

An Early Great Plains Pastor

**An Autobiography
of Evangelist R.R. Richards**

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Foreword

The following autobiographical sketch is the story of my father's life, written between 1938 and 1945. He asked me on several occasions to help him put it into an adequate form, but my own affairs prevented my giving his manuscript the needed attention until this last month, when I decided that if I were ever to accede to his wishes then it should be done soon.

My father's story is a simple one, portraying the personal spiritual life and growth of a man completely dedicated to the Lord's work. There have, undoubtedly, been far greater preachers of the gospel than he, but I doubt very much if there was ever a more earnest or devout one. To him the ministry was more than a profession—it was a spiritual dedication. What work I have done in giving his story grammatical astuteness or organization has in turn given me a better insight into his life than I ever had before.

Whatever omissions I made were for the sake of unity. The story is not one of family life, except as his family life touches upon his religious experiences. The life of his family has never been static, and to crystallize it in words leads only to a distortion in the face of later changes. However, the story of his spiritual life is one that now awaits only the final fulfillment and will stand as a testimony of good work engaged in and completed.

As is true of any such witness of the Lord, my father always eagerly desired that others hear his story. If the story has meaning or inspiration for others, it will probably be found in the fearlessness with which he always undertook a job, no matter how impoverished the field, and stayed with it until it was done.

The actual number of conversions under his preaching may be numbered at two or three thousand, compared to the tens of thousands of a Billy Sunday or a Russell Conwell. My father's work was frequently in barren places where the population was

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scattered and meager, but withal needy. He was no big-city preacher, but a country pastor and evangelist from first to last. In that field, I think, he was as strong as any who have worked in the Lord's vineyard.

The story of God's providence in his life may seem a little erratic to a profane or skeptical reader, but it shone with reality for him and may do so for others. His testimony of the value of personal work is a record of experience. He has witnessed how faith has made men whole. He has seen men in one condition of life and then has seen them change to another and happier condition through the influence of their Christian conversion. It is as simple as that.

Father's preaching was flavored by a trace of his Welsh accent, and I have retained—perhaps for sentimental reasons—such slightly archaic expressions as “whilst,” “it read something like this,” and “sure enough” (pronounced “shoo-r-r enuf-f,” with a slight trill to the R's). He always gave expression to an impressive sight or unusual experience by: “We-l-l, if-f that does-sn't beat the climax; I nef-fer saw the like before!” All in all, he lived a good life, and I think he has done good in a world where much good is needed.

After his retirement, he took great pride in his horticulture and his gardening. Later, after his move to a smaller place, he nursed his yard religiously, and frequently extended his labors to his neighbors' yards when they appeared unsightly to him. He also worked diligently to keep the weeds from trespassing on the premises of the Lord's house until an accident sent him to the hospital with a broken hip.

At the time of this writing, he is looking toward his eighty-seventh year. He is confined almost entirely to the house, too broken, tired, and stiff to wage war against nature any longer.

Lloyd R. Richards
Omaha, Nebraska, 1948

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My Boyhood in Wales

I was born in Carmarthenshire, South Wales, in a town called Laugharne, on July 3, 1861. The following spring my parents moved onto a farm called Rodgers-Well, which looked south to the Atlantic Ocean across a beautiful valley about two miles wide.

This country home is very precious to my memory. Here I was raised and nourished in my youth. Just a short distance from this home, at the foot of a hill, sat a beautiful Baptist church. My father served as a deacon in this church through all my early life. I very much enjoyed the Christian work carried on there. Regular services on Sunday included preaching at eleven in the morning, Sunday School at two in the afternoon, and preaching again at seven in the evening. Weekly prayer services were held Thursday evenings.

Another attraction I enjoyed very much in this church was our singing schools. Led by a competent director, we met one evening a week to practice singing. We also had what we called our annual singing associations, in which we competed in singing very choice anthems. This was an all-day affair. With a background like this, it's no wonder many of the Welsh people have become famous for their singing.

My first Christian training was received in our home. My father and mother were the common, home-loving kind of Christians. When I was a little boy, I often found my mother on her knees in prayer, and I heard my brothers and sisters tell of the same experience.

I well remember when my mother, sitting in her chair, would ask me to come to her. She would take me by the hand and ask me to kneel in front her, and then she would pray. I remember her tears dropping on my hands. I would ask her what she was crying or. I can never forget prayers like that.

I well remember, too, when I was a little boy four or five years

for

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old. At our family worship one Sunday morning, my father read the ninth chapter of St. Mark's Gospel. At the close of the chapter it read something like this: "If thy hand or foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands or feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched." Then we knelt for prayer. As my father prayed, his voice trembled as he pled with God for our protection, and I wept while on my knees.

After family worship, I went outdoors, where I continued to think of the Scripture my father had read. I thought of eternity, and said to myself, *Suppose I should be lost forever and ever?* Then I thought, *Surely there will be an end sometime—surely after thousands of years there will be an end.* But the more I try to comprehend eternity, the more sure I was that there was no end. At this point, great fear fell upon me and I was so spellbound I could not move.

After a little while, I felt some release and ran to the house. Before entering I stopped and said, "I know what I will do. I will be a good boy, and Jesus will take me to heaven," and all fear left me. Yet, I well remember that many temptations for evil and oftentimes great fear came upon me, and I found I had a great battle to fight for the rest of my life.

I can never forget one Sunday evening after we returned home from church, how my mother talked to my brother John and me about making a profession of Christianity and being baptized and uniting with the church. She said something like this: "Boys, how do you think your father and I feel when the minister invites everyone who would like to make a profession of Christ and be received for baptism to remain after the congregation is dismissed? Don't you think it is about time you considered this?"

From that time forth we began to think differently, and it became a serious matter with us. We talked it over together and finally decided to remain the next time an opportunity was given us. We began to talk with our young friends, telling them what we

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had decided to do. They also talked to their friends, so that quite a number of us did remain when the next invitation was given.

After we were baptized and received as members of the church, we became more serious and active in church work. I well remember the first time the minister called on me to pray in public. This meant I must leave my seat and go to the front to pray. I attended the weekly meetings very regularly when I was young, and I took great pleasure in all Christian work. It was in this church I had my first inspiration to become a minister of the gospel.

Not long after I became a member, we had what we called a missionary meeting. Ministers from different parts of the country attended. One minister came from Liverpool, England; one from Carmarthen, one from Saint Clears, and one from Whitland, Wales. All the preaching was very interesting and effective, but the one who affected me the most was Dr. Roberts of Carmarthen, Wales. He preached the first sermon on "Aquila and Priscilla, Great Missionaries."

He told an interesting story ^{from} for his youthful experiences. When he was a little boy, cottage prayer meetings were held in his neighborhood, and one met in his parents' house. This meeting deeply stirred him. At its close, the minister came up to him put his hand on his head and said, "Little man, you will preach gospel for Jesus some day." From that day forth he had a burning in his heart to be a preacher of the gospel.

I think I can safely say that the Lord made no decision with ^{more} profound ~~of~~ results upon my life than ^{when} what he called Dr. Roberts into the ministry. I suppose this man did not realize he had already created in my heart a burning to be a preacher of the gospel.

I Decide to Go to America

When I was nineteen, I married a young woman by the name of Martha Williams, the oldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Williams. They had a large, bountiful farm and were quite wealthy people. Their family of seven children—three sons and four daughters—were all members of the church my family attended. Their oldest son was a Baptist minister and a great preacher. The other two sons lived in Sydney, Australia, one a druggist and the other a dentist. The three younger girls still lived at home when I left Wales to come to America.

My wife and I first farmed in Pembrokeshire, Wales. This farm, called Cwmrath, had very fine buildings on it, all stone with slate roofs. In fact, practically all the buildings in that country were either stone or brick; there were no frame houses. Our nearest town was Amroth, a summer resort on the coast, just one mile away. People gathered here from far and near in the summertime to visit and swim in the ocean and enjoy themselves.

At Amroth I met a Welshman, Mr. Picton, who had been in America for nearly twenty years. I had a fine visit with him and invited him home with me to spend the night. We enjoyed talking about America. My wife's two brothers had insisted we join them in Australia, and we had planned to do so until Mr. Picton entirely changed our minds. From that time forth, we made plans to go to America. I believe to this day it was all in God's plan that I should meet this Welshman from America at the seashore and invite him home with me.

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“Ye Must Be Born Again”

When my wife and I moved to the farm at Pembrokeshire, we put our church membership into the First Baptist Church of a town called Saunders-Foot of the seacoast. Their beautiful building had a large choir stall in the rear. It had a very competent director, and the entire congregation sang with inspiration and power. During the second year of my membership, they elected me one of the deacons.

The pastor, Rev. Harris, was a very interesting and inspiring preacher. It was in this church that I began to feel the need of a deeper work of grace. Not long before we left for America, there came a Baptist minister from England to spend part of his vacation on the coast in South Wales. Whilst he visited this town, our pastor became acquainted with him and invited him to preach on a Sunday morning. That sermon I shall never forget. He preached on the new birth: “Ye Must Be Born Again.” As he stressed the necessity of being born again and explained how Jesus demanded we experience being reborn, my heart stirred as it had never been stirred before.

He then spoke of his own experience. When he began the Christian life, he realized there was more to the Christian experience that he had yet witnessed. Here is his story: “When I was a young man and lived here in Wales, I was walking down the road from Tavernspite to Whitland, and a deep conviction came over me that seemed to say, ‘Ye must be born again!’ Nearby was a gate going into a field. I climbed over the gate and under a high hedge I went down on my knees. I pled with God for the experience of the newborn life. There under that hedge, the Spirit was poured out upon me, and I changed my prayer to praising God with my whole heart for the experience of the newborn life.”

Whilst listening to this great preacher telling his experience of

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the new birth, I said, "If that is what it takes to be a Christian born of the Spirit of God, I don't know anything about it." But this is what I decided then and there: *If it is for him, it is for me, I will never cease seeking it until I find it.* From that time forth, I began seeking the new birth in the fullness of its experience.

Before leaving the farm to come to America, I went out to the field, and under a high hedge I went down on my knees. There I consecrated myself to the Lord and most earnestly asked Him to use me in America for His cause and Kingdom. This he did far beyond my expectation.

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Settling in America

When we sailed to the United States, we had four little ones, the youngest only a few months old. We had a fine voyage across the ocean on the *Germanic*, which carried over one thousand passengers. If we had arrived in Liverpool two hours sooner, we could have joined the maiden voyage of the *City of Rome*, the largest ship to cross the ocean at that time. We saw her start out about four o'clock in the evening, and the *Germanic* left Liverpool at nine the next morning.

I shall never forget our experience crossing the Irish Channel. A storm came up and all passengers were ordered to their berths, but a few of us men stayed on deck. The ship rocked in a fearful way. After the storm ended, I went down to see how everyone was getting along below. To my great surprise, more than half the people were seasick, moaning and groaning and throwing up.

As soon as I came into that atmosphere, I grew as sick as any of them. I could not stand even the smell of food for several days. When the waiters called out the first course for dinner that evening, Irish stew, I became nauseated—not only I but hundreds of others too. It seemed strange to me that my wife and children were not sick at all. After the seasickness ended, however, we could eat Irish stew or anything else they set before us.

How happy we were when we first saw land after such a trip. When one of the sailors cried out, "Land!" everyone crowded on deck as fast as they could get there. After we docked in New York, it was quite a sight to see people going in every direction, possibly hundreds of them not knowing where they were going.

I enjoyed the time we spent in New York. The hotel where we stayed whilst there was managed by a Welshman. On Sunday morning he had his son take us to the McArthur Baptist Church. The first sermon I heard preached in America was by a Baptist

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minister, one of the greatest preachers New York could offer. The auditorium was so full that I had to go to the gallery, which was also crowded. I was fortunate enough to find a good seat right in front of the pulpit.

From New York we took a train to Hiawatha, Kansas. That was quite an experience going through all those states in the month of September, where for the first time I saw fields of corn. After the long train trip, we arrived at Hiawatha about two o'clock in the morning and went to the hotel. In the afternoon, Mr. Picton came into town and took us home with him.

The Pictons lived on a beautiful home on a 160-acre farm eight miles northeast of Hiawatha. They had a large orchard loaded with fruit ready for harvest. We had a wonderful time with this family and in many other homes in that community. Their Welsh Baptist Church had services every Sunday morning and evening, and the Welsh minister could preach in both Welsh and English. This minister, Rev. Richardson, was a powerful preacher who made me feel as though I were almost back in Wales.

In the spring, I bought an eighty-acre farm eight miles southwest of Tecumseh, Nebraska, the county seat of Johnson County. I spent some joyous and sad years on this little farm, where my wife died in childbirth. The baby, Gwennie, survived.

Losing my wife and being left with five little children was a greater tragedy than I can describe in words. But I was thankful that, before this happened, my parents and brothers and sisters moved to the United States and decided to settle in the very community where we lived. After my wife died, my oldest sister came and kept house for me for a year. Then she was married to Mr. Picton's oldest son. My second sister came and kept house for me for six months, then she too married.

Despite the pain of the loss of my dear wife, I saw evidence of God's providence and love. During this time of sorrow, I spent much time in prayer and felt God very near to me in many ways.

My children are all grown and married now, with families of

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their own. My oldest daughter, Edith, died in Los Angeles while giving birth to a baby girl, just as her mother had. My oldest son, Joseph, lives in Denver, Colorado. My second son, John, lives in Tecumseh. James, my third son, died in 1923. My youngest daughter, Gwennie, who lives in California, proved to be a mother to her sister's children after their mother's death.

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Evidences of God's Providence

A short time after the death of my wife, a \$235 note came due. I felt it would mean the loss of my home if I should fail to meet it. I had no way to pay it began to wonder what I could do.

