out there wanting to get in, and I have a whole entrance to myself!"

Finally I was shown to my seat. It was an end seat near the front just to the left of the speaker's stand, and in the first balcony. There was a sign on it which read, "Personal Worker's Seat," and bearing a number corresponding to the number on my badge. It was one of the best seats in the auditorium. I could see everything, and I chuckled to myself thinking how nice it was to have one of those little badges and always to be able to get in.

Of course, had I known what a personal worker was supposed to be and do, I would not have been there; but that was another time when it was blissful to be ignorant.

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42 -- UNDER CONVICTION

I have no idea what Mr. Smith preached about that night -- I wish that I did have. I did not know in those days that a preacher had a text, or was supposed to. But I do know that while he was preaching, I thought that I should like to be as kind as he seemed to be. I thought I could give anything in the world if I could be as good as he. When the message was over I was trembling from head to foot. I did not know what was the matter with me. I know now; I was under conviction. But at that time I had never heard of conviction for sin, and did not know what it was. I had heard the words, "saint and sinner," but had no real idea as to what they had reference to. I knew some people were wicked and bad; I knew some were unfortunate and poor; I knew some were referred to as being good, but that some were Christians and others were not was unknown to me. I did not know that "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

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43 -- THE INVITATION

At the close of his message the Gipsy requested, "If there are any who would like to be saved, please raise your hand."

I had never heard the expression before and did not know what it meant. I did not know what they were to be saved from, but I thought, "If being saved will make me as kind and gentle as that preacher seems to be, I want it." And up went my hand as high as I could raise it. There I was, sitting in a personal worker's seat, wearing a personal worker's badge, raising my hand to be saved. How glad I am that I did not know what a personal worker was. I kept my hand up and after a while, the preacher said, "You may take your hands down."

I thought that I had to keep it up to get saved. Then he said, "If you really mean it, if you are anxious to be saved, stand."

And I, with many others, stood, badge and all. Oh, how much I wanted to have what "being saved" was.

Then he said, "If you intend to go through with this, go to the inquiry room."

Then I thought, I cannot get saved for I have never heard of such a place and do not know where it is; so I just stood there, not knowing what to do.

Presently a little lady placed her hand on my shoulder and said, "Would you like to go to the inquiry room with me?"

I replied, "That is exactly where I want to go."

"Then follow me," she said.

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44 -- THE INQUIRY ROOM

I followed the lady down the aisles and around through corridors until we came to a very large room. Here were scores of people. Some had Bibles in their hands and were talking to others, showing them the Scriptures. I wondered what in the world they were doing; I know now, they were instructing people how to find God through His Word. Others had cards in their hands and were writing as they talked. This also seemed queer and I wondered why they were doing it. Now I know they were having the seekers sign cards as an evidence that they were converted. I saw quite a number who were kneeling and talking to seekers. Others were praying aloud with them; this, too, was very strange to me, and I wondered what it all meant. It is all plain now, they were Christian workers who believed in helping people find God in this way.

All the while I kept following my lady; I did not want to lose her, for it was she who was going to help me find out what "being saved" was.

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45 -- SAVED AT LAST

Finally the lady stopped beside a chair and told me to kneel. She knelt beside me and asked, "Do you want to be saved?"

"Of course, I do," I replied; "that is why I am here."

Then she said, "Ask God to save you and He will."

I prayed, "O God, save me," and sprang to my feet. I knew that whatever "being saved" was, I had it. I was still trembling, but it was a different kind of tremble. I had never felt such peace, such joy, such happiness in all my life.

I just stood there, not knowing what to say or do and the lady looked up at me and said, "Well?" And I said, "Well."

Then she asked, "Did you ask God to save you?"

"Why, certainly," was my reply.

"Did He do it?"

"Certainly," I answered.

