

The Life Story of Bernice Gerard



*Converted in
the Country* 

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The Life Story of Bernice Gerard

As told By Herself

McCOLL-GERARD PUBLICATIONS

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Dedication

To Jean and Velma McColl with whom I travelled for ten years. With gratitude to God for His blessing on our trio, our friendship and our partnership in soul-winning.

Table of Contents

Chapter One	
Twice Without A Mother	9
Chapter Two	
I Remember	15
Chapter Three	
Adopted—What Does It Mean?	19
Chapter Four	
Where Do We Go From Here?	30
Chapter Five	
Introduction To God	34
Chapter Six	
The Lord Made A Way!	44
Chapter Seven	
Walking In The Light	55
Chapter Eight	
Guardian Takes Away Religious Freedom	62
Chapter Nine	
Standing Alone	70
Chapter Ten	
Fighting The Good Fight	78
Chapter Eleven	
No Longer A Lonely Orphan	88
Chapter Twelve	
Into All The World	97

CHAPTER ONE

Twice Without A Mother

My first loss in life was irretrievable—I lost my Mother.

Born December twenty-fourth in New Westminster, British Columbia, I lay in the Royal Columbian Hospital, kicking and squalling, cooing and gurgling, completely unaware that I was an orphan baby.

THE DYING WOMAN AND THE ORPHAN BABY

Among the patients at the Hospital was Mrs. Gerard. She was suffering with an illness that later caused her death. The wife of a fisherman, Mrs. Gerard had been brought down the Fraser River in a gas boat. Docking at the New Westminster wharf, they rushed the sick woman to the hospital. In the days of her recovery her heart went out to the wee baby whose only home was the hospital. Mrs. Gerard was a full-blooded Canadian Indian and had four grown boys but earnestly desired a baby daughter. In this day of adoption controls, when prospective parents have to face an inquisition on paper and meet all kinds of requirements, it is hard to imagine what circumstances conspired to join the dying woman and the orphan baby. But the adoption papers were drawn up and Mother and child bade farewell to the Hospital and travelled by boat fifty miles up the mighty Fraser River.

OUR FLOATING HOME

Like other fishermen of the Fraser, Gerards lived in a scow house, a shingled, three-room shanty, with an out-house perched on the downstream edge. A number of cedar logs, cut from British Columbia's magnificent forests, were bound together to make the raft on which sat the house. The floating home was moored to a great poplar tree on the steep but sandy bank of the river. A second raft and blue stone tanks, necessary equipment for a gill-net fisherman, lay alongside.

These floating homes had all the amenities of a house on shore plus mobility. Ours had a porch with a walk-way around one side and a railing to prevent the children from falling overboard. There were also flower boxes, beautiful beyond what one would expect, with sweet peas and nasturtiums. The iron kitchen range was kept going with firewood cut at the chopping block right on the raft or on the nearby river bank. During the winter the stove burned all day long serving as both heater and cooker.

How could I forget the old cook stove? One winter's day the boys, arriving home from a hunting trip, brought me some cat's tails. Somehow baby Bernice managed to get one of the cat's tails caught in the heavy oven door. When the door fell, it was apparent to all within hearing distance that tragedy had struck. To this day I have on my right wrist the scar left by the nasty burn received when trying to put the cat's tail where it ought not to go.

THE FRASER RIVER—QUEEN OF THE VALLEY

The Fraser River is mighty, boisterous and nearly eight hundred miles long. One hundred and thirty miles from its mouth is the Fraser Canyon, a narrow, rock-bound gorge through which the river tumbles so quickly that sometimes mud and silt are carried thirty miles into the ocean.

We drank the grey, sandy water and trusted in its purity but nobody really trusted the river itself. The swift, eddying waters continually worked their strange patterns on the sandy river banks: building up a peninsula here, carrying away an island there, changing the course of an inlet somewhere else. By the time I was old enough to be adept at handling the skiff and dugout canoe, there had been instilled in me a strong fear of the river. To be seen standing up in the canoe in midstream, meant a sound thrashing on return to shore. The thrashing served as a warning against future foolhardiness. Backing up this knowledge in my mind, was the memory of the search for the bodies of two Japanese girls who were drowned in the inlet off the main river. What they took to be a quiet bathing beach with a delightful sand bar, through the mysterious workings of the river, had become a treacherous eddy. Once caught in its downward pull they had been unable to free themselves from its power.

THE MEN OF THE RIVER

Treacherous and unfaithful, relentless and unsympathetic, with periodic bursts of anger expressed in

raging floods, the Fraser, Queen of the Valley, still held extraordinary power over the men of the river. Gerards, father and sons, were gill-net fishermen. Something about that life made gamblers out of men. Toiling on the water, their strength and skills were too often inadequate for the might and crafts of the River.

I often heard the fishermen say that after "this" season, they'd be leaving the river with its uncertainties. But on the opening day of the season when the boats gathered at the head of the drift to draw numbers to decide each man's turn, they'd be there with the rest. They dreamed of the day when Fortune would bless them and they would make a haul. When the gun went off, signalling the opening of the season, they'd sally forth to cast their nets and again hope for a successful year.