My wife had a very wealthy uncle in England, who owned the Queens and Northwestern Hotel in Birmingham. I began thinking about Uncle Joshua, although I had met him only once. Soon after we were married, he and his wife had come to Wales to visit his brother and family. This uncle and aunt had no children to share their wealth. I felt my only hope was to pray that he might help me.

A few months before I left Wales, George Mueller of Bristol, England, made a tour through Wales in the interest of his large orphanage. I had the joy of attending two of his meetings. Never, up to that time, was I so moved under the power of a man speaking. He made me feel as though I were in the presence of God. When I heard him tell his marvelous stories, I felt that I could never again doubt that God answers prayer.

I said to myself that if God could lift George Mueller out of such hard places through prayer, He could lift me out of this trouble now. I went out into the middle of my cornfield, where I could be alone and undisturbed. There, on my knees, I laid my troubles before God. I asked him if He would be pleased to have Uncle Joshua send me \$235 so I could pay off my note. There and then, the answer came in plain words, "I will!" At once I changed my prayer from supplication to thanksgiving. I felt sure I would receive the money, as sure as it had been put down before me. I left the place feeling very happy.

About two weeks from the time of this prayer, I was hauling a load of hay. As I came into the yard, my father also drove in. He came up to me looking very happy and said, "Well, how are you feeling, Richard?"

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“Oh, all right,” I replied.

“That’s fine,” he said. I’ve been to town and brought out your mail, and here is a letter from Birmingham England.”

Sure enough, here a reality was the answer to my prayer. It was a draft for \$250, a little more than I had asked for. I said to my father, “Let us go into the house. I want to tell you about this.”

After I told him how I had taken my problem to the Lord in prayer, how the answer had come to me, how sure I was that the money would come, and how I had received more than I asked for, I said, “Let us kneel together and thank God for His blessing.” We both felt overjoyed.

The letter I received ran something like this: “Mr. Richards, I am enclosing a draft for \$250. I have had a strong feeling that you might be needing it, though I have seen only once, the time my wife and I were down in Wales visiting my brother John and his family. I might have sent you this gift a little sooner had I known where you were in America. I had to write to Wales to my brother John for your address.”

I wrote a letter thanking him for his gift. Then I told him the whole story as I have written it. Shortly after, I received another letter from him with a draft for \$100. Such is the wonderful providence of God when we are willing to put our trust in Him.

Another illustration of Divine Providence in small, personal affairs occurred when I was pastor of the First Baptist Church of Sterling, Nebraska. I had a very strong conviction that I should go into evangelistic work. I would dream night after night that I was in evangelistic meetings, and I could not rest because of it. Finally, I made up my mind that I would yield to the call and take up this special work. After I gave the church my resignation, we began making plans to move to York, Nebraska, where I decided to make my headquarters.

What should I do with my little eighty-acre farm southwest of Tecumseh? Should I keep it or sell it? I took it to the Lord in prayer. A few days later, a man came from Tecumseh and asked

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me if I would care to sell my farm. I told him I had been thinking about it. Then I decided to put a price on it, and if he would take at that price I would sell. I asked for sixty dollars an acre, and he took it at that price. I consider this another token of God's providence. I had bought this land eight years earlier for \$1600 and now sold it for \$4800. I found that it pays to take every business transaction to the Lord in prayer.

After we moved to York, I began to wonder what I should do with the money I had received from my farm. I asked the Lord to direct me, and I have every reason to believe that He did. The first transaction I made was to buy a home almost in the heart of the little city of York. We lived in this house four years, and when I sold it I received twice what I have paid for it, although I had given the former owner what he first asked for it.

Another token of God's providence occurred when I was in a meeting at Burchard, Nebraska. I had a dream that I bought a farm, and the impression was so vivid that I remember the lay of the land, the fences, and the appearance of the surrounding community. It looked so attractive to me and I felt so elated over it that I was sure the Lord wanted me to invest in a farm again. Then I woke up and said, "Nothing but a dream!"

The next morning I decided to call on a family living at the edge of town. As I walked along, the memory of my dream came to me afresh. It was so real that I said, "If I ever see that farm as I travel over the state in my evangelistic work, I'll recognize it." Weeks and months passed, and then I received a call for a meeting out Lomax, Nebraska, forty-six miles northwest of Kearney.

Whilst holding meetings there, I stayed with the Robersons, who lived on a farm at the edge of the town. I told them I was going to call on the farmers north of town. After breakfast I started out. I walked to the first corner west then turned north. Crossing a little draw and climbing to the top of a little hill, I looked out over the beautiful Wood River Valley. Right there, spread out before me, was the farm I have seen in my dreams months earlier.

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Seeing how the Lord was making this dream become a reality, I turned around and went back to Mr. Roberson's and asked him if that farm was for sale. A real-estate man as well as a farmer, he said that it was and that the owner was very anxious to sell since he wanted to move back East. I told him about my dream and that this farm was the one I had seen in it. I said, "If you will go with me, I will buy the farm." We went over and found that they were ready to sell. I asked what they wanted for it, and they gave me their price. I bought the two-hundred-acre farm for \$2600. This was in the 1890s when it was hard to sell land, but a good time to buy.

The next spring I built all new improvements on it, as the buildings that had been on it included only a sod house and a straw barn. Many of the buildings through that country at the time were made of sod, but now there is not a sod building to be seen.


I share these experiences because I feel it is my duty to do so. Looking at it from a spiritual standpoint, I can say, "The half has not been told."

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Nearer to God

The Methodists had a Sunday School organization in what was called Maple Grove Schoolhouse, one-and-three-quarter miles from my home. They held preaching services every Sunday afternoon. I attended them most of the time, for it was more than seven miles to Vesta, where I had my membership in the Baptist church, and the only way I had to travel was by team.

A retired minister from Vesta—quite an elderly man—came out to the Maple Grove school to preach on Sunday afternoon. He took for his subject “The Sealing of the Spirit.” This text was from Ephesians 1:13, “In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.” He preached a wonderful sermon, a sermon that brought afresh to my mind the message I had heard in Wales. This message stirred again the belief that Scripture demanded a definite experience of new birth, and from that time forth I became more and more in earnest in my search for it.

The following winter, the last part of January and the first week in February, the pastor of the Methodist Church of Vesta held a series of special meetings in the schoolhouse. On Friday night of the meeting the minister said, “There doesn't seem ~~seemed~~ to be  the spiritual interest in the meeting that there should be. It may be that we are not praying as we should. I would like to know how many of you will promise that at four o'clock tomorrow afternoon you will go to some secret place of prayer and pray that God's Spirit may be poured out upon this meeting, and that the hearts of people may be turned to God, and that many souls may be saved in this meeting, and that our hearts may be turned to God.” He continued, “The reason I am asking you to do this at this special hour is that when a number of people ask God for His blessing at

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the same time, though in different places, their united prayers will have a greater influence. Now, all who promise to do this I ask to stand." A large number rose to their feet, and I was among them.

Saturday afternoon I was splitting blocks into stove wood south of the house, and whilst I worked I was thinking in my heart of the promise we had made to the minister. When four o'clock came, I stuck my axe into a block of wood and walked to the barn. As I walked, a cloud seemed suddenly to come over me and my heart became burdened. After I entered the barn, I stopped to think why I should feel that way.

I looked back over my life and said, "I've always tried to live a Christian life and take part in Christian work the best I knew how." I thought of the life Jesus had lived and of the work He did and of the sacrifice He made to save us from sin and death and hell.

Just then a voice seemed to say to me, "Your life can be likened only to filthy rags compared to the life of Jesus." I knew that was a scriptural reference from Isaiah 64:6, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags."

I said, "Lord, give me a righteousness that will be acceptable to You." Then I went over to a corner of the barn and fell on my knees. I prayed, "Lord, have mercy upon an unworthy creature like me." Just then it seemed that I could see Jesus hanging on the cross, His head hanging low in death. I cried out, "Yes, Lord Jesus, You died for me," and the love of God filled my soul. I said, "There, now I know from experience that my sins are all blotted out."

My soul was filled with the love of God and peace came upon me. That day, that hour, I shall never forget, when in that humble barn I had the experience I had been looking for, even before leaving Wales. Yes, now I know what it means when Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Now I see it and feel it and know it.

I look upon that day as the greatest day of my life, for that day

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was the beginning, in reality, of all the great days that were to follow in my Christian life. I prayed that God would pour out His Spirit upon the meeting that was now in progress at Maple Grove Schoolhouse, and upon the community, and that many souls might be born of the Spirit of God.

Other nights I went down to the meeting on horseback, but this time I went afoot. I wanted to be in communion with the Lord as much as possible. I shall never forget the sweet communion I had with the Lord as I walked to the meeting that night.

The minister preached a very short sermon. He said, "It is not preaching that we need tonight; it is prayer and testimony that we need. I want to alter the service tonight, and all who will, I would like to come here to the front."

Several of us went forward. Then he said, "I am not going to call on anyone personally, but let us all voluntarily pray as the Spirit leads." The room was quite still for a few moments. Then I commenced praying aloud, and the spirit of love came upon me afresh and my heart was filled with the love of God. I pled for the Spirit to come upon the people. Before I was through, many were weeping. Then others prayed, we had a wonderful prayer meeting.

The minister asked us to rise and take our seats. Then he called for testimonies and said, "I am sure there are some here who have something to tell concerning what the Lord has done for you." I then rose and told the story of the heavenly experience I had gone through that afternoon and evening.

When I was through, my brother William rose and said, "Brother, you have had an experience that I have not had, and as it was for you so it is for me. I will never cease seeking until I find it." I'm happy to say that God's Word promises in Deuteronomy 4:29, "But if from thence thou seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him all thy heart and with all thy soul."

As my brother told the story later: That night after he reached home, instead of going to bed he went to the haymow in the barn. There, upon his knees, he said, "I will not leave this place if I have

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to stay here all night until I have the experience of the newborn life." Then he began to pray, and how long he prayed that night I cannot say just now, but as near as I can remember his story he said that about midnight he saw a light in the distance that looked like a blazing star. As it drew nearer to him, it became brighter, and very suddenly the love of God filled his heart. He was very happy and his prayer now turned into praise to God. That was the part of the story he told the meeting the following Sunday evening.

That same evening, after the testimony time ended at church, the minister gave an invitation something like this: "Are there any who would like to have something of the experience you been listening to tonight and to seek the salvation that Jesus always is always ready to give to all who ask of Him? If you do, will you not come forward to the altar here?" A large number came forward. This was the beginning of a great revival at the Maple Grove Schoolhouse.

The experience of this meeting brought my brother and me nearer to the place where God saw fit through his Providence to call us both into the ministry.

Called to the Ministry and Baptized with the Holy Spirit

The next fall, in the month of November, a meeting was held in our Baptist Church at Vesta, seven-and-three-fourths miles northwest of our home. The minister who conducted the meeting was a holiness evangelist and a great preacher in his way of preaching. During this meeting, my brother, William, and I had our definite call to the gospel ministry.

To me the call came in this way: One Sunday morning during the meeting, a farmer who lived about two miles northeast of our town invited the evangelist; the pastor, Rev. Coffield; and me home to dinner with him. After dinner as we sat together visiting, the pastor nudged me with his arm then went outdoors. I knew he wanted me to follow him, so I excused myself.

"I want to have a little talk with you alone," the pastor told me. A short distance from the house was a creek with a heavy stand of timber along its banks. He said, "We will go to the timber." We sat down a large log and began talking about the meeting. Suddenly he said, "Let's kneel together and ask God's blessing on the meeting tonight." When we finished our prayers, he said, "Mr. Richards, I have a burden weighing heavily on my heart that I want to reveal to you. The Lord has been urging me to tell you that He wants you in the gospel ministry, so much that I cannot sleep nights on account of it."

Rev. Coffield lived at Humboldt, Nebraska, and was pastor of the First Baptist Church there and at Vesta and preached in each church every other Sunday. He told me, "Now, I want you to promise that after these meetings close, you'll preach alternately with me here. When I preach at Humboldt, you'll preach at Vesta. That will be good practice for you."

"Brother Coffield, I cannot do that. I have had no college training for the ministry, and I would be afraid to attempt it."

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“Neither have I had college training,” he said, “and I have been in the ministry for years!”

“Well, then I will try it.”

He said, “I want you to know that God’s Word says, ‘Open thy mouth and I will fill it.’ If you will do your part, God will not fail to do His part. So now I have discharged my duty, and the burden that has been on me is on you.” I will never forget the feeling a responsibility that now fell upon on me.

At this time William, who rented a farm to the south, was staying with me, and we had our family worship every morning. Our plan was that I should read a chapter of Scripture and offer prayer one morning, and he the next. Every morning, in that order, we kept up the family worship. Knowing now that after this revival closed, I was to preach every other Sunday at Vesta, I keenly felt the responsibility that was upon me.

One morning during our worship, when I read the seventeenth chapter of the book of Jeremiah I came to these wonderful verses: “Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.”

As I read these verses, the Spirit poured out upon us. I said to my brother, “Let us pray.” We knelt in prayer, and, whilst we prayed, our hearts were so filled with the love of God that we both broke down weeping for joy.

After breakfast, my brother and I both harnessed our teams to go husk corn. But with this great blessing that had come upon us, I said, “I am not going to husk corn today. I’m going to consecrate

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this day to the Lord.” William said he would to. He said he would go over to Jenny’s, our oldest sister, who lived in Vesta, and attend the afternoon meeting at the church. Then we went out and took the harnesses off the horses and turned them out to the pasture.

I went to the house and got my Bible. Then I went to the barn, got a horse blanket, and went out to the middle of the cornfield where I could be alone and undisturbed. The first thing I did was to spread the blanket on the ground and lay my Bible on the blanket. Then I went down on my knees with my face in my hands and my hands resting on the Bible. I prayed to the Lord to give me the light and a true understanding of His Word, that if He had called me to preach his gospel I might have the true light and wisdom to lead the lost into the fold of Jesus.