She looked at me as though she thought I were crazy; she did not know what a little heathen she had on her hands. But I was amazed at her for telling me to ask God to save me, and assuring me He would, then asking me if He had. I did not know anything about God, but I thought that since He said He would save me if I asked Him, He surely would do what He said. And now I know He will, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

"Oh, the joy of sins forgiven,
Oh, the bliss the blood-washed know;
Oh, the peace akin to heaven,
Where the healing waters flow."

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46 -- THE JOY OF SALVATION

I left the old Shrine Auditorium that night the happiest girl in Los Angeles. As I got on the street car to go home my heart was singing with joy. I said over and over to myself, "I'm saved, I'm saved; whatever it is, I have it. It's mine. It's mine; I'm saved."

"I had walked life's path with an easy tread,
Had followed where pleasures and vanities led
Until one day in a quiet place
I met the Master face to face.

"I lost my life to find it again;
My thoughts are now for the souls of men,
E'er since that day in a quiet place,

When I met the Master face to face."

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47 -- TRYING TO PRAY

When I arrived home there was no one there, so I let myself in and hurried upstairs to my room. Everything looked beautiful. I had a lovely room, but tonight it looked lovelier than ever. I undressed and jumped into bed and started to pull the covers up around me when the thought struck me, "If you are saved, you ought to pray." I got up and knelt beside my bed, but did not know any prayer to pray. I did not know that you could talk to the Lord as you do to a person; I thought you had to have prayers already made up to pray.

I knelt for quite a while wondering what to do, when from somewhere out of the past there came floating into my mind the childhood prayer:

**"Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep;
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take."**

It had been taught to me when I was a little child, and I was so glad that I had remembered it. I prayed it over, and got back into bed and went to sleep.

Perhaps this seems silly to you for a grown young woman to pray a simple prayer like that; but it was the only one I knew, and it satisfied my heart.

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48 -- HUNTING A PRAYER

The Smith meeting lasted for several weeks and I went every night. I would not have missed one for anything. Each night after service I returned home and prayed my little prayer.

But the time came when it did not satisfy; it was so short, and I wanted to pray longer, but I knew no other. So I would pray over and over this little childhood prayer until my heart felt rested and satisfied.

I wanted really to pray and commune with God, and wondered whether or not there was such a thing as a book of prayers. I thought if I could buy one I would memorize a lot of them.

I went down in the city to Fowler's large book store to ask about a prayer book; but when I got inside I thought, "If there is not such a thing, the clerks will

laugh at me." So I walked out. I walked up and down in front of the building. I wanted so much to pray -- to have a long prayer --that I mustered up courage enough to go back into the store; but again I feared to ask, thinking they would make fun of me if there was not a book with prayers in it. Several times I went into the store to ask; but each time my courage failed me and finally I went home.

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49 -- DR. R. A. TORREY

One night, after the meetings had been going on for nearly three weeks, the man in charge of the service said, "Now Dr. R. A. Torrey will lead us in prayer."

I watched Doctor Torrey walk to the edge of the platform, where he knelt and began to pray. All of the others who had prayed had seemed so stiff and formal; their prayers seemed so precise and perfect, but this man was different. I had bowed my head, but no sooner had he begun to pray than I lifted my head and looked at him, and as he prayed I said to myself, "That man did not have that prayer made up, and he did not get it out of a book; he is talking to God exactly as I would talk to a person. Why, he is talking to God like he would talk to a friend." Oh, I was thrilled through and through, and I could hardly wait until the service was over, so I could go home and try to pray.

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50 -- MY FIRST REAL PRAYER

As soon as I entered my room I knelt and prayed my old prayer, "Now I lay me down to sleep." Then I waited for some time because I was not sure whether I could really pray or not. But, oh, I wanted to talk to God in my own way; to tell Him all that was in my heart -- if He did not care if it was all right with Him.

Finally I said softly, "O God," and stopped, but I had no sooner done so, than it seemed to me that He spoke audibly to me. Of course I know that He did not, but His voice was so plain to my heart, and it seemed to say, "That's it, child. That's it. Just talk to me as you would to anyone else."