THE FISHING BUSINESS

Each man had a small boat, sometimes powered by a marine engine or sometimes by an engine from a wrecked car. The boats were built right on the river by men who had followed the trade all their lives. The engine and cabin occupied the forward part of the boat, the fish box the centre, and then piled in the stern were several hundred fathoms of fishing net.

The net is rigged with surface floats and sinkers and hangs like a curtain in the water. The salmon swim into the mesh and are caught behind the gills, hence the name gill-nets. Different nets are used at different times, as the size of the mesh determines the size of fish to be caught. Having run his boat off shore

sufficiently, the fisherman throws his net over the wooden roller at the stern until the desired amount of net is out of the boat. By controlling the speed of the engine and keeping a hand on the rudder, he skillfully lines his net across the current. On one end of the net is the buoy, the first item thrown overboard, on the other end is the fisherman in his boat. Having cast the net, careful to avoid known underwater snags and at the same time close enough to the sand bars to which the fish hold, he drifts with the current. At all times he is watching the net for strikes. When a salmon hits the net, he says, "There's a strike." If the floats continue to bob up and down in that spot, he feels quite sure that a fish is caught and that he will soon have the pleasure of drawing in his catch.

Perhaps the fisherman drifts with his net for a mile, then he cuts the engine and begins hauling the net over the roller into the boat, piling it in orderly fashion, getting ready for the next drift. As the fish come in with the net he throws them into the fish box up ahead. At regular intervals the collector from down river comes to take the fisherman's catch to the cannery.

NATURE'S GREAT ROMANCE

Of all the edible fish caught in the Fraser, the Cohoe, Steelhead, Jack Salmon, Spring Salmon, Humpbacks, Sockeye and others, the Sockeye is most valuable. This red-fleshed fish travels up-stream in great schools and when a "run" is on, it is a prosperous day for the fishermen. The story of how splendid salmon overcome many obstacles in ascending the river in

late summer to spawn at the place where they were born four years before, is one of nature's great romances. Then in the spring the young fish run down river and disappear in the Pacific. Four years later, some unknown power brings them back to their birth-place to spawn and die.

LOST—A GOOD MOTHER

Mrs. Gerard was a woman who knew the ways of the river. She could handle a boat and cast a net like a seasoned fisherman. I was scarcely two years old when she died. The neighbors used to say that she would have been a good Mother to me had she lived. Her body was taken down the river on a fishing boat and put away in the Langley Prairie cemetery.

CHAPTER TWO

I Remember . . .

No one's life is really his own. It is chartered before one is born but the time does come when one is permitted to cast a vote. Then it is that the course can be altered. Before my election day was to arrive, there were to be many unhappy, fear-filled hours.

SOME JOKE—OR WAS IT?

Never had I seen anything so funny! The "old man," as the boys called Mr. Gerard, was down at the river bank trying to push his boat off the sand-bar. The tide had gone out leaving the bow of the boat high and dry. The more he struggled and cursed the funnier it all seemed to me. Whereupon he took time out from his difficulties to note my glee. Up the bank he strode, mouth full of hair-raising oaths, turned me over his knee and gave me as sound a whipping as was ever administered by hand. Decidedly sobered and truly convinced I got what was coming to me, I beat a retreat to the house. I found that the boys were highly amused with the incident.

NEW HOUSE ON LAND

We now lived in a large house on the banks of the river. The raft and blue stone tanks were tied in

front of the house at the river bank. The raft served also as a boat dock. For a poor gill-net fisherman the big fourteen-room house was too ambitious an undertaking. The house was never completed; in fact we lived in only part of it. Gerards still made their main living from fishing but in common with most of the neighbors they kept a cow. Only one of our neighbors was a prosperous dairy farmer. Each night we could hear the chug, chug of their milking machine. The rest of the community eaked out an existence by mixed interests in farming, logging and fishing. With fish and game so plentiful it took little to live but it was hard to make that little.

NIGHTS ALONE OR ON THE RIVER

Childhood memories—what do they bring me? Even now a sense of fear and dread. The wail of a distant train blowing at a country crossing makes me think of nights alone in the big, empty house on the river. The Canadian National Railway tracks were fifty yards from our back door. When the train was still two miles away, the house would begin to shake and every window in it would rattle. When the engineer blew the whistle for the crossing, every one of the dogs would howl. We had housekeepers most of the time but there were times when I had to be left alone all night, since the men had to fish at night. Countless times I pleaded with my foster Father to take me on the boat with him rather than leave me in the big house alone. Through the hours of the night he would travel up and down the mist-laden river, casting his net again and again. Curled up in a blanket on the

open deck over the fish box, lay the sleeping form of his adopted child.

HOUSEKEEPERS, WHISKEY AND FITS

Sometimes I was boarded with the neighbors and sometimes we had housekeepers, some of whom were heavy on the bottle and none too careful of their language. There were good and pleasant memories of course: the joy of catching brook trout in a nearby stream, the expeditions to the marsh on cranberry hunts and the devotion of my own Cocker Spaniel puppy. But the good things are overclouded by recollections of an abusive, alcoholic foster Father and dreadful drunken brawls that filled my heart with terror.

True enough, the "old man" later on laid off the bottle almost entirely on account of the fits he began taking. When in one of them he would lose his equilibrium both physically and mentally. It is hard to say which I feared most, the drunkenness or the sickness.