Whilst praying in this manner for some time, strange to say, I went into a trance. I do not know how long I was in this condition, but during that time I felt a hand take hold of my side and shake me and heard a voice say in plain words, “I want you to preach the gospel.” I rose to my feet, and the glory of God was so bright I could not see anything else.

I kept saying, “This is heaven; this is heaven!” Then the glory and brightness began to vanish and finally disappeared. I said, “There, I am in the world again.” It made me think of Jacob what he saw the ladder that reached to heaven and said, “The Lord is in this place, and I knew it not.” That heavenly voice and a heavenly vision will never be lost to my memory.

From that time forth, the Bible became a new book to me. I read, not because it was a duty, but because I loved to read and had a longing in my heart to understand. After reading and studying the wonderful life and works of Jesus and the apostles and of the whole Church after Pentecost, I had a hunger in my soul for the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

One day as I walked through the pasture, an unusual desire for the baptism of the Holy Spirit came upon me, and I went down to the draw where tall slough grass grew. I went to the middle of that

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tall grass and prayed for the baptism of the Holy Spirit in my life. The Spirit was poured out upon me with such power that I was overcome and thought I would die. I felt as though I was burning up. I believe that this was the baptism of which John the Baptist spoke in Matthew 3: 11, "He [Jesus] shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." That was the way I felt—I could feel the burning heat go through my body.

All these marvelous experiences God has been pleased to give me because I was living with him and for him in those days.

The meetings having closed at Vesta and the announcement made that I was to preach the next Sunday morning, I felt sure that the message the Lord wanted me to give was from the Scripture I had read in the family worship I mentioned. I titled my sermon, "The Course and the Blessing."

That Sunday morning when the deacon announced I would preach, I felt quite nervous. Yet I felt sure that the Lord would be very near me. There was an unusual attendance that morning. I have no doubt that many wondered how this young farmer would make it. At least, that's how I felt.

When the time came, I took my place in the pulpit, determined to do the very best I could, trusting in the grace of God. I read for my Scripture that seventeenth chapter of Jeremiah, and after the devotional service was over, I announced my text and began to preach. While I told how the Lord had been preparing me for the ministry and for the work He had for me to do and how His grace and Spirit had been so very precious to me, many wept, and that inspired me very much. At the close of the service, many came forward and thanked me for the message. Then I felt quite happy as a result of this first attempt to preach the gospel in public. I continued preaching at Vesta every other Sunday, and in the neighborhood where I lived.

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My First Evangelistic Meeting

I received an invitation from Tait, Nebraska, to come hold a revival meeting, and I accepted. This was my first attempt in evangelistic work, and I'm happy to say the Lord gave me a real revival in this place. The whole community was stirred, and people came from miles around to attend the meeting.

The revival was held during the last week of December and the first week of January, and I had Christmas and New Year's Day both during these meetings. I well remember the large Christmas tree they had, well loaded with gifts for the children and some for me, as well as for many others. After Christmas we had a big snow, so that the men had to get together to open the roads in order to get to church.

I will never forget the first convert in that meeting, a young woman about twenty years old. When I gave the invitation, she stepped out boldly and came to the front. She seemed so happy that her face fairly glowed. Many told me afterward it was a great surprise that she should have been the first one to come forward. They said she was the belle dancer of the community and that her father was an infidel who had forbade her going to church.

As the Lord would have it, at the time of this meeting she was working in a home near the church. The people she worked forward were devoted Christians and members of this Baptist church. The great change in her affected her father very much, so much that he bought her an expensive Bible for a Christmas present and had no more objection to her attending church. All these God-sent blessings came to pass in my first evangelistic meeting and meant so much to me as well as to the people of the community.

Toward the close of the meetings, a young man from Virginia came to this new convert one night and asked if she would go to a

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dance with him. She promptly answered, "No, sir!"

I happened to be right there and said, "That's right, Maggie, be true to your Christian experience."

I don't remember just how many additions there were to the church during these meetings, but I know there are quite a number. Those who were baptized were immersed in the Blue River, cold as it was at the time. One lady who was to be baptized had a very bad cold. Her husband, an unbelieving man who would not attend the meeting, was bitterly opposed to her baptism. I'm happy to say she was baptized and suffered no ill effects. In fact, she recovered from her cold soon after.

I think this would be a good place for me to relate another incident. A husband and wife, members of this church, told me this story in their home. Mrs. Smith said that when Mr. Smith was converted in this church about two years earlier under Evangelist Shepherd, there were sixteen to be baptized. This was in the middle of winter, just as the meeting we had held, and the ice was over a foot thick on the river. She said that Mr. Smith was severely troubled with rheumatism in his shoulders, so much so that he could not lift either of his hands to his head, yet he wanted to be baptized with the others. Mrs. Smith opposed it; however, they both went to the baptism.

When the minister was baptizing the last one, Mr. Smith asked one of the men to help him take off his overcoat.

Mrs. Smith walked up and said they should not do it because of his condition.

"Well," he said, "if you will not help me take it off, I will go in with my coat on. I am going to be baptized."

Then I helped him take his coat off, and he was baptized. The moment he was raised out of the water, he shouted, "I am healed!" He threw up his arms, praising God. His shoulders were completely healed. Many people who were at the baptism came to their home to see for themselves, knowing the condition his shoulders had been in. I knew Mr. Smith for many years after that.

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He was never again troubled with rheumatism. I am very happy to know that the Lord greatly blessed my first evangelistic revival meeting.

My Ordination and Early Ministry

Shortly after this evangelistic meeting, the First Baptist Church of Vesta called for my ordination on May 6, 1893. For my first regular pastorate, I had two country churches. One was six miles south of Adams and the other four miles north. I had a very pleasant pastorate with those two churches. I commenced my work on this field in June 1894. The north church had a little organization of thirteen members and held their services in what was called the Red Diamond Schoolhouse.

Early in the fall, I held a special meeting there and had thirty-five additions to the church. Most of these were heads of families and proved to be a valuable addition to the congregation. During this meeting we had a very large attendance, so large that many stood outside.

At the close of the meeting, some of the leading members said, "What are we going to do when the cold weather comes? People can't stand outside then." They began to talk of building a church. They called another meeting to discuss it, and a big majority was in favor of constructing a church building.

We appointed solicitors to go out and see what they could raise. In two weeks we had enough money to buy the lumber, and a long list of names of people who would contribute their labor. "For the people had a mind to work," Nehemiah 4: 6.

Work began, and by early spring we had a beautiful little church standing alongside the schoolhouse. It had a nice steeple and a bell in the tower. The entire building was painted and made ready for dedication. On April 15, 1895, it was dedicated clear of debt, with twenty-five dollars left over, which went toward buying an organ. The new church was christened Bethel. Rev. F.M. Williams, our state secretary, and Rev. Russell had charge of the dedication service.

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At Glendale, my other pastorate, I held a revival that resulted in a number of conversions and baptisms. In this church we had one family who was quite wealthy. They were farmers and owned three very valuable farms. The one they lived on had a beautiful home and fine outbuildings. It was only one mile from the church, and here I had my headquarters as long as I was pastor of this church. They counted me as one of the family. Mr. Miles united with the church under my ministry there. All the family, except for one little boy, were members of the church and were all very faithful in attendance. The daughter was my organist the entire time I served as pastor. Mr. Miles gave more, by far, than any other member of the church toward the finances. He gave one-hundred dollars a year toward my salary and more in other ways.

One time I told our people at the meeting that the taxes were due on my farm and that I would be thankful if they would pay my back salary so I could pay the taxes. The following morning, Mr. Miles said to me, "Mr. Richards, I'm going to drive down to Filley this morning. Would you care to go along?"

I said I would go with him. After he was through with his business in town, he asked me to go to the bank with him. As we walked to the bank, he asked me how much my taxes were. I told him forty-five dollars. We went into the bank, and he told the cashier to make me out a draft for forty-five dollars. I thanked him very much and sent it on. I thought that would be counted on his pledge toward my salary, but it was not. It was to be considered a gift. That incident serves only as an illustration of what Mr. Miles and his family did for me in my first little pastorate.

I greatly enjoyed the service I gave to these two churches. During my second year of pastoring, I began my college work at Grand Island, Nebraska, but returned every Saturday to preach. One Monday morning as I was leaving for Grand Island, Mr. Miles called me to him. He handed me a five-dollar gold piece and said, "I want you to take this. It will help you on your way." I think it graciously, but I believe that giving that five dollars did him as

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much good as it did me.

At the close of my second year on this field, I turned in my resignation saying, that it was too expensive for me to make this run of 125 miles every week. Besides, I was losing one day a week of my classes. The next time I came down, they had raised my salary one-hundred dollars at each church. They said that would more than pay all my expenses, so I felt obliged to remain another year with these two churches.

Before the end of the third year, I had a call to become pastor of the Laclede and Arborville churches, half-time to be served with each church. Taking the Laclede and Arborville churches would make it possible for me to drive to my appointments every Sunday since I had a good driving team. I requested the people of Bethel and Glendale to release me so I might accept this call. After reasoning it over with them, they most graciously did so.

I shall always have very precious memories of these two country churches of my first pastorate. At the Bethel Church I held an evangelistic meeting before leaving. Here again, the Lord was pleased to give me a remarkable meeting.

The first Sunday morning I took for my subject "Not So the Ungodly." My text was Psalm 1:4, "The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away." I felt the Lord with me in spirit and power in the preaching of that sermon.

At the close of the message, I felt that I should give an invitation. Then I considered that it was only the first sermon at the beginning of a revival. Perhaps I should wait until the spiritual interest was stronger. After I announced the hymn, I felt more and more constrained to give an invitation at once. So I said, "If there is anyone here this morning who would like to make an open confession of Jesus Christ as personal Savior, I want you to come forward whilst we are singing this number."

As soon as they began to sing, a man to my left started making his way out to the aisle and came rushing forward. He reached out his hand and said, "I give you my hand and God my heart." Then

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he turned to the audience and said, "My heart has been so stirred this morning through the service that I felt when that invitation was given there was no power that could keep me from coming forward."

As he spoke, I noticed many people were weeping. After the meeting dismissed, nearly everyone came forward to shake hands with him. Mr. Booth then came to me and introduced me to his wife and said, "I want you to come out to our home." I asked where he lived, and he told me. I said I would drive to his place on the morrow.

The next day, I drove out his farm, tied my team, and went to the house. Mrs. Booth sat on the porch sewing. I went to shake hands with her, but she paid no attention to me and went right on sewing. I backed up a little and asked her if Mr. Booth was home. She said he was around somewhere, maybe in the barn.

I went to the barn, and as soon as he saw me, he threw his arms around me. I said, "How are you feeling, Mr. Booth?"

"I feel as happy as a king," he answered.

"What about Mrs. Booth?" I told him how she had acted when I went up to the porch to speak to her.

"Well," he replied, "let's go to the house."

I said, "Before we go to the house, Mr. Booth, please tell me what the trouble is with her."

"Oh, she is a little put out because I went forward as I did in the Baptist church."

"How about her? Does she belong to any church?"

"No, but she was raised a Methodist and was baptized as a little child." Then he took me by the arm and said, "Come on," and we went to the house.

We sat and visited a little while when Mrs. Booth came in and, taking a chair, sat right in front of me. Then she said, "You Baptists preach that if we are not plunged under the water we are lost!"

I said, "You may have heard some minister preach that, but

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you have not heard a Baptist preach it, I am sure.”

“Well,” she insisted, “you do preach that you have to be put under water in order to be baptized.”

“That is altogether different, Mrs. Booth. That is what the Scripture teaches. When Jesus was baptized He went down into the water, setting us an example of how we should be baptized.”

“Now,” she said, “if a Methodist minister should come and talk to me about it, he would say that John the Baptist took up a little water in his hand and baptized Him.”

I replied, “That may be, but I would like you or anyone else to be baptized the way Jesus was baptized and the way the New Testament teaches it; then I know you would be right. If you would like to know what the New Testament says about it, I will give you all the references on paper.”

She said, “All right,” and I gave them to her.

I said, “Now, Mrs. Booth, if you will promise one thing before I go, you will have no trouble knowing the right way. Promise me that you will first go down on your knees and ask the Lord to take all prejudice out of your heart and to give you a right understanding of His Word. Then you will have no trouble. Will you do that?” She said she would.

Then I said, “Let us kneel in a word of prayer before I go,” and we knelt together, and the Lord’s blessing was upon us. I then wished them goodbye and told them to be sure to come to the meeting that evening.

At the close of the meeting that night, I gave an invitation. Mrs. Booth came forward, and for the rest of the meeting that night she was the preacher. This was her story: First, she apologized for the way she treated me when I came to her door. Then she wept a little and went on to say that after I left she got out her Bible and knelt with it in her hand, asking God to give her a better understanding of His Word. Whilst she prayed, the Spirit of God’s love came upon her and she felt her sins were all blotted out. She felt so happy she had to praise the Lord whilst still on her knees. Then she

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said, "I opened my Bible and turned to the references you gave me. As I read them, my heart was filled with joy, and I found them to mean more to me than you had said they would.

"Then I thought of the enmity there had been between me and a cousin of mine and of how we had not spoken to each other for over a year. I asked the Lord to forgive me for that and promised Him I would go and ask her forgiveness, which I did. I went to her home and knocked on the door. I will never forget the look of surprise on her face when she answered the door and saw me. She asked me in, and when I told her why I had come, she threw her arms around me and we wept together. She asked me to pray for her, and we were both very happy.