Then I "opened up" and prayed and prayed, talking to God right out of my heart. What a wonderful thing it was to me -- to find out that I could really approach and talk to the mighty God, the Maker of heaven and earth, and that He would listen to me.

More than a quarter of a century has passed since that first hour of prayer. Meanwhile I have approached Him thousands of times and still He says, as in days of old, "That's it, child. Just talk to me as you would to a friend."

"Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer,
That calls me from a world of care,
And bids me at my Father's throne,
Make all my wants and wishes known!

"In seasons of distress and grief,
My soul has often found relief,
And oft escaped the tempter's snare,
By thy return, sweet hour of prayer."

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51 -- THE LAST CARD GAME

The first night after the "Gipsy" Smith campaign closed my father, my two brothers and I were at home for the evening. After dinner someone said, "How about a good card game? We haven't had one together for a long time."

They all agreed, and I stood by the table while they shuffled and dealt the cards. I did not know what to do. I had heard Mr. Smith say that real Christians did not play cards. By this time I had learned the difference in being a Christian and thinking I was one merely because I was born in America.

I did not want to play cards, but it is hard to stand out against your own folks. When all was ready they looked at me to see why I had not taken my seat, and I said, "You know I have been going out to the Smith meetings."

One of the boys laughed and said, "We thought that was where you were going."

"And," I continued, "I got saved out there the first night, and I'm not going to play cards any more."

One of the boys started to make light, but my father stopped him with a look, and, reaching out his big friendly arm, swept in all the cards, saying, "Honey, if you don't want to play cards, you don't have to play cards."

That was the last card game that was ever played or started in our home. Years later I learned that the Bible says, "In all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy path."

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52 -- THE LAST DANCE

A big dance had been planned for months by a group of my old friends, and before the meetings ever started I had been making preparations to go. I had bought a lovely dress -- I'll never forget it -- a cream satin with a tiny pink and rose pattern. Indeed I had looked forward to this ball for a long time hoping to wear this beautiful evening dress.

When the night came my friend called for me about eight-thirty; but before he came, even while I was dressing, I began to feel strange about going. I am sure Gipsy Smith preached against dancing, but I did not remember hearing him.

When we arrived the crowd was already there, all of my gay old friends, laughing and talking. But somehow I felt out of place. I did not know what was wrong, but I began to feel terrible. I did not know the meaning of it then, but I know now; God was reproving me for being there. It was the precious Holy Spirit trying to tell me that dancing was wrong.

Presently the music started, and my escort came to me and said, "Dell, you know the first dance is mine."

I looked up at him and said, "I want to go home."

He asked, "What did you say?"

I said, "I want to go home."

"Very well," he replied decisively.

I hurried for my wraps, and we went out. The farther I got from the dance, the better I felt. My heart began to sing again, and that terrible feeling was gone. He did not speak all the way home and neither did I. He was angry and I could not blame him, for he was not a Christian. When we reached home I said, "Good night."

And in a disgusted voice, he replied, "Good night," and I have never seen him since.

I went immediately to my room and removed my lovely dress, and never wore it again, for I never again went to a place where I would be expected to do so.

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53 -- WALKING IN THE LIGHT

I have always been glad that I did not dance that night. Feeling as I did was God giving me light, and my leaving the dance was walking in that light. Most people could not go that far without backsliding because they know better; they

have light about such things, but with me it was different. I did not know, but I am thankful I walked in the light and kept the Lord in my heart.

All this was many years ago, and I have had a beautiful, unbroken walk with Jesus through all the years. I am persuaded that God will lead us in the "paths of righteousness," no matter how little we may know about it, for He led me from "Darkness to Dawn."

"Fade, fade each earthly joy;
Jesus is mine.
Break every tender tie;
Jesus is mine."

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THE END