PUPPIES FOR PLAYMATES

Most little girls play with dolls—I played with dogs, several of them. Fuzz, the three-legged terrier had skillfully nursed herself back to health after losing one leg when she was run over by a railroad train. They carried her off the railroad track to die. To everyone's surprise she gnawed the projecting leg bone smooth and licked the wound until it healed. Then there was Daisy, the Water Spaniel, who was such

a good bird dog, and a couple of lanky Blood Hounds that the boys had trained for tracking deer. Besides the regular adult dog population, which included a variety of mongrels, batches of puppies arrived regularly. Most of these were put in a sack weighted with a rock and thrown into the river when I was not looking.

These dogs were fed on big pots of fish cooked especially for them and on what was left of the deer and bear carcasses after the humans finished with them. At feeding time I stood guard demanding that each dog be given a fair share. In return for my concern all of the dogs followed me to school every morning. The teacher did not like dogs on the school ground so at a certain place in the three-mile journey through the woods I would turn and wave the dogs home. They did not always go home though and could be heard yelping through the woods, hot on the trail of a rabbit.

THINGS A BOY SHOULD KNOW

In the years before I turned thirteen, I had learned a lot of things: how to run a trap line—that was worth learning for one muskrat skin brought one dollar and a quarter; how to make a sling shot and shoot a bird off a tree; how to load and fire a rifle or a shotgun. Oh yes, not to neglect mechanical skills, the boys had taught me to run the gas boat. They also taught me to paddle the canoe noiselessly, Indian style.

CHAPTER THREE

Adopted—What Does It Mean?

Every member of the Gerard family had jet black hair and swarthy skin: due of course to their French-Indian background. Even strangers commented on how unusual it was that the little sister should be so fair and the brothers so dark.

LITTLE TOW-HEADED SWEDE

One day on our way to the country store, Harold, the youngest of my brothers, stopped the car and offered a woman a ride. No sooner had she got into the car than she inquired who the little blonde was.

"Oh, that's our sister," answered Harold.

"Well," said the woman, "She certainly doesn't look like your sister, she is so blonde and you are so dark. How did that happen?"

Harold shrugged his shoulders rather foolishly and said the only thing he could think of, "Oh, it just happened, that's all."

My ears always wiggled ambitiously whenever my name came into any conversation but this woman and her questions made no sense to me.

Of course I loved my brothers. They teased me unmercifully but I loved every minute of it except when they put me down the basement stairs into pitch darkness and yelled, "The boogie man is coming!"

They often called me "the little tow-headed Swede." I had grown to quite an age before I learned that it was nothing bad to be a Swede. The crew of railroad men who worked on the bridge near our house joined in with the rest. They talked to me in a strange language and kept saying, "Svenska?" Confused, I replied shyly in the negative. Whatever it was they thought about me, I was sure I was not.

RELUCTANT SANTA CLAUS

Gradually there came upon me the awareness that, because my Mother was dead, my position was one of disadvantage. The other children's Mothers used to get together at the meetings of the Parent Teacher's Association. They talked about their own children as if they were little angels, but I knew that one of them had said the little Gerard girl would never come to any good.

At one meeting they discussed the Christmas concert and the gifts to be given. One woman spoke up and said that she thought they should purchase gifts for all the children except the Gerard girl. The reason being that no one from the Gerard household belonged to the P. T. A. so there was no one to pay for her gift.

"But," objected another neighbor, "to leave one child out while the others got gifts would be most cruel. Anyway, the Gerard men are always generous in giving their share whenever a collection is taken to buy the refreshments for the twenty-fourth of May picnic."

When the night finally came for the concert to be presented in the school house, we all had reached

a high pitch of excitement. The teacher had appointed me mistress of ceremonies. The program went off very well and she told me she was proud of me. Then it came time for the gifts to be taken off the tree and given out. When they handed me mine, I was seething with resentment and called out in the same loud voice the teacher had told me to use for the announcing, "No thank you, I don't want your old gift. I heard that you didn't really *want* to give it." My angry reply had not made me feel one bit better but I was determined that if they did not care about me, I did not care about them.

MY FRIEND HELEN

What I really wished for was a Mother—especially at affairs like that. Every one of the children that attended the one-room school had a Mother, except Helen and me. Helen's Mother had died shortly after mine and her Father and brothers were also fishermen. Because of having so many things in common, including our ages, she and I were born to be pals. In each other we confided our childish hopes and problems and between the two of us managed to stir up an extraordinary amount of trouble. No doubt she told at home what I told her about the goings-on at our house.

"DADDY IS KILLING THE COOK"

On one occasion, during a brawl between my foster Father and our housekeeper, I was paralyzed with fear and hid in the yard behind big logs as long as I could, listening to the quarrel. When he began beating her

I could keep still no longer. Down the river road I ran screaming at the top of my voice, "Daddy is killing the cook. Help—please—help! Daddy is killing the cook." She had told me that due to an operation on her nose if she were ever struck a severe blow on the head it might mean her death. My screams had been heard by some of our neighbors but the only one that could have helped did not feel it wise to interfere. He was afraid the quarrelers would make peace with each other and turn on him.