"When I left my cousin's home, I went to Mrs. Bangston's, a dear friend of mine. I want to tell her what the Lord had done for Mr. Booth and me, and how my cousin and I had settled our trouble. Whilst I was telling her this, she wept and asked me to pray for her. We knelt, and while we were praying Mr. Bangston came in. When he saw us on our knees in prayer, he was so stricken with astonishment he didn't know what to think or say. Then we rose, and I told him the story of Mr. Booth's and my conversion. He said that if it can make such a change in me, it would be good for him, and he asked us to pray for him. We knelt together again in prayer, and Mr. Bangston was saved too."

I asked Mrs. Booth if Mr. and Mrs. Bangston were in the audience, and she said they were. I then asked them to stand and said, "If you would like to make an open confession of Jesus Christ as your Savior, will you please do so by coming forward?" They both came.

We can well realize now why I should have had such a strong impulse to give the invitation that Sunday morning at the close of the first service of the revival meeting. Mr. Booth coming forward Sunday morning was the beginning of all those events told by Mrs. Booth that night.

The real results of this meeting cannot be put into words, for

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this was only the second night of the meetings. As the revival finally came to a close, I had the pleasure of baptizing Mr. and Mrs. Booth, Mr. and Mrs. Bangston, and many others who were converted during these meetings. When I left this appointment for my new field of labor, we had over sixty very substantial members in the church.

My second pastorate, the Laclede and Arborville churches, incorporated as the First Baptist Church of Polk, Nebraska. A new railroad came through Laclede and Arborville, with the little town of Polk building up so rapidly between these towns, made it necessary to move these two organizations to Polk. Here they constructed a large, beautiful, brick church.

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My Partner in God's Work

What I accepted the call to the Laclede and Arborville churches in July 1896, I had an excellent driving team. I drove from Adams, in Gage County, to Arborville, in York County, more than one-hundred miles, in a little more than two days. I arrived at the home of William Mitchell, one of the deacons of the Arborville church, about four o'clock in the afternoon.

A prayer meeting was held that evening at Arborville, which was seven miles northwest of Mr. Mitchell's home. Etta May, his oldest daughter, accompanied me. From that time on, we kept company with each other until the time of our marriage, June 2, 1898.

When I asked Mr. Mitchell for his daughter's hand, I told him that we had been together like Isaac and Rebekah. Mr. Mitchell consented to our marriage, and I believe to this day we were brought together by the providence of God. Etta May was not only a competent schoolteacher, but a leader among the young people as well. She was faithful to the church in her youthful days and continued to be a leader, giving unsparingly of her time and energy throughout our ministry together.

In times of difficulty and indecision, her fine sense of organization and detail, her ability and willingness to adjust herself to the work of a minister's wife, has been "my strength and my fortress." I have never known her to weaken or to fail in the time of need. Her devotion to her family was second only to her devotion to the work of the Lord.

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God Moves in a Mysterious Way

After finishing three years of academic work at Grand Island College, I held pastorates at Sterling, Crab Orchard, Ansley, Gibbon, Lomax, Arnold, and at Ansley again. After pastoring at Sterling, I moved to York, where for four years I served as an independent evangelist and later as State Evangelist for the Nebraska Baptist Convention.

After my second pastorate at Ansley, I moved to Grand Island. There I again served for short time as an independent evangelist, then as State Evangelist for South Dakota. After completing my work with the South Dakota State Convention, I retired from active ministry. I concluded my years of work by holding meetings in localities near my home in Grand Island and occasionally supplying neighboring churches that were without pastors until they could obtain a permanent minister.

In order that I might conserve my strength—and perhaps the reader's patience with my story—I should like to write about only a part of my experiences as God's servant and my subsequent work as pastor and evangelist. The complete record of my work would be too long and arduous a task for my ebbing energy.

The first meeting I held after moving to York was at Blue Rapids, Kansas, beginning October 23, 1903. My brother, the Reverend William Richards, was pastor of the First Baptist Church there at this time. I went into the meeting at the request of my brother, who had hoped we might get the other churches in the community to cooperate in a union meeting. We soon learned, however, that this was impossible, for the Methodist Church had already had a special meeting and did not want to go into a union service mainly because their meeting had not been successful. We had a good meeting at the Baptist church. New members came into the church by baptism and others by experience and letter.

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I had one special and providential experience in this meeting that I feel I should relate. I was asked by the lady of the house where I was entertained at the time if I had called on a sick man by the name of G.A. Haskell, who lived just west of the church. I answered no, that I had not heard of his being sick. The lady said he was very sick and the doctor had very little hope of his recovery. I told her I would go see him.

I did call on him and found him in very low condition. His mother told me that the doctor had given orders he should not be disturbed by visitors. I asked her if he was a Christian, and she said that he had not made a profession that he was a very good man. I said I was very sorry to hear of his condition and that I would like very much to see him.

"Well," she said, "you are a minister, so I am going to let you in," and she did.

I looked at him a moment, then told him I was evangelist who was holding meetings at the Baptist church and that I felt very sorry for him. I asked if he would like to have me pray for him, and he said he would. I asked his mother if his wife was in, and she said his wife was in the other room. I asked her to bring his wife in, then I asked them both to kneel with me at the bedside. As we knelt together I felt the Lord was very near to us.

I prayed for God's power to come upon the sick man to heal him body and soul. In a moment he cried out, "He is healing me now!" I asked the mother to pray, but she was so full of emotion and weeping so hard she could not. Then I told his wife to pray for herself and for her husband, and in a broken voice she pled with God.

Mr. Haskell cried out, "Jesus has saved me." When we rose, he was smiling happily.

The next time I called, he was sitting up and feeling quite well. His mother told me that a little while after I left, the doctor came in and went to his bed, but did not say anything. Later the doctor turned to her and asked what had happened. She told him the

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evangelist had been in to see her son and prayed for him, asking God to heal him and save his soul. She said, "You can see the results for yourself."

The doctor said, "Let God have the praise, for you know I had very little hope for him."

She told the doctor that all the time we were praying for her son he was praising God and saying, "He is healing me now."

That same day, William and I received a telegram from Hiawatha, Kansas, bearing the sad news that our father had been killed. He had been cutting down trees, and a large tree had fallen on him. We hurried to the livery barn for a team to take us to Marysville, Kansas, where we would catch a train to Hiawatha. With the sad condition in our home and with other meetings awaiting me, I did not go back to Blue Rapids.

After the burial of my father, I fell to thinking of Mr. Haskel. I wrote and asked him how he was getting along, and received an answer from him saying, "I received your letter just as my wife and I were leaving for Concordia, Kansas, so I was detained from answering it. I am happy to tell you that I am feeling very well, although I am still a little weak. I am gaining strength every day and will soon be able will to go to work again."

I am grateful to know that the Lord brought such a good work in this man through prayer, according to his own testimony as well as that of the physician. I am more than pleased to have been a witness to this miraculous answer to prayer.

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Welsh Revival in Nebraska

In April 1904, I received a letter from Dr. C. W. Brinstad, secretary of the Nebraska Baptist Convention. This confirmed my appointment as “an Evangelist to labor among the churches of the state of Nebraska.” My meetings, however, were to pay their own way—a matter I left entirely to the Lord.

At Wymore a meeting was held at the time of the great Welsh revival in my native country where young Evan Roberts led by the Spirit of God was doing a marvelous work for the Lord in the saving of souls and reviving of churches to a new life. We had remarkable sessions of prayer and consecration from the beginning of these services. Even when the temperature was twenty below zero, the church was crowded and a deep conviction was manifest. So much so that one night, at the close of the sermon while I offered the prayer, a woman came forward and knelt at the platform. When I ended my prayer, I knelt beside her and asked why she had come forward.

She said, “I am seeking the Savior you have been preaching about tonight.”

My subject had been “Christ Seeking the Lost.” I said to her, “If you are seeking Christ and Christ is seeking you, you ought to find Him.”

Suddenly she cried, “I have found Him!” And she rose and praised the Lord.

Just then Mrs. Miller, the pastor’s wife, called out, “Some of you Christian people come back here. Two young men are kneeling here.”

I stepped down from the platform, walked to the rear of the church, and knelt with them. Just as I asked them why they knelt there, one of them said, “We are seeking the Christ you were preaching about.”

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Then the other man rose and went forward and knelt at the platform. Whilst the pastor and others prayed with the young man at his seat, I went forward and knelt with the man at the platform. I asked him why he had come forward.

He answered in almost the same words as the others, "I am seeking the Christ you were preaching about tonight."

"Well," I said, "He is here seeking the lost night, and you are seeking Him. I don't see why you could not find Him now."

As I spoke, he exclaimed, "Yes, and I have found Him!" And he rose praising the Lord.

His father sat in the rear, and when he saw it was his son, the father came rushing down the aisle and threw his arms around his son, and they praised the Lord together.

During this time, a circle formed in front of the platform with people singing. Among them was the president of the bank, Mr. Anderson, who was so happy he started up the aisle clapping his hands and shouting, "This is heaven! This is heaven!"

Just then a young woman walked to the platform and knelt there. Before anyone could get to her, she rose and cried, "I have found Jesus!" and she was happy. I was told later that she was the best dancer in the community.

A night or two afterwards, she came to me and said, "Mr. Richards, I want to tell you something of the temptations that have come to me since I have become a Christian." She said the young people had been coming to her home, begging her to go to dances with them, but she told them to go with her to the meeting and become Christians, then they would not want to go to dances.

I said, "I pray that you will be able to win many of them to Christ and show them a better way to live."

Rev. Eugene Miller had charge of the singing at the Baptist church. The night of the heavenly movement, instead of going to the song service before the message I went to the haymow of the little barn belonging to the people with whom I was staying. I spent that time in prayer, asking God's blessing and Spirit to be

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with me in the preaching of the message. He was!

The Methodist minister, Rev. Parker, who was at the meeting that night, said, "I will guarantee that this building will not begin to hold the people who are here tomorrow night. If you need more room for your meeting, our doors will be open to you any time."

Sure enough, there were scores of people who could not come in the next night and had to be turned away. At a meeting after the service, we decided we should accept Rev. Parker's invitation and move to the Methodist church that Sunday night. The church seated five hundred people, and it was packed. The meetings continued from that time until their close in the Methodist Church.

During these revival meetings we had as many as five afternoon prayer services a day in different parts of town, with leaders appointed every day for each service. Nearly every evening we would have announcements of conversions in the prayer services.

The number of conversions from this revival would be hard to estimate, but we know that there were more than one hundred persons united with the different churches of the town. The ministers of Blue Springs, a little town nearby, reported that more than fifty people united with the churches there as a result of the meetings at Wymore. The editor of the Wymore paper wrote that the Welsh Revival had come to Wymore. "One thing is true," he said, "the meeting at Wymore was conducted by a Welsh evangelist."

In Cedar Rapids we commenced a meeting in the Methodist Church, for it was the largest church building in town. Within a week the services were moved to the City Hall in order to accommodate the attendance. During this meeting, some of the schoolteachers were converted. The superintendent of the school said in the meeting that the whole moral atmosphere of the school had changed. The young people had become more quiet and orderly than he had ever seen them before.

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Conversions at Carroll

At Carroll, Nebraska, I had a very pleasant time. I felt as though I were almost back in Wales. There was a large settlement of Welsh people, a large Welsh Presbyterian Church in the country, and some fine Welsh singers in the congregation.

One of the converts in this meeting was Mr. Scott, a drunkard who spent most of his earnings in the saloon. I went to his home and talked to him about the consequences of the drink habit and what it meant to his aged mother to have him out late of nights and to have him come home drunk. My reasoning brought him to tears.

One day at the post office, the postmaster said to me, "Mr. Richards, if you do nothing more they have already done, you be well paid for the time you have given."

I asked, "How is that?"

He replied, "There is a man attending your meeting every night who was never known to attend church before. He used to spend his money and time in the saloon, but now he attends your meeting." That man was truly converted and became quite a worker in the church.

Sometime later I attended our State Convention at Lincoln. Mr. Scott was a delegate to the convention for the Baptist Church at Carroll. It happened that he and I were assigned to the same place for entertainment, and I had a fine visit with him. That is what personal work and the gospel did for that man.

There were two other conversions in the Carroll meeting that I would like to relate. One morning while eating breakfast at the parsonage, the pastor said, "Mr. Richards, there's a family out in the country about five miles northeast of town that we ought to call on. His wife is a member of the church and is faithful in attendance. She brings her two little boys to Sunday School every Sunday, but her husband has never been seen inside a church. He is

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a noted infidel—was born and raised an infidel.”

I said, “All right, we will go out and see him.”

We drove there with a team, as there were no cars at the time. As we entered the yard, he drove into a runway between two corn cribs with a load of corn. As he began to unload, we tied our team and walked up to him. The pastor introduced me as the evangelist was holding meetings at Carroll.

I said, “Mr. Silkett, we have come out here to invite you to our meeting.”

“Me attend your meeting? If the people of Carroll should see me in church, they would think I had gone crazy.”

I said, “It is not what the people think, Mr. Silkett, is what the Lord thinks that makes the difference.”

“You don’t know me, or you wouldn’t talk that way.” He went on shoveling corn. We could not get anything more out of him at that time, so we went to untie our team. He straightened up and said, “You men unhitch your team and put them in the barn and feed them, and come to dinner with us.”

I thanked him and thought, *This is my chance.*

After he unloaded his corn, we walked in together, and dinner was waiting. I felt that the only time I would have to talk with him would be whilst eating dinner, for as soon as he was through he would go back to the field. I decided to make the best of my time and asked him why he did not attend church with his wife.

He did not hesitate to say that he did not believe in church, that he was not brought up that way, but was raised an infidel. He said his father lived and died an infidel, not because he had not read the Bible through many times, for he had. “I made up my mind that was one book that should never be allowed in my home.”

“Well,” I said, “what about your wife and those two little boys? I understand she is a Christian but is not allowed to have a Bible in her home. I think that is too bad.”

By this time we were through with dinner and said, “I am a busy man in the corn-husking season.”

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I said, “Will you have any objection to the pastor and me holding a short worship service with your wife and children before leaving?”