SHE HAD SEEN BETTER DAYS

This particular woman, receiving low wages with much abuse for a bonus, was living much below her former estate. She had a fine English background and could tell fascinating stories of England and Spain. She also told me about Bluebeard and his murdered wives. When the rats went thumping across the floor in the attic of our house it always made me think of Bluebeard—probably he had hung his wives from just such rafters as showed in our upstairs.

In spite of the big crock of home brew she kept behind the kitchen door and the terrors I felt because of the brawls, I looked to this housekeeper as my protector. I knew that all the troubles were not her fault. After one terrible drinking party when I had been scared almost out of my wits, my usually tremendous appetite left completely. It stayed away three days! The housekeeper, realizing how upset I was, looked at my foster Father accusingly and said, "It is your fault." I went to her for the answer when I was faced with the biggest question that ever troubled me.

BLUE JEANS AND GUM BOOTS

During most of the year the road from our house to the school was ankle-deep in mud. The men used to complain that the politicians did not care about us except at voting time. Then they made big promises to do road repairs. Every school day I walked the three miles alone except for my dogs. To make the journey interesting I waded through as many mud puddles as possible. Quaint little figure I was! They sent me off in a boy's shirt and pants and gum boots. My favorite shoes were hiking boots but they could only be worn in dry weather. The leather hiking boots came three-quarters of the way up my leg and were ideal for playing football. Softball was my first love but the boys considered me a fair football star also. When spring came and the girls played jacks I changed my social circle and played football with the boys.

NATURE STUDY ON STURGEON

One particular day the road to school seemed shorter than usual. Sometime before, the teacher and I had agreed that the first time one of our men caught a little sturgeon in his net I would take the fish to school. Many of the children had never seen a sturgeon, an entirely different type of fish than salmon. It looked more like a shark. In preparation for eating it had to be skinned. When put in a hot frying pan the pieces jumped, giving the appearance that they were still alive. Smoked sturgeon was also very good. Many of the river dwellers had their own smoke houses, tall skinny buildings with a green alder-wood fire

burning continually, sending the smoke up to the fish hung above. One of the neighbors kept a few pieces of dry smoked fish in his back pocket and regularly reached for a chew as though it were chewing tobacco.

Government regulations forbade the fishermen to keep a sturgeon under three feet long, but much smaller ones regularly showed up on our dinner table. The little fellow I had in the pail was scarcely twelve inches long. Since sturgeon did not die as easily as other fish it seemed likely he would live through the walk to school and the nature study. It was hard work carrying a pail of water with a live fish in it all that distance. By the time we reached the school he was still giving lively swishes of his tail and I had a feeling of importance. After all was I not working in collaboration with the teacher? When a farmer's kid dipped the end of his pen in the dishpan that was the fish bowl and turned the water blue I felt he was trying to poison my best friend. Of course he got lectured on how to take care of a fish, the water was changed and the fish breathed on.

At our school anything different was interesting. To bring a live snake, frog or fish made one a hero for the day. In the spring many of us would show up proudly at the teacher's desk with lush bouquets of trilliums, wild bleeding hearts, lilac or dogwood branches.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE ADOPTED?

Beside interest in the sturgeon the main talk of the school that morning was the dance that had been held the night before in the school house. One of my

brothers had come home with a black eye. In discussing the fight it was not long before the entire school was divided into two camps. Hashing over the events of the night before we felt it necessary to blame and justify. Henry, a small, skinny, freckled-faced boy said my brother got what was coming to him. I was sure my brother was right whatever he was doing and felt somebody ought to give the other fellow a black eye. Back and forth we haggled.

"My brother was right!"

"He was not!"

"Well, prove it then!"

"You don't even know what you're talking about!"

"I do so. My brother was at the dance last night and he saw every bit of the fight."

"Anyway," I said, as though bringing up some startling new evidence, "the other fellow used brass knuckles and that's not fair."

Then Henry struck the telling blow. He asked in sarcastic tones, "What are you sticking up for him for? He is not your brother. You are adopted—!"

Quickly I shouted, "I am not."

Defiantly Henry answered, "You are."

I screamed back, "I am not. Who told you I was?"

At this Henry's high pitched voice rang out, "My Father told me." This brought gales of laughter from the crowd. We had nicknamed Henry "my father" because he so often said, "My Father said so."

I let him know I did not care two pins about what his father said or what anybody said, I was not adopted.

Hoping to prove his accusation false I asked,

"What does it mean to be adopted?" It was a word I had never heard before.

"It means," said Henry, "that your own Mother and Dad didn't love you; they just threw you out and let somebody else take you."

Now I knew for sure! That settled it! If there had been any doubt before it was gone now. With an air of finality I roared at Henry for all the world to hear, "I am not adopted."

Persistently I continued hoping for victory, "Alright smarty, you know so much, who else around here is adopted?"

The motley group of boys and girls were breathless. Things were getting to the place where it was hard to say whose name would be called next.

With the air of a man who really knew, Henry said, "Nobody."