“Not at all,” he said.

Then I added, “You are your own master. Why can’t you stay with us? It will take only a few minutes.”

“Well,” he answered, “I can,” and he came back and sat down.

I said, “I will quote to you one verse of Scripture, and we will kneel in prayer. ‘For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.’ Do you know that?”

“No,” he replied, “I don’t.”

I said, “I do, and Paul knew it, and every Christian knows it. And it is for all to know it who, by faith, believe in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. Let us kneel in prayer.” And we knelt.

I prayed first that God would give this husband and father the light and knowledge of the gospel of God and a vision of the saving power of the blood of Christ. Then I prayed for the mother who was trying to bring up her little boys so that they might know Jesus in their youthful days. The mother began to weep softly, and when the little boys saw that she was weeping, they rose and threw their arms around her and wept with her.

Then we stood, and I took the father by the hand and said, “Will you promise me to come to the meeting for once at least?”

He asked, “When will the meeting close?”

“It will close Sunday night.”

Finally he promised, “Yes, I will be there tonight,” and he was.

That
I preached ~~without~~ ^{at} night from Hebrews 2:3, “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?” I put strong emphasis upon the great salvation that night, especially upon what it cost to make it great and what it will cost the believer to neglect it—the only salvation that can save from sin, eternal death, and hell. At the close of the sermon, I gave out a number to sing and said, “If any of you are ready to accept this great salvation, won’t you come

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whilst we are singing this number?"

As soon as we began to sing, here came this tall, broad-shouldered, fine-looking man down the aisle. He took me by the hand and said, "I did well, did I not, to come forward the first time I ever heard the gospel preached inside a church?" He then turned to the audience and said, pointing to me, "This is the first man who ever came to my home and talked to me about my soul. If it were not for him, I would not be here tonight."

I asked him to be seated, then I asked, "Is there anyone else ready to accept this great salvation? You can all see what the Lord has done for Mr. Silkett, and He will do the same for you." To my left, a husband and wife stepped out and came to the front. Then others came, and God's blessing was upon us in a great way.

Some may wonder how a man brought up as an infidel from his youth held out. Eight years after his conversion, I received a letter from my brother William, who had become pastor of the Baptist church at Downs, Kansas. He wrote, "There is a member of this church by the name of Silkett, who came here from Carroll, Nebraska, eight years ago. At the close of the service he came up to me and asked if I had ever held an evangelistic meeting at Carroll. I told him I had not. Then he asked, 'Do you have a brother who is an evangelist?' I answered, 'Yes.' He said, 'I was converted in your brother's meeting, and I want you to tell him when you write to him that I am still working at it!'" I'm very thankful to know the Lord brought such a good work in that man.

The third conversion I consider of unusual interest was that of a man of low character who was very bitter toward the church. His wife, a good Christian woman, was faithful to the church in every way. Their daughter, a young woman, was converted in my meeting, and she became anxious about her father. When she went home the evening of her conversion, she wanted to tell her father about it, yet she was afraid to do so. As he sat reading the paper, she finally took courage, and, crossing the room, she sat on his lap and said, "I went forward in the meeting tonight, accepting Jesus

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as my Savior, and I want to be baptized and unite with the church.”

When she said *church*, it was a little too much for him. He pushed her away from him, crying, “To hell with the church!”

This story was told to me by her mother the next day at our afternoon meeting. That she said, “Mr. Richards, I wish you would see Mr. Cox and talk to him. Maybe you could do some good. He may be very rough with you. There is no telling what he may say or do.”

I said, “I will see him.”

After the service, the pastor and I went to visit Mr. Cox. We finally found him behind the barn, hitching up his team. The pastor introduced me to him, and I said, “Mr. Cox, we have come to see you, hoping that we might persuade you to come to our meeting.”

He said, “I am hitching up my team to go to the country to husk corn, but I won’t be back until Saturday night.”

“Well,” I said, “come Saturday and Sunday then.”

“I don’t make no such promise.”

“Well, Mr. Cox,” I replied, “I want you to know that while you are throwing those ears of corn into your wagon, I shall be praying for you.”

Saturday night and Sunday night, Mr. Cox was in the meeting. After the meeting dismissed Sunday night and the people were visiting at the rear of the sanctuary, the pastor and I sat on the platform talking.

Mr. Cox entered the room, walked up to me, and said, “Mr. Richards, I started home but I could not go any farther until I had thanked you for what you have done for so many people at Carroll and for my own family.”

I said, “I am only sorry that I could not have done more for you, for your own sake and for the sake of your family too.”

He answered in these words: “You have done more for me than you may think. That little talk you gave me while I was hitching up my team never left me, especially those last words.”

I asked, “What were the last words?”

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He said, “While you are throwing those ears of corn into your wagon, I will be praying for you.”

Then I asked, “Would you like to have the experience of being saved?”

“Yes, I would, but God would never save a sinner like me.”

I said, “Listen, Jesus said, ‘If you are ready to confess your sins, I am ready to forgive your sins and remember them against you no more forever.’ Again He said, ‘I am come to save that which was lost.’ And again He said, ‘I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.’ And you say God would not save a sinner like you! Here He is telling you plainly, ‘I am come to save a sinner like you if you only give Me a chance.’ Are you willing to kneel in prayer?”

He said, “Yes, I will.”

Then I called those in the rear to come to the front for prayer with Mr. Cox. They came forward, and among them were his wife and daughter. We all knelt together and had a wonderful season of prayer. In a very short time, Mr. Cox was praising the Lord, saying, “I am saved; I am saved.” We had a happy time together. What joy this wife and daughter felt, as well as the man himself—saved by the grace of God’s love.

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Evangelism While Pastoring at Ansely

After four rather strenuous but happy years in evangelistic work, I longed to settle down with my family again so I decided to take a pastorate. There followed a series of experiences in different fields. Although I enjoyed them all, I will write about the pastorate at Ansley, Nebraska. During the first year of my work there, I held a revival meeting in the fall. There were a number of conversions and baptisms, and a great many people from the country as well as the town enjoyed the services.

One day after the special meanings were over, a man from the country stopped me on the street. He told me his name and said, "We have a Sunday School organization in the country eight miles northwest of here. I have been wondering if you would care to come out there and give us a meeting for a week or two?"

I replied, "Yes, I will be glad to do so."

Then he said, "I think it would be well for you, first, to drive out there and talk to the school board. I will see them too, but I think it will be all right with them." He told me that Mr. Staab, one of the board members, and his family were Catholics. He suggested that it would be just as well not to call on Mr. Staab, for he would very likely oppose the meeting. "We had a minister from Berwyn come to hold a meeting there once, and the Staabs ran him out."

"I see, and now you expect to see something like that again?"

"No," he said, "I will promise that if you will preach as you did here in town, they will not bother you."

I said that was all right, that I would go see the school board.

I found when I got out there that I had to go through Mr. Staab's yard to reach some of the men. I knew that if I should meet him, I would tell him my purpose. Sure enough, we met. I said, "Is this Mr. Staab?"

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“Yes, that’s what they call me around here.”

I introduced myself and told him my business. I said, “I met one of the members of your school board in town a few days ago, and he asked me if I would come hold a meeting for a week or two in your schoolhouse. I told him I would be glad to do so. He suggested that I call on the school board first to see what they might say about it, and he gave me your name as one of the board members. How would you feel about it, Mr. Staab?”

He said it would be all right with him. I asked him if he and his family would attend, and he said they would. I went on and saw the other men, and all were in favor. I then made my plans and announced the meeting through the newspaper. I am happy to say we had a real revival out there.

Forty-five members were added to the Baptist Church of Ansley as a result of my meeting in that schoolhouse, which was known as happy Hollow. Eighteen of these were the heads of families. I won the entire Staab family, some of them young married people, and they made very faithful members. When they had their election of officers for the Sunday School, they elected Mr. Staab superintendent, and he proved to be a good one.

Afterwards, I held meetings in a number of schoolhouses in the area. At the McIntosh School, seven were added to the church at Ansley, although the roads were almost impassable at that time of year.

The Ash Canyon School, seven miles east of Ansley, was in an almost entirely strange community to me. They had a Sunday School organization but no preaching services. My wife and I together went and called on people of the community. As we visited in the homes, I told them I would come and hold a meeting if they would care to have one in their schoolhouse. I found they were strongly in favor of such a meeting. As a result, there were thirty-three additions to the church at Ansley, twenty-six by baptism.

Janesville was a consolidated school four miles north of

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Ansley. Here I visited the community as I had at Ash Canyon, and found the people were in favor of a meeting. In two weeks there were twenty conversions, eighteen of whom united with the church at Ansley.

The Harris Schoolhouse was only three miles from Ansley. Here there were forty-four conversions, and all were baptized and united with the church at Ansley. One incident occurred here that I would like to relate.

The Reel family, who lived about a mile from the schoolhouse, had three young people. I called at this home and found Mr. Reel to be an unbeliever in the hereafter. He said that when a man dies there is nothing more. I told him that I was calling in the homes of the community with the intention of holding a meeting at the Harris School.

He said, "If you hold a meeting in the Harris School, I will promise that I will attend."

One man told me during the meeting that he would bet me \$1,000 that I would not convert Mr. Reel in my meeting. That same evening, Mr. Reel and his entire family came forward and accepted Christ as their Savior. At the close of the meeting I went to the man who had made the wager and asked him what he thought of Mr. Reel's conversion.

He said, "Well, it is worth the thousand dollars to see Reel converted."

I answered, "You are right."

When I closed my work at Ansley to come to Grand Island, there were 305 resident members. One day, just as I stepped out from the post office, I met the Christian minister who said, "Mr. Richards, do you know what I would do after accomplishing such a work as you have done here at Ansley?"

I asked, "What would you do?"

"I would plan to build a nice, big church and take the whole town," he said. "I will turn my church over to you."

"You would?"

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He answered, "Yes, I would."

I said, "Yes, but your congregation may not all be of the same opinion as you."

That, at least, was the way one minister felt about it. I must say that the Ansley Church will always have a warm place in my heart as one of my best pastorates.

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The Value of Personal Work in Evangelism

After a series of pastorates that ended with the one at Ansley, I felt the call to return to evangelistic work. As a result, I moved to Grand Island, which seemed to me to be a good place to work from. The Nebraska Baptist Convention headquarters were located there at that time and so was the Baptist college, where I would have the opportunity to educate my two younger children.

My first meeting was held at a country church south of Ogden, Iowa, counted as one of the strongest rural Baptist churches in Iowa. Here we had a large attendance and a real revival, with a number of conversions and additions to the church by baptism and otherwise.

From there I went to Silver City, where Rev. King was pastor. I had held a meeting with him once before when he was pastor at Cedar Rapids, Nebraska. At Silver City the attendance grew so large that the meeting was moved to the City Hall. After the second night of the meeting in the hall, I received a telephone message from Dr. S.P. Shaw, State Secretary of the South Dakota Baptist Convention in Sioux Falls, asking if I would consider being State Evangelist of Iowa. *South Dakota*

After some deliberation, I accepted Dr. Shaw's offer and assumed my duties November 1, 1922. My first meeting was at Canton, about twenty miles southeast of Sioux Falls. Rev. L.A. Miller was the able pastor. We had a large attendance at the meeting there.

The editor of the local paper wrote the following report in his news column: "Evangelist Richards, an orator and gospel preacher, has been drawing a large attendance each evening. His earnestness as an evangelist has become known throughout the community. Mr. Richards, like the Master Himself, believes in taking the gospel to the people when the people will not come to where the

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gospel is preached.

"An interesting service was given by the evangelist at the eastside pool hall Saturday evening after service at the church. Better attention could not have been asked for in a church when the evangelist sang a solo and gave an interesting talk on the great plan of salvation to a lost world."

There were eleven additions to the Baptist church at Canton, eight by baptism.

After I had conducted a number of meetings in the eastern part of the state, I was sent to Timber Lake in the northwestern quarter. Dr. Shaw had told me, "We have the church building there, but there has not been a service held in it by the Baptists for about eight years, and we have to do something with that building. Rev. Nestrude, our Colporter, lives there. I have written him that I am sending you and have told him to give all his time to your service. You can look the field over, and whatever decision you both come to, we will accept."

When I arrived at Timber Lake, the first thing I did was to hunt up Rev. Nestrude, whom I found to be a very congenial man. We examined the building to see if it was in proper condition for a meeting. The outside was good, for it had been painted sometime before. However, we found inside that the plaster had fallen from the ceiling. When we saw the condition of the ceiling, we were at a loss to know what to do. After thinking it over a few minutes, I said, "I have come to the conclusion that we will have to have a plasterer come and replaster the ceiling. It will be useless to try to have a meeting with the ceiling in that condition, even if we should clean up the floor and the walls."

Rev. Nestrude asked how we were to pay for it.

I said, "You and I will pay for it if no one else will. Are you willing to risk that?"

"I will if you will," he answered.

"All right, you get a man, and we will go to work right away."

He got a man, and we went to work. We not only got the

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plastering done, but we went to the hardware store, bought some varnish and a brush, and varnished the woodwork and scrubbed the floor and oiled it. When we were through, it looked like a new building.

While we worked on the building, we spent what spare time we had calling on the people in town and in the country, getting acquainted and telling them what we planned to do. Whilst this work was going on, we attended Sunday School at Glenn Cross, the next town east, where they had a Sunday School organization. This was the only Protestant Christian work in the town. The Sunday School was held in the school building, and its superintendent was a Baptist lady.

The first time we attended there, Rev. Nestrude introduced me as the Baptist State Evangelist who had come to hold a meeting at Timber Lake. He explained that we had much work to do on the building to get it ready for a meeting. He was very interested in this community and had preached for them a number of times. He was well acquainted with the people, among whom were some very well-to-do farmers who attended the Sunday School. They were very much interested in the organization, not only for themselves but for the children of the community.