He was making me out to be the only one. Terribly angry and upset I rushed at Henry with the intention of beating a little sense into his head. Henry decided retreat was the wisest so into the boy's wash-room he fled. Wanting to hurt him I stood outside screaming, "Come on out and prove it." The teacher heard the commotion, came out and took us in hand. Both of us were crying. Henry claimed bodily injuries. I was wild with anger and was hurting deep inside. In the physical combat I had been the aggressor. Henry had not been anxious for that. On top of all this I expected the teacher to get out the strap and whip me for fighting on the school grounds. She asked me what the trouble was—why the fight? I explained with no little sense of righteousness that

Henry said I was adopted, that it was a lie and I was trying to make him take it back. To my surprise she did not punish me but told me to sit in my seat until I was quiet and then to go and wash my face and straighten my hair. She then added that it was not lady-like for girls to fight, especially with boys. She must have seen my frustration and felt that the truth was hurting enough without laying on the strap as well.

EVERYONE WANTS THEIR OWN GRANDMA

For the next weeks I made an unconscious effort to ignore the facts of my life as disclosed by Henry. Not one word about adoption passed my lips. Once before I had argued with a girl about who belonged to whom. It was just before I started to school. The woman who was keeping me was mother of a large family and had several grandchildren all of whom called her "Grandma". Of course I called her "Grandma" too. Somehow we children got to quarrelling about whose Grandma she really was. In tears I burst into the house demanding to know if she was my real Grandma.

"You are my real Grandma, aren't you?" I pleaded.

She patted me affectionately and assured me that though she wasn't really Grandma to me the way she was to Myrtle, she loved me just as much as the rest. Triumphant I returned to the playground and assured them that though things were not quite the same with Grandma and me as with them, our relationship was every bit as good, if not better. When

my foster Father decided to take me home again I said, "Goodbye Grandma," with many tears. The parting would have been even more painful had she not told me that maybe someday I could come back and live with her.

AM I ADOPTED?

If the subject of adoption was taboo with me it certainly wasn't with the rest of the school. They had found my sore spot. In our frequent quarrels during the playground games they found that just the mention of the word adoption riled me terribly and set me off to great disadvantage. The final blow came when Helen, my best girl friend, carelessly added, "We all know you're adopted." I hurried home from school determined to settle the question forever.

I approached the housekeeper with the question, "Am I adopted?"

Very much surprised she asked in turn, "Who told you?"

I answered, "The kids at school are saying it and I want to tell them it's not true."

At that point she made some seemingly irrelevant remark. But there was only one thing I wanted to know, one thing I had to know so I repeated the question—"Am I adopted?"

She said, "Yes, you are adopted."

I objected, "No, I am not! It isn't true! I won't believe it!"

"Then," she said, "there is only one thing to do. Don't tell anyone I told you to do it but go to the spare bedroom and look in the bottom shelf of the

cupboard for a small wicker basket with a lid on it. Inside the basket are the adoption papers. You might as well see them for yourself and know the truth."

NAME HAD BEEN NEILSEN

At the first opportunity I stealthily approached the little wicker basket, took out the paper she had described and noted with horror that my name was on the front. What Henry said was true! Whoever my own Mother and Father were they did not love me enough to keep me. My name had been Neilsen and now it was Gerard. Whoever my own Mother and Father were—I hated them! Dramatically I imagined myself to be one of the last born into a large family like the Murphys. They had many children but poor as they were at least they had not given any of their babies away. If only I had my own Mother and Dad I would not mind being poor or even hungry.

CRUELEST WORDS OF ALL

The adoption papers went back into the little basket but things were never the same again. The housekeeper must have told that I now knew I was adopted. Whenever I was bad, which unfortunately was quite often, my foster Father would say, "We should send you to an orphanage. You really don't belong here anyway, we just took you in."

CHAPTER FOUR

Where Do We Go From Here?

Two Roman Catholic nuns were guests at our house. Everyone was on good behavior including the "old man". The Sister Superior, who asked me to call her Sister Elizabeth, was my foster Father's youngest sister. He had often crudely stated that when Elizabeth announced to the family her desire to give her life to God as a nun, he would rather have seen her hit on the head with a baseball bat. During the entire week of the visit the Sisters were wonderfully cheerful. They showed themselves to be very good sports on the fishing expeditions and sight-seeing ventures, but about them was always a veil of mystery and secrecy. To me the dark robes and cowl were frightening and yet it was hard to be afraid for their faces were very kind.

Sister Elizabeth discussed with her brother the possibility of my being brought up in a Catholic convent. The irreligious one of the family was my foster Father. He stoutly refused to give consent. The matter came up for discussion several times after the Sisters departed and he repeated again and again that if any priest set foot on his property, he would fill him full of salt. They had a way of taking buck-shot out of a shotgun shell and filling the shell with course salt. I had seen stray dogs get the salt treat-

ment. It was really just big talk but in all the noise his true sentiments on religion were expressed.

VOID OF CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE

Our country district was void of Christian influence. There was no church on our side of the river within several miles. Only one of the fishermen we knew was religious and he was regarded as somewhat of an oddity. The lack of Christian influence could be felt in the morals of the young people. At thirteen years of age I had never seen a Bible, never heard a hymn sung, nor had anyone talked to me about God. He was completely unknown to me except as I heard His name frequently in profanity. Many of the men were masters in the use of vile and filthy language.