They asked me if I would preach for them after Sunday School, and I said I would be glad to. At the close of the service, they asked me if I would care to preach for them every evening whilst we were repairing the church at Timber Lake. We decided to do that, and continued on.

Great interest was manifest in the meeting every night. The following Sunday evening at the close of the service, I gave an invitation and eleven came forward, most of them heads of families. Because of their interest, we decided to continue the meeting another week. Whilst this meeting was going on, Rev. Nestrude and I visited the homes of the entire community and did some good personal work.

We found that the people were hoping we could organize a

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church there, so he began to plan for it. At the close of the meeting the next Sunday night, five came forward, making sixteen in all. The next consideration was what kind of organization it should be. Among those who came forward were members of Methodist families as well as Baptists. Mr. Martin was a Methodist man of strong character, highly regarded by the people of the community and a strong contributor to the Sunday School. He owned 1,100 acres of land just across the road west of Glenn Cross. The Jones family, whose property joined the Martin's on the east, were Baptists.

To our surprise, when we were ready for the organization, Mr. Martin who was the first speak, said, "I think it is only fair that this should be a Baptist organization, since the Baptists have done so much for the work here. I am my family are ready to be received into the organization when it is effected."

All those who had not been immersed were received for baptism, among them the Martin family. The ceremony was performed in a lovely lake south of Rev. Nestrude's home, and he did the baptizing. It was a beautiful scene, and all were very happy. Then we made our plans for the organization of the First Baptist Church at Glenn Cross, and the church was organized with fourteen members.

At Timber Lake we had strong support from the people of Glenn Cross. At the close of the service Sunday morning, I explained that it had cost \$110 to make the church building usable. I said, "You can see we have done a good job, I would like to raise that amount this morning."

I asked Rev. Nestrude to come forward and keep an account of the pledges offered. "You can put me down for ten dollars to start with," I said. When we were through, we found that we had a little more than the amount called for. I offered a prayer of thanks for the liberality of the people, and asked God's blessing upon them and upon our meeting. Then I invited all to come back for the evening service, announcing that the meetings would continue

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through the week.

After the service, a man came up to me and said, "My name is Stump, a member of the Home Mission Board of New York. I have come to sell this building to meet a loan that was made to this church when it was built twelve years ago."

"Well," I said, "what are we going to do about it? Here I have just raised a hundred dollars for repairs on the building."

"Yes," he said, "and I want to thank you for the blessed service I have enjoyed this morning."

I called Rev. Nestrude and introduced him and several other men who were standing nearby. I asked Dr. Stump if he would tell the men why he had come. He explained his purpose in a very nice way. Then we asked all the men who could to come to Rev. Nestrude's home at two o'clock that we might talk this over together with Dr. Stump.

At the meeting, Dr. Stump informed us that the Home Mission Society had made a loan to the church when it was built. The members paid the interest for the first four years, but since then no interest had been paid. Now the principal and interest amounted to five-hundred dollars. He said, "Since you have repaired the building I have such a fine prospect for a real revival, I will take no further action toward selling the building if you will raise fifty dollars at the close of the meeting and send it to the Home Mission Society, with the promise that you will pay ten dollars a month until the whole is paid. We will then send you the mortgage notes with a clear title to the building."

We all thanked him for the generous proposition. Then we visited together for the rest of the afternoon and had a good time. We found Dr. Stump to be quite jovial, and he told a number of very interesting stories. Later he went on his way rejoicing, and we did too.

We had a large gathering in the evening, and the Lord was with us in a powerful way. We continued the meetings with great interest from night to night. The following Sunday we had an all-

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day meeting, during which we enjoyed a good covered-dish dinner together. After dinner, we made our plans to raise the five-hundred-dollar mortgage. We decided first to raise a hundred dollars instead of fifty to be sent to the HMS, and then to pay ten dollars a month until the principal was paid.

At the close of the meeting we organized a church of thirty members, ten by baptism and twenty by experience. The results of our labor in this field meant that a number of people were made happy, precious souls were saved, and two churches were organized. I can say too that much of the success of these meetings was due to personal work, calling in the homes of the people in both town and country.

To offer a better conception of the value of personal work, I want to tell one or two incidents that will illustrate something of its value. About four miles northwest of Timber Lake, lived a farmer by the name of Collins. None of his family had made a profession of Christianity. We called in their home and had a nice visit with them. Before leaving, I told them I would like very much to have a word of prayer with them. They gave me their permission. I said, "We will all kneel together in prayer." And we did. Only the father and mother and daughter were present at the time. Rev. Nestrude and I both prayed, and when we finished they thanked us and seemed to be very much affected.

The meeting was then in progress at Glenn Cross, and we gave them a special invitation to attend. Mrs. Collins and her daughter were both converted in the Glenn Cross meeting. Mr. Collins was very strongly impressed in that meeting too, but was converted at the Timber Lake meeting. He owned about 1,200 acres of land, and had a hundred head of registered Hereford cattle. He had two sons, one of whom, J.L. Collins, owned a section of land joining his father's ranch on the west. The other son had a half-section a little farther west. All three of them were successful farmers. We called on the sons and their wives in their homes and had worship with them too. I am happy to say we won all the Collins families to

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Christ and to the church at Timber Lake. The family gave largely for the finance of the meeting and contributed to the church in every way.

This experience illustrates the success of personal work, as well as the preaching of the gospel. At the close of the meetings, a young pastor and his wife, both graduates of the Moody Bible Institute, were happily installed on the field.

The second year of my work, I wrote to Dr. Shaw and told him I was growing tired of spending so much time with the down-and-out churches, when I could be in meetings where scores of souls could be won to Christ.

He answered, "Richards, don't be discouraged. I understand how you feel about it, but you are just the man we need in such fields. I want you to know the people in the churches where you have held meetings love to hear you preach and sing; so stay with it, my brother, I beseech of you."

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Bright Spots in South Dakota

With all the discouragements I had in South Dakota, there were many bright spots too, some of which I want to describe.

At Wessington Springs we had a meeting of great interest. There were twenty-eight additions to the church, nineteen by baptism. This church had no pastor at the time of my meeting, yet on this field we had strong evidence of God's grace and Spirit.

While being entertained in the home of one of the deacons of the church, he said to me one morning, "Mr. Richards, there is a family a few miles south of town who don't seem to be attending these meetings. They are not Christian people, yet they come to church occasionally. If you would like to call them, I would be glad to take you."

We drove out and had a very nice visit with this family. Before leaving, we had prayer and invited them to our meeting. They came that night, and before the meetings closed, every one of that family was converted and baptized and united with the church.

In Witten, Rev. Wold was the worthy pastor. I held a meeting there in January in very severe weather of twenty-five degrees below zero. There were thirty conversions, and on a Sunday afternoon twenty-five were baptized.

In Gregory, Rev. Christiansen was pastor. The meeting there was held in March 1923. Twenty-eight were added to the church, nineteen by baptism. One very interesting experience in this meeting was the conversion of two young Catholics by the name of Janousek. When the priest learned they were attending, he got after them, but a little too late.

John Janousek said the priest came to his house and was quite indignant about their attending a Protestant church. John told the priest not to worry about him, that he and his wife had experienced having their sins forgiven and that they had enjoyed the happiest

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days of their lives since they had that experience. He said he told the priest had been a member of the Catholic Church all his life, but had never enjoyed the happy experience he was enjoying now. That was about all that priest could stand, he went away and left them alone.

Sometime later when the people of Gregory heard that I was holding a meeting at Burke, the county seat, a number of them came down to the services. Some of them asked me what I thought had become of John Janousek by this time. I said I didn't know, but hoped he had not gone back to the Catholic Church. "No," they said, "he has gone to college to prepare himself for the ministry."

In 1937, I received the following letter from two very dear friends, Mr. and Mrs. Ollie Peek of Ellendale, North Dakota. They had been members of the Mount Zion Baptist Church when I was pastor there and at Sterling. They wrote:

"Do you remember a young Catholic and his wife who found Christ for their Savior in a meeting you held in Gregory, South Dakota? They were happily converted and united with the Baptist Church there. Their names are Mr. and Mrs. John Janousek. He is now the pastor at our church at Ellendale. He came here on September 17, very highly recommended. He and his wife seem very much interested in seeing the work of the Lord advance. How I wish I could have a good visit again. We are commencing a two-week meeting here tonight and wish you were here to help. You would certainly be welcome. Pray for us."

At Chalk Butte, fifty miles from a railroad, there was only a store and a post office. To me this was a wild-looking country, and in some respects it was wild. I never found a more friendly people, however, than I found here. They appreciated my work with them so much that I found it a great pleasure to work with them. At this desolate place, I had fourteen additions to the church, twelve by baptism.

Clough, the next meeting on this field, was twelve miles west of Chalk Butte. Here, too, they had only a store and a post office.

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The meeting was held in a schoolhouse, and seventeen were received, twelve by baptism. A church was organized with seventeen members. I had a very happy time working with these people. They were so determined to have a church building to worship in that a committee was appointed to solicit the community. They were making very good headway when I left.

At Bonesteel we had an interesting and successful meeting. I found Rev. A.A. Ostrich, the pastor, a genuine Christian man and a good preacher. I want to refer particularly to some of the calls we made in the country whilst at Bonesteel.

On Monday morning we started out to make calls southwest of town. After we had driven two miles south, we turned west, and just as we approached the corner, I noticed a beautiful home. I asked Rev. Ostrich who lived there.

"I don't know those people," he answered.

I said, "Drive in."

We drove to the house, and a tall man came out. After introductions had been exchanged, Mr. Titus said, "Why don't you come in?"

We entered and had a very nice visit with him and his family. I asked him if he belonged to one of the churches in town, and he said no, that none of the family attended church anywhere. There were three daughters in the house, all young women. I asked if there were any other children in the family. He said they had a son in the high school at Bonesteel and three boys in the country school.

"I hope you will come and bring your family out to the meeting." Then I said, "It is customary with me to have a word of prayer in the homes we visit. You would have no objection to that, would you?"

He said, "No, you are welcome to do so."

Then the mother called the daughters into the room. I said, "Let us kneel, please," and we knelt. I ask God's blessing on the home and on these dear parents, that they might be able to set a good

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example for this family of children. Then I prayed for the daughters and for the sons in high school and for the younger children in the country school. By this time, several of them were weeping, particularly the mother. I then asked the pastor to pray, and he gave a wonderful prayer. By the time we ended this little family worship, the entire family was moved to tears.

I went to Mr. Titus and asked, "Will you promise to bring the family to our meeting?"

He answered, "Yes, sir, I will!"

Then the pastor and I shook hands with all of them and went on our way rejoicing.

That night, as the pastor and I walked down the street, the Titus family drove up to the church in a big car. This was a Monday, and before the following Sunday evening service ended, every one of the Titus family had come forward and accepted Christ as Savior.

Sunday night, Mr. Titus invited the pastor and his wife and me to come to their place on Monday for dinner. We enjoyed a good time in their home again. Before we left, Mr. Titus asked if we had called on a family by the name of Kreuger. We told him we had not heard of that name. He showed us where they lived and said that Mr. Kreuger was what we would call an infidel and had quite an influence over his children.

We went to the Kreuger home and proceeded much the same as we had with the Titus family. We could very plainly see that they were much affected by our presence and by the worship we had with them. They told us they were very much surprised at the stand the Titus family had taken toward the church. We gave them a special invitation to come to the meeting, and they came. Before the meetings closed, Mr. and Mrs. Kreuger and their two sons and a daughter, young people in high school, were converted and baptized, along with a large number of others, and united with the church.

Mr. Titus's oldest daughter, a student at state university at Vermilion, was home on vacation, but she had to go back to school

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before the meetings ended. After she returned to school, she wrote me a letter thanking me for what I had done for her and her family. She said, "I am closing a ten-dollar bill with my best wishes to you and your good work for what you have done for me and my family."

At the meeting that night I said, "I have a letter I received today from a convert in this meeting, Miss Titus, who is attending school at Vermillion." As I read her letter, Mr. and Mrs. Titus and many others wept.

At the close of the service, Mr. Titus came up to me and said, "I want to tell you about my daughter. When I took her to the depot Monday, I gave her a ten-dollar bill and told her she could spend it for her own pleasure. This was the good pleasure she got out of it. If she had given half, she would have done well, would she not?"

"Yes," I said, "she would have, but as Jesus said of the poor widow, 'She gave all she had.'"

A year later I met the pastor, Rev. Ostrich, at the State Convention in Sioux Falls, and he told me about the Titus family. He told me how faithful they were to the church and that they were the largest contributors to its finances.

Some years later when I was in the state evangelistic work in Nebraska, I received a letter from Mrs. Titus telling of the great pleasure they were deriving from the church work. At that time she was superintendent of the Sunday School and president of the Women's Missionary Society of the Rosebud Association.

Also, while I served in the state work in Nebraska, I met a Mr. Kreuger at a meeting in Octavia. I asked him if he had a brother who lived on a farm near Bonesteel, South Dakota.

He said, "Yes. He is living in Nebraska now, only about twenty miles from here."

I said, "The whole family was converted in a meeting at Bonesteel."

"Are you the evangelist who held that meeting?" he asked.

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“Yes, and I shall never forget that family.”

“Well, I will send them word,” he said. “They think so much of you.” He sent them word and the family came to our meeting, a twenty-mile drive, every night.

The Bonesteel meetings resulted in forty-eight conversions and thirty-eight baptisms. After closing the meetings there, I went to Fairfax, the next town east, where we had another joyous meeting.

Dixon is a rural community eight miles north of Gregory. Here the church was closed and locked. There were no church services or Sunday School, but the community attended the movies at Gregory every Sunday night. During my meetings at Gregory, many told me they pitied me for attempting to hold a meeting at Dixon. In spite of this, we had a glorious meeting, winning out over all opposition. There were thirty-five additions to the church, twenty-six by baptism and five by experience.