In the months prior to my thirteenth birthday my mind became agitated by several difficult questions. The first question concerned death. Two Japanese girls had been drowned in the channel just below our house. I had been left motherless because Mrs. Gerard died. Now my favorite Aunt was dead.

RELIGIOUS ILLITERATE

On the way to my Aunt's funeral my foster Father and brothers had stopped for a drink of beer at a tavern and left me sitting in the car. By the time we arrived at the church I was thirsty too and much relieved to see the fountain at the church door. The water did not taste as good as I had expected but it was quenching my thirst. Just as I poised for one last

gulp, Harold turned around, grabbed me by the arm and said, "Silly, that's not for drinking, that's holy water." Poor little religious illiterate that I was, I fearfully asked, "Will I die because I drank the holy water?"

"No," said Harold, "but the priest won't think much of you."

Aunt Sina had been very kind to me, writing letters and sending gifts through the mail. Now she lay cold and white in the coffin at the front of the large Roman Catholic church. The priests were chanting and waving their smoking censers. The affect on me was drastic. The funeral, the incense, the mournful chanting and the sight of my Aunt cold and still made me sick to my stomach. It was a great relief when the funeral was over.

IMPORTANT QUESTION

What is death? Where do you go after you die? After the funeral I asked my brothers many questions about what happened to Aunt Sina and where she had gone. They knew nothing at all about it. To them she was just gone—that's all—never to return again. In the weeks following the funeral, the buzzing of a fly or the drone of a bumble bee on the window sill filled me with a sense of dread because it reminded me of the drone of the funeral service.

Our house was located across the river from a great hydro-electric plant. At certain seasons of the year there was a tremendous roar as the water plunged through the flood-gates of the dam. The grown-ups said that if ever the Stave Falls' Dam broke we would

be washed away, even though there was an island between us and the mouth of the Stave River. Always in connection with these fearful thoughts was that terrible uncertainty about the hereafter. The only consolation in it was that all of the people in the world were in the same predicament—brought into this world to live, love and laugh for just a while and then sent out to nobody-knows-where. Little did I know that a merciful God had by His Spirit awakened within me a consciousness of the hereafter and that He was about to take up my cause.

When my father and my mother forsake me,
then the Lord will take me up. Psalm 27:10

CHAPTER FIVE

Introduction to God

Things were as usual in the little red school house. The teacher was going through her daily routine, giving the lesson to each class in its turn. Some of us had finished our own assignments and were listening as she taught the grade four class. Soon we would get a break for morning recess. Then all forty would fly screaming down the school steps, intent on making the most of fifteen minutes of freedom.

Just before the signal for recess the teacher called us to attention: "I have been asked to announce that, beginning Sunday there will be a series of gospel meetings conducted in this school house. The preachers are Miss Frances Layden and Miss Clara Manary. Boys and girls, please tell your parents about this. Everyone is welcome."

MYSTERIOUS BOOK

It sounded interesting but what was a preacher? Up went my hand, "Please, Miss, what is a preacher?"

A little amused the teacher replied, "A preacher is one who speaks from the Bible."

Still in the dark I followed it with a logical question, "What is a Bible?"

With that she drew from her desk a black, mysterious-looking book. On the cover was printed "Holy

Bible" in letters of gold. There followed a few words of explanation on what the Bible was. We all seemed quite satisfied and in a few minutes were playing in the school yard, completely unaware of the affect the coming meeting would have on us.

FIRST GOSPEL SERVICE

At the opening service on Sunday night I was present. Helen sat beside me in the same double desk we used in the daytime. The two lady preachers had walked up and down the roads calling on family after family inviting them to attend. The school house was crowded to capacity.

I will never forget that first gospel meeting. Never! What I heard there will stay with me through all eternity. The preacher appointed someone to give out the hymn books. These we regarded with curiosity. Then we began to sing,

Life at best is very brief,
Like the falling of a leaf,
Like the binding of a sheaf.
Be in time!

And we sang,

We are fading too like the flowers
That but yesterday were in their bloom.
Oh how many pass with the hours,
O'er our path falls the shadow of the tomb.

There was something touching about the plaintive melodies. The words were solemnizing. It was impossible to escape the logic of them. Had I not seen

Aunt Sina lying in the coffin? She had faded like the flowers and had been cut down like the grass.

GREATEST LOVE STORY

Out came the mysterious book—the Bible. The preacher read a few lines from it and then told the most wonderful story that I have ever heard. Spell-bound I drank in every word.

It was all about a Man who was so wonderful that even His enemies could find no fault in Him. He took the little children in His arms and blessed them. He healed the blind and made the lame to walk. He loved the unlovely Mary Magdalene, the woman of bad reputation. He cared for people that no one else loved.

Thirteen years old and mature beyond my years, I was for the first time hearing of the marvelous Man of Galilee. The meeting was quiet, the singing poor (nobody knew the hymns) but the preaching moved me deeply.

Christ was everything that one could imagine and much more. The preacher pictured His sufferings in Gethsemane and in the judgment hall before Pilate. Dramatically we walked the way of sorrow with Him, feeling His anguish, wanting to share the load of the heavy cross. When the procession reached the summit of Calvary's Hill, I felt that some kind of deliverance would come. I was sure that some man of authority would arrive at the last moment and free the innocent one.

To my surprise and horror His persecutors threw Him rudely to the ground, nailed Him to a cross and

lifted Him up to die. Every sense of decency and justice within me was in revolt against this unspeakable crime.

Then the preacher looked down at me, right into my eyes and asked, "Do you know why He died?" Breathlessly I waited for the answer. She continued, "He didn't have to die. He was the Son of God and could have pronounced judgment on all His enemies. At the crucifixion all heaven stood alert awaiting His command. He died because He loved you. 'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life'."

HE LOVED ME?

Could it be that He loved me? Why nobody had ever loved me. I was the little Gerard girl who would never come to any good, the black sheep who was always leading the other little lambs astray. In thirteen years I had lived in nine different households: sometimes with relatives in the United States; sometimes with neighbors and sometimes at home. In none of these places had I really belonged. Always I was the girl "just taken in" either for pity or profit. Now the preacher was telling me that this man loved me enough to die for me!

Cautiously I pulled myself together to face the facts. It was possible that this woman was just telling a story to serve some purpose of her own. I could not take my eyes from her. "Preacher," thought I, "you wouldn't be lying would you? You wouldn't stand up there looking so pretty and tell a beautiful

story like that if it were not true?" If that was what she was doing it was the meanest thing I could think of.

REJECTION UNTHINKABLE

I wanted the story to be true. I wanted Jesus Christ to be real. If what she said was true, if God really did love me so much that He gave His Son to die for me, I would give myself to Him and follow Him all the days of my life. The thought of rejecting Christ never occurred to me. I only worried that He might not want me. If the preacher had asked me that night to go to the front and take a public stand on the side of Christ I would have done it. That is one of the beauties of hearing the gospel in early youth. Tenderness of heart and the lack of damaging prejudices make it easier to say "Yes," to Christ.

LONGING FOR PURITY AND PARDON

My own unworthiness overwhelmed me. My adoption was a failure. I did not know anything about my natural parents and feared I had been illegitimate. What little information I had gleaned on that subject had been from questionable sources and filled me with a sense of shame. But worst of all was the burden of my own sin that had nailed Christ to the cross. I longed for the purity and pardon that the preacher said would come when I confessed my guilt.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful
and just to forgive us our sins, and to
cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9

CONVICTION

When the meeting was over Helen and I heaved a sign of relief as we got out into the fresh air. She said, "I am no sissy but do you know if they had kept on with the meeting, I would have been crying." Relieved to find that she too had been stirred I said, "I'm no sissy either but I could have cried too. I felt funny inside when she told that story." God by His Spirit had convicted both of us of righteousness, temperance and judgment.

I had the privilege of attending only a few of the gospel meetings. One night I walked alone through the woods to the meeting. In the darkness blobs of phosphorous glowed on the wooded trail. What usually terrified me now seemed insignificant. The meetings had become very important to me.

DECISION ALREADY MADE

When the series of meetings was drawing to a close the preachers made plans "to test" the meeting. At the Sunday afternoon service someone whispered to me that I should make up my mind whether or not I wanted to follow Christ. We would be asked to make known our decision on the last hymn. My decision was already made.

At a shivaree the night before, a few of us gathered in a corner and discussed the gospel meetings. The neighbors had come and deposited their babies in the bedroom. They were now expressing their good wishes to the newly-weds by dancing 'til the rafters trembled. Most of the men had liquor on their breath and the house-warming was turning into a rough party.

Sitting on a large wooden barrel in the corner with a few others around me I voiced my disapproval of the celebration. To my own surprise I spoke out loudly in favor of the gospel meetings. "When I grow up," I said, "I am going to give my life to God like the preacher ladies have done." There were comments favorable and unfavorable but I stood my ground. All I had thought of for days were the gospel meetings and the possibility of a new life following Christ.

"If you desire to confess Christ as your personal Saviour, please signify your decision by standing during the singing of this hymn," said the preacher. Not knowing what to expect but determined to be obedient, I stood up. "God, if there is a God, I'm giving my life to you. Please, wash away my sins and make me clean as the snow," I prayed silently. To my surprise a great peace swept over me. My knees felt weak and the tears began to flow down my cheeks. Something good had happened inside of me. The preacher put her arms around me and commended me for my decision.

BLACK LEGION

The news that I had publicly confessed Christ as my Saviour reached home before I did. When I arrived it was supper time.

"We hear you joined the black legion," said one of my brothers with a smile.

Shyly I nodded, "Yes."

Then he said, "All your fun is over now. That is worse than becoming a nun."

I had no idea what he meant by, "All your fun is over." All I knew was that I felt clean and strong.

They might laugh and refer to the preachers with their black stockings and dark clothes as the black legion but I admired and respected them. To be just a little like them when I grew up seemed an ambitious goal.

During the next few weeks I felt God's miracle-working power. My pals at school could see the difference. The teen-agers of our school were fast developing into a wild crowd. On our way home from school most of us secretly smoked cigarettes. If we couldn't get tailor-mades we rolled our own or made some out of maple leaves. We tried everything that came into our heads, even to smoking cigars.

Beside our daring urges to meddle with the forbidden we carried on a kind of gang rule on the school ground. Anyone who tattled to his teacher or parents was punished by the rest. The older girls and boys imagined themselves to be madly in love and from these flash romances grew jealousies and rivalries.