I was entertained by the Roberson family, who owned a lovely home about four miles west of town. In my meeting, their son and daughter were converted. The Robersons told me of the bitter hatred a close neighbor, Mr. Massich, held against them. This caused much grief to both families, who were related by marriage. They said they would like to have me call on the Massiches. I said I would be glad to go, and their son took me over there.

Mr. Massich fed a large number of cattle and was a very busy man. I knew the time I would have to talk with him would be short. He happened to be home when we arrived, and I had a very good visit with him, though he talked very rough at times. Just as our talk was growing interesting, some of the shellers drove in, and he had to leave. Before leaving the house, he said, “If you’ll come back here for supper, I will take you to church tonight.”

I thanked him and promised I would return.

This change of attitude was a great surprise to his wife, for she had never been able to get him to go to church with her because of the old enmity between him and the Robersons. I believe a great many people were astonished to see him at the meeting that night.

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After the service, I greeted him and asked if he would come back to the meeting the next night. He promised he would, and he came every night.

On Friday night he told me he was going to ship his cattle the next day and would not be back for a week, that he was going to visit his relatives in Missouri. On Tuesday I went to the post office to get my mail and, to my great surprise, I met Mr. Massich. I asked how it was that he had returned so early, and he said the snow was knee deep in Missouri and he thought it better to come back home.

I said, "What about the meeting tonight?"

He said, "I will be there if I can get around to it."

That was one of the happiest meetings the Dixon Baptist Church had ever experienced. At the close of the service I gave an invitation, and here came Mr. Massich walking down the aisle. When his daughter, a high-school girl, saw it was her father, she came forward and threw her arms around his neck and they wept together. First, his wife came down, then the Robersons, then others, and the people kept coming to the front until there was a real jubilee. The hard feeling between the Robersons and the Massiches was settled there, once and for all. This reunion would never have occurred had it not been for those visits in the homes of the people.

Before the close of the meetings, Dr. Shaw sent us a minister who hoped to become a pastor on that field. After becoming acquainted, the congregation gave him a unanimous call. Here, on a field like this, over all opposition, God proved to us the power of his grace.

At Lucas, a small country town about five miles north of the county seat of Burke, there was a little church that had been without a pastor for some time. In this place we had a real revival. There were forty-four conversions, thirty-nine people were baptized, and \$1,300 was raised toward a pastor's salary. A full-time pastor was called before I left the field. This community was

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made very happy in the Lord.

Turkey Valley was a country church about five miles northwest of Irene. We had quite an interesting meeting, with nine conversions and nine baptisms. At the baptism services there were over one hundred cars. The church building had a balcony across the rear, yet it was crowded to the door, and many had to remain outside.

At Pedro, forty miles from a railroad, we held a tent meeting. Rev. John W. Winn, the pastor, was called the "cowboy preacher." At the time of the meeting, Rev. Winn had men and teams digging a basement for a church and men hauling logs from the Black Hills for the erection of the log church building.

As a result of this meeting, there were thirty-four conversions, and sixteen were baptized in the Cheyenne River. Two hundred people stood on the bank during the service, and before the meetings closed eighteen more were received for baptism. I don't suppose that meeting will ever be forgotten by the people of Pedro.

At Folsom a meeting was held in a beautiful country church close to the Black Hills. The town had a store and a post office, both located near the church. A very wealthy farmer, who lived a short distance from the church, told me he would give ten dollars if I would put Mrs. Capel under water. She was a strong Methodist and quite prejudiced against the Baptists, especially toward baptism by immersion. I won her over by plain teaching from the Word, and received the ten dollars. In this meeting there were twenty-four conversions, twenty were baptized, and Mrs. Capel was one of them.

Sometime later, I held a meeting at Chadron, Nebraska, where Rev. Benjamin was the worthy pastor. I visited the high school during the meeting, and when school was dismissed a young lady came up to me and asked if I remembered her. I said she looked familiar to me, but I could not remember her name. She said, "I was converted in your meeting at Folsom, South Dakota, and you baptized me. My name is Beulah Cralley." Then I could well

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remember the Cralley family and being in their home a number of times.

At Wagner, in the eastern part of South Dakota, the church was very low spiritually, but very much revived during the meetings. It was customary with me to have a service on the street, or in a billiard hall, or in any public place or building outside the church. It seemed to create an interest that drew people to the church services. My plan was to sing a solo or two first. Then I would give them a talk on some interesting subject, mostly on the plan of salvation through the crucified Christ, or "Christ Crucified for a Lost World." Such subjects as these seem to have weight and brought conviction. As a rule the listeners wanted more.

There were two billiard halls in Wagner. At the first one I visited, I had very good attention. They seemed to be very interested, so much so that they asked me to come again. Some of the men in this hall challenged me to go to the other hall, which was run by a Bohemian.

I went there and, as I did in all places, I first went to the proprietor and introduced myself, explaining my custom of holding meetings in such places where I might have permission. The owner said, "If you can hold a service in a place like this, you are welcome to it."

Most of the patrons were Bohemians or Indians. I walked up to them and said, "If you people will listen, I will sing you a solo and give you a little talk." At all but one pool table the men threw their cues on the table and came to the front. I went up to those who were still playing and said, "If you will stop playing for a few minutes I will sing you a solo."

An Indian said, "Just a minute." When he got his ball into the pocket, he sat down on one side of the table.

I sang them a solo and gave them a talk, then sang another solo, and they seemed delighted. The Indian who had continued playing stepped up to me and handed me a quarter. I said, "No, thank you, I don't want your money. I came for your good."

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He said, "You are welcome."

I said, "I believe that!" Then I invited him to our meeting at the Baptist church.

As I left, they shouted, "Come again."

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For Thine Is the Glory

Perhaps the hardest time in a minister's life comes when he can no longer perform the work that God's service requires. Like an old workhorse, he must be turned out to pasture. Although my own work is done, or must be carried on by others, I have memories that no one can take away—memories of jobs to be faced, memories of good work accomplished, and, above all, memories of faces shining in the first rapture that comes with the experience of salvation. Those faces have numbered several thousand during a lifetime in God's service. No life could have held greater happiness for me than the one I have led.

I have had much good fellowship along the way, pastors with heavy burdens on their hearts whom I have been able to help, and rough men at whose tables I have sat and broken bread and whom I have been able to point a gentler way of living that has brought a happiness they had never known before.

My way has not always been lit with sunshine. There have been days of darkness too, but it was never so dark that the rays of God's love could not penetrate the gloom. My weight has been made lighter with the love and sacrifice of a good wife who has always been wedded, not only to me, but to the work we have found to do in God's vineyard.

Amen.

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Postscript by the Author's Great-Grandson

I had an experience very similar to my great-grandfather Richard's about ninety years later! I became born again on June 28, 1987. It was a radical conversion. When the evangelist requested I stand up after praying to receive Jesus as my Savior, I shot out of my seat. It felt as though I had been hit in the back of the head with a two-by-four. I remember crying uncontrollably, and I knew that something was drastically different within me. I also knew that I was saved for eternity.

About a month after my choice to step from death into life, my sister Holly (also born-again) gave me a copy of my great-grandfather's autobiography. Up to that point, I had no idea any of my relatives had undergone the same startling experience of giving their heart and life to God as I did. I immediately felt a kinship to my great-grandfather that was greater than the fact that I was blood relative three generations removed.

Great-Grandfather Richards wrote a letter to his son, my grandfather, Lloyd Raymond. Lloyd R. saved that letter, which held some unanswered questions, and I inherited it when he passed away. Apparently, Lloyd R. had sent a letter to his father indicating he was planning on pursuing the vocation of the gospel ministry. Great-Grandfather Richards was ecstatic and responded with joy. Lloyd R. would have recently turned eighteen years of age at the time he received this hand-written letter, reprinted as follows:

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Fruitdale, So. Dak.
Sept. 5th 1925

Master Lloyd R. Richards

My Dear Son Lloyd,

I never could express to you the joy of my heart from reading your welcome letter. It made me laugh and it made me cry for joy. I am glad that you have fallen in with such a girl as Esther. She sure will be a great partner with you in the problems of life in the Master's business, and I can assure you there will be problems. It is the hard knocks in life that makes a man a man and a woman a woman. As you will become more and more familiar with the apostolic life and problems, you will naturally realize what it means. If it were not for the hard problems and sacrifices I have to put up with, Christianity would not be what it is to me. That, as you know, made Paul and the Apostles the great men they were, and all other great men became great through the difficulties they overcame and conquered.

I remember when the time came for me to preach my first sermon. I was then on the farm and had not been to college yet, had no books to amount to anything outside my Bible and dictionary. My first text was Jer. 17:5 and 7, and you will see the great contrast between the two lives by the following verses of each text of the "man that trusteth in man" and the "man that trusteth in the Lord." The church was crowded to hear that first

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sermon, wondering what kind of an account that young farmer was going to make of preaching.

But on my first trial I brought many of them to tears, and that inspired me more and more because I knew my message was having great effect on the people in my audience. So from that time forth I have always put my full trust in the Lord. I never did confine myself to a scrap of paper for an outline of my sermon till after I went to college. Then I took up the plan of outlining my sermons and have done so ever since. It is my opinion that a minister should never preach his sermon from manuscript, neither should he be confined to his outlines. I find that the more open and free from manuscript and outlines a minister is, the greater will be the power, and the more manifest will be the presence of the Spirit.

I am sure Lloyd that you are going to be a great preacher. For it has been my prayers for years and before you were born that I may have at least one son for the gospel ministry, and I can realize it in you.

May God keep you humble and trustworthy is my prayer.

I will close with my best wishes to you and I want you to remember me in your prayers. I sure have my problems and sacrifice to make, and I count it all joy for the Master's sake, who made the supreme sacrifice Himself.

Very Truly,
Your Dad

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My grandfather never became a preacher or gospel minister. But the amazing thing is that my great-grandfather's prayer for a son in the gospel ministry was answered not by his own son but by me, his great-grandson.

I remember my father, Lloyd W., speaking about his grandfather Richard, not so much in harsh terms, but as a child remembering him as someone who was staunchly religious and not much fun to be around. My grandfather, Lloyd R., reflected on his father in a letter to me as someone who lived during the Victorian era, and wasn't privy to modern scientific revelation, such as Darwinian evolution or splitting the atom or space flight, and therefore could not help but believe in the God of the Bible.

I am so very grateful there was someone else in my family who understood, as I do, the significant life change as a result of inviting Jesus to come into one's heart.

My hope is that this autobiography of a Great Plains pastor and evangelist will inspire you in your walk with the Lord.

Rev. Jeffrey M. Richards
June 2012

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Selected Poems by Rev. R.R. Richards

The Death of a Mother

A good mother taken from the home
Leaves a vacancy none other can fill.
Though we may try too as best we will,
The vacant place will be there still.

But God has provided a Comforter,
That whether in life or death,
He is ever present to help us,
As long as God gives us breath.

And then when we shall be called o'er,
To meet the loved ones gone before,
That will be a glorious day,
When we shall meet to part no more.

There, sorrow nor death will never come
Is the promise of our Lord,
Proven to us again and again,
In the truth of His Holy Word

Then cheer up, dear bereaved ones,
The time will not be long
Till Jesus will come and call us home
To that land where our loved ones have gone.

Where Jesus has prepared a beautiful home,
A mansion all our own,
And to live with Him forevermore
In that land where our loved ones have gone.

~R.R. Richards

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America

Free country of America,
There's none like unto thee,
Thou land of Christian fellowship,
Thou land of liberty.

Through faith in God thy battles won,
Has brought to thee a name;
And all the world, both rich and poor,
Look up to thy great fame.

When Pilgrims from a foreign land
Did step upon thy sward,
They vowed to God with promise true
That they would preach His Word.

And now all nations though they come
From countries far and near,
Look unto thee for righteousness,
Which makes thy name so dear.

Thou art serving every nation now,
With food for body and soul.
How God does bless thy fruitful soil,
And feed the hungry souls.

Someday we'll raise from off this soil
To reach that heavenly shore,
And be with Christ, our Lord and King,
To praise Him evermore.

~R.R. Richards

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My Second-Born Life

I am sure I never can forget,
When living on the farm,
The experience I had of my newborn life,
On my knees in a humble barn.

It was there I experienced the love of God,
My sins forever gone,
By the blood of Christ, my Lord and King,
'Twas there I was heavenly born.

That's my experience of the twice-born life;
I shall ever owe to Him,
Who gave His life on Calvary
To save us from our sin.

It was on this farm about noonday
I heard the heavenly call:
To preach His gospel to all the world,
With love to one and all.

That day I never shall forget,
When heaven was so near to me;
And the glory of God shone around,
The world I could not see.

It made me say with Jacob of old,
This is heaven to me,
And I want to be faithful to the end
For what He has done for me.

And when He is pleased to call me home,
I'll still His servant be.
And serve Him there with all my heart
Through all eternity.

~R.R. Richards

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A Message of Love

I am bringing you a message of love,
It came down from heaven above.
It is a message of God's free grace
That He offers to the human race.

No greater proof came from heaven above
Than the story of God's great love,
When He gave to us His only Son,
Which meant to us heaven had begun.

Before He came we did not know
What heaven was like here below;
For we only had the Law that was given,
And the Law was not the love of heaven.

When Jesus came He gave His life
To unite us together as husband and wife;
To live together in joy and love;
That's the message that came from above.

Then let us do all that's in our power,
To live for Him at every hour.
For whilst we are here is the only time
We can repay His love divine.

He labored on at every hour,
With love divine and heavenly power,
To save the human race from sin;
It's there the joy of heaven in us begins.

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When Christ through His blood blots out all sin,
'Tis then we feel heaven's joy within;
And it's then we walk the narrow road
That safely leads us home to God.

Oh, then, how much we owe to Him,
Who made it possible for us to win
A home in heaven through Christ our King,
Who came to full salvation bring.

~R.R. Richards

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A Christmas and New Year's Poem (ca. 1936)

We think of Christmas and New Year's,
Especially over in Wales,
Where we sang our Christmas carols
With joy and Christmas cheers.

I can well remember now,
Though fifty years have gone,
How we boys would go from house to house
And sing the New Year's songs.

Now when I think of Europe,
I am glad I am not over there;
For no one can enjoy Christmas,
Nor a happy New Year.

Where bombs are tearing up houses,
Instead of songs of praise;
I am glad I am in America
In these wicked, evil days.

I thank God for the hope of the future,
Where war will be no more.
All will be peace and happiness
Over on the other shore.

So cheer up, dear comrades,
We'll soon be over there;
Though now we are passing through trials
That are felt everywhere.

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There Hitler nor any foe
Can start a fearful war.
For they'll take what God will give them
When they appear at the judgment bar.

They may be sent to heaven,
Or they may be doomed to hell,
But one thing we do know,
God doeth all things well.

And if we're prepared for heaven,
'Twill be a God-blest home,
Where all the saints of God
From the Adam on have gone.

~R.R. Richards

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Pembrokeshire Wales (ca. 1936)

My last home in the country of Wales
Was a farm called Cwmrath.
It was a pleasant place to me,
Down close to the Atlantic sea.

Nearby was little town called Amroth,
Where was a favorite resort,
To which people came in the summertime,
To swim and to visit and walk.

There I met a man from America.
I invited him home with me,
And we had a very fine visit,
Talking about this land far across the sea.

Now, here I am in America,
And have not regretted it yet,
Though I have been here fifty years
And have given it a very good test.

I believe to this very day
That it was all in God's plan for me
To meet that Welsh American that day
In that summer resort by the sea.

For here in America it's plain to see
The Lord had planned His work for me,
Though in a country far away,
Across the Atlantic Sea.

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And now when I think of the many souls
Who've been gathered into His fold,
It's a happy memory to me
That in words cannot be told.

Happy, yes happy will be the day,
When I shall be called o'er,
To meet the loved ones with the Lord
Over on the other shore.

~R.R. Richards

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The Kingdom of God

The kingdom of God is a kingdom of love,
Which came down to us from heaven above
By the love of our eternal God
To lift us above this earthbound sod.

And the kingdom of God is a kingdom of grace
That God has provided for the human race,
So we might live to worship Him,
Who came to full salvation bring.

It was purchased by the blood of God's Son,
And there's where heaven on earth was won.
When we were saved, through the love of God's Son,
'Twas there where heaven in us begun.

Then let us ever be faithful to Him,
Who came to save our souls from sin.
And when our labor on earth is o'er,
We will dwell with Him forevermore.

Then sin and pain will be no more
When we land upon that heavenbound shore,
Where the saved of God have gone before
To dwell with Him forevermore.

And now, faith, hope, and love, these three,
Are precious jewels that we may see
Of the kingdom of God, that's ours to be,
Prepared by our Lord, for you and me.

"The kingdom of God," said Jesus,
"Is not a thing to see;
The kingdom of God is within you,
And in all who believe in Me." ~R.R. Richards



Evangelist R.R. and Etta May Richards on the their wedding day, 1898.



*Evangelist R.R. Richards
(ca. 1920)*

During the last few years he has been serving as evangelist respectively under the direction of the Nebraska and South Dakota Baptist Conventions.

In this state Mr. Richards meetings have been a series of surprises, run-down, defunct churches have been actually resurrected into newness of life; half-dead churches have been made to function normally; new churches have been organized and multitudes of souls have been renewed and saved. The Rosebud has been no exception. On the field of Lucas Witten, Burke etc. God worked wonders through this servant of his.

We are mighty fortunate to get this splendid man for Bonesteel and Fairfax. We have been working for nearly a year. At last, by the direction of the Spirit of God, our wishes are going to be realized. Let the whole community make the most out of this God sent opportunity for opportunities like this come only once in a long time.

A. A. Ostreich

During the meetings at Canton, S. D., the editor wrote: Rev. Richards a silver-tongued orator and gospel preacher has been drawing a large attendance each evening. His earnestness as an evangelist has become known throughout the community. Mr. Richards like the Master Himself believes in taking the gospel to the people when the people will not come to where the gospel is preached. An interesting service was given by the evangelist at the East side pool hall last Saturday evening after service at the church. Better attention could not be asked for in a church, when the evangelist sang two solos and gave them an interesting talk on the great plan of salvation to a lost world.

R. R. RICHARDS



EVANGELIST RICHARDS

A Singer and Preacher
of wide experience

— TERMS —

Free Entertainment and Traveling Expenses
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Please read this little circular before throwing it aside.

Address

624 East Eleventh St., Grand Island, Nebr.

TESTIMONIALS

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that Rev. R. R. Richards has served as State Evangelist for the South Dakota Baptist State Convention for three years. In that time Brother Richards has proven himself an evangelist of rare ability. He has done a great and marvelous work in our state, many a church owes its existence to his untiring work and faithfulness.

As a State Convention we most heartily commend Brother Richards to any other Convention or to churches and wish to assure them that if they secure his service, they will secure a man who deals fairly, a man of marked ability as an evangelist, Gospel preacher and singer.

Very respectfully yours, John Leslie Barton,

General Superintendent

For a number of years Rev. R. R. Richards served as State Evangelist in South Dakota, and did a most remarkable work. His great faith and absolute devotion led him to the most difficult tasks. He both preached and sang the gospel of hope and gladness in a way that made his stay in any field, town, village, or out on the plains, a great joy. He is a man of judgment and consecration whom the Lord has greatly honored in the work. He is a real soul winner, constructive teacher and leader. And will be a blessing to any field securing his service.

Dr. S. P. Shaw, Fargo, N. Dak.

This will recommend to those interested Evangelist Rev. R. R. Richards, Grand Island, Nebraska. Rev. Richards is a devout, earnest, Christian worker who knows the Lord. He is a hard worker, never tiring of seeking souls for Christ. He is a good preacher, winning men to decision. He is a personal worker second to none. He lives with the people he seeks to win, and by untiring effort makes his work in a community a success. When I was State Secretary for Nebraska Mr. Richards was a worker under the board. No field was too weak, no work too hard for him to attempt, and in no case did he fail to do a great work for the Lord. He is preeminently a soul winner. May God bless him and the churches to which he goes.

Dr. Walter I. Fowle, Greeley, Colorado

Rev. R. R. Richards of Grand Island, Nebraska, he with us a series of evangelistic meetings. I am happy to say that it was one of the very best in my thirty years of experience as pastor. Large numbers were saved and added to the church. Best of all the work was deep and thorough and has stood the test.

In Evangelist Richards meetings, one is brought face to face with the spirit of New-Testament times. As when they sat under the preachings of Peter and Paul and cried out: "Men and brethren, what shall we do," and when the power of Pentecost became a reality in the actual experiences of life.

He has a way all his own of preaching the gospel, and in song, his solos sing themselves into the hearts of his hearers, and carry with them conviction of sin and the balm of healing for sin sick souls.

Rev. A. A. Ostreich, Pastor First Baptist Church, Bonesteel, South Dakota

MY MOTTO

"Shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." 2 Tim. 2:15.

BAPTIST BULLETIN

One week from next Sunday we plan to begin a series of revival meetings under the leadership of Evangelist R. R. Richards of Grand Island, Neb. Mr. Richards is splendidly equipped for his special line of Christian work by disposition, ability, education and experience. There are few men in whom the elements of success are so harmoniously poised as in this man.

Mr. Richards was himself a successful pastor for quite a number of years. This fact makes him especially sympathetic toward the problems of pastors and their churches, and thus making his work constructive as well as instructive and evangelistic.



*The Baptist Church of Vesta, Nebraska, ca. 1910
(photo courtesy of Tecumseh Historical Society of Nebraska)*

(opposite) Circular for Evangelist R.R. Richards (ca 1920)

JOHN LESLIE BARTON
ACTING GENERAL
SUPERINTENDENT

South Dakota
Baptist Convention

Master Lloyd R. Richards
My Dear Son Lloyd,

1000-1000-1000
BAPTIST HEADQUARTERS "HUB & PHILLIPS"
ST. LOUIS, MO. 63101
TELEPHONE NO. 1000

Sioux Falls, South Dakota, Sisseton, S.D., Sept. 5th, 1926

I never could express to you the joy of my heart from reading your welcome letter. It made me laugh and it made cry for joy. I am glad that you have fallen in with such a girl as Ester she sure will be a great partner with you in the problems of life in the Master's business. and I can assure you there will be problems. It is the hard knocks in life that makes a man a man and a woman a woman.

As you will become more and ^{more} familiar with the apostolic life and problems you will naturally realize what it means.

If it were not for the hard problems and sacrifice I have to put up with Christianity would not be what it is to me. That as you know made Paul and the apostles the great men they were, and all other great men become great through the difficulties they over come and conquered.

I remember when the time came for me to preach my first sermon. I was then on the farm had not been to college. I had no books to amount to any thing outside my Bible and notes.

My first text was Jer. 17: 5 and 7. and you will see the great contrast between the two lines by the following verses of each part of the "man that trusteth in man" and the "man that trusteth in the Lord". The church was crowded to hear that first sermon wondering what kind of an out that young farmer was going to make of preaching, but on my first trial I brought many of them to tears and that inspired me more and more because I knew my message was having great effect on the people in my audience. So from that time forth I have always put

JOHN LESLIE BARTON
ACTING GENERAL
SUPERINTENDENT

South Dakota
Baptist Convention

REPORT HEADQUARTERS 1920
TELEPHONE NO. 1000
MUS. BUILDING
NORTH 9th & BURLINGAME

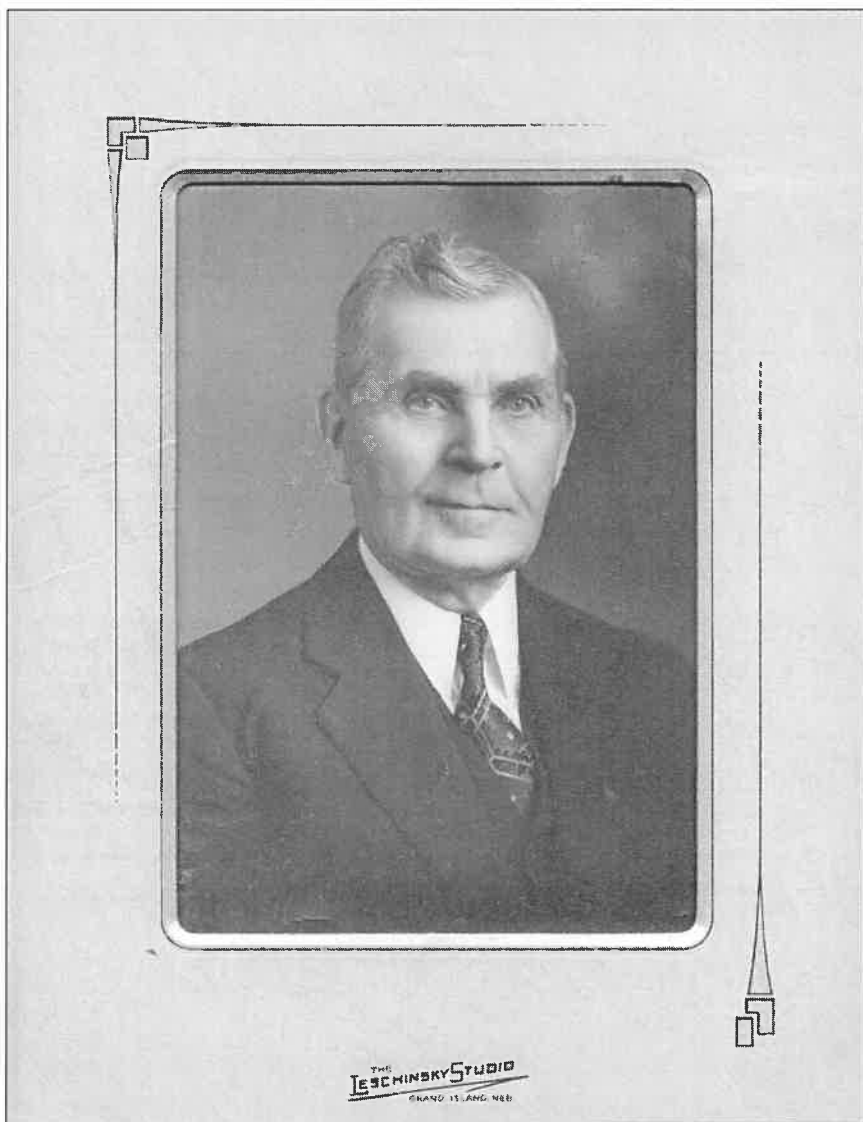
SIOUX FALLS, South Dakota

full trust in the Lord. I never did confine myself to a scrap of paper for an outline of my sermon till after I went to college. Then I took up the plan of outlining my sermons and have done so ever since. It is my opinion that a minister should never preach his sermon from manuscript neither should he be confined to his outlines. I find that the more open and free from manuscript and outlines a minister is the greater will be the power, and the more manifest will be the presence of the Spirit.

I am sure I grieve that you are going to be a great preacher, for it has been my prayer for years and before you were born that I may have at least one son for the gospel ministry and I can realize it in you. May God keep you humble and trustworthy in my prayer.

I will close with my best wishes to you and I want you to remember me in your prayers. I sure have my problems and sacrifices to make and I count it all joy for the Masters sake who made the supreme sacrifice Himself.

Very truly
Your dad.



The Reverend Richard R. Richards (ca. 1936)