OLD THINGS PASSED AWAY

To this day I am thrilled to remember the miraculous power of God and its affect, following my decision to live for Christ. Nobody could have been more destitute of Christian teaching or more ignorant of what is meant to be a Christian. Yet God put Christianity in my heart. My whole course of thought and conduct was changed. When I asked my preacher how I could know for sure that I was a Christian, she said, "All you have to do is look at your own life and interests. The scripture has been fulfilled in you

'Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new'."

The change was evident in the ordinary activities of my life. Blood and thunder murder stories, ranch romances and detective stories had been my spare-time reading since I learned to read. Most Mothers see to it that their girls read the right books: perhaps Joan Fielding at Snow Camp or Black Beauty. Nobody cared what I read. The boys at our house used to buy cheap novels, second-hand. Hungry to read I eagerly devoured the stories and often read the same one several times. Right after my conversion my brother brought a large stack of magazines home and, anticipating my usual pleasure said, "These are for you." Something inside of me revolted. I had to tell him that I doubted I would ever read that kind of book again. Puzzled he asked, "Did somebody tell you not to read these?"

"No," I answered, "I just don't think I will ever be reading them again."

One Sunday night my foster Father and brother decided to go to the theatre. Because the theatre was not open on Sunday in Canada we used to drive to the international border and cross over to Sumas in the State of Washington. Usually I jumped with glee at the thought of going to a show. But the new Bernice did not want to go. With difficulty I tried to explain how I felt. This time angrily they asked, "Did those preachers tell you not to go to the show?"

"No, they didn't say one word about it."

Nobody went to the show that night. I retired to

my room and by the light of the coal oil lamp read the New Testament the preacher had given me.

WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

Would I be able to continue with what I had begun? Could this new life possibly flourish in so alien an environment? My adoption was a failure. There was no promise for the future in my present situation. They took my hymn book and New Testament away and laughingly declared that a thirteen-year-old could not possibly know anything about religion.

In desperation I cried out to God. My preacher friend would soon be leaving the district and then who would help me? It occurred to me to run away. Common sense told me they would find me somehow and bring me back. Then there would be my foster Father's rage to face. Troubled and fearful of the future I confided in my preacher. It was right after that God wrought a miracle on my behalf.

CHAPTER SIX

The Lord Made A Way!

My prayer to God had been for a way out. The answer came in a most unexpected manner. All of a sudden I was saying, "Goodbye" to everyone and everything I had ever known.

At the school house we were busy studying but there was an undercurrent of excitement because it was the day the report cards were to be given out. There was a knock at the door. The teacher opened the door and stepped out into the hall. Curious as we were we could not see who the visitor was nor how he had come. In a few minutes the teacher stepped back into the room, walked to my desk and said, "The school nurse is here. She wants to speak to you."

My preacher friend had told the right people about the plight of the thirteen-year-old girl whose adoption was a failure. The school nurse had come to take me away. I did not understand what it was all about but I willingly went with her after she assured me that I would never have to go back to my foster home.

NEW GUARDIAN

About eighteen years previous in British Columbia the problem of neglected children had become so

acute that two child welfare acts were passed in parliament. From that time on other steps had been taken to protect adopted and neglected children. With all sincerity I had asked God to help me. Now in answer to that prayer the provincial government was getting into action. After proper legal steps had been taken I became a charge of the Child Welfare Department of British Columbia. My guardian was Superintendent of Child Welfare.

After a brief session in court with my foster Father present, it was established that he had failed to live up to his side of the adoption agreement. My new guardian took me in her car to Vancouver. At one time on the journey I broke into tears. She tried to cheer me and said that the best days of my life were in the future. I clutched the report card the teacher had given me as I left the country school. All my marks were good. My guardian said, "Do you like school?"

"Yes," I replied, "school is wonderful."

With a smile she said, "You are going to have the opportunity to continue in school and get all the education you can absorb."

Confused as I was with so many things happening that I did not understand, I could not fail to feel the importance of what she said. What a wonderful promise!

We discussed the fact that I had stood to my feet in the gospel meeting. When she asked me why I did it, I said, "I wanted to be like the preacher ladies, pure and holy. That is why I gave my life to Christ."

ALEXANDRIA ORPHANAGE

During all this time I wondered where she was taking me. When she said, "The Alexandria Orphanage," I couldn't believe my ears.

"But I don't want to live in an orphanage," I objected.

Then she explained that I would not be at the orphanage very long; just long enough for her to find a more suitable place for me to live. It occurred to me she might have in mind to take me there and leave me permanently but just wasn't saying so. But nothing could be done about it.

The Alexandria Orphanage was a large rambling building with a small and inadequate playground. I rather took to the place. My bed was in a dormitory where I slept with several other girls my age. There was a set time for rising, cleaning teeth, dressing, and making the bed. Someone taught me how to make my bed according to the rules.

Some of the older girls spent their time scheming how to get outside to meet their boy friends. Some wanted to run away and get married and others talked wildly of getting out and going on a good drunk. How any kind of a "drunk" could be "good" was hard to imagine. When one of the girls climbed out a window and secretly spent the evening with her boy friend, she was punished by solitary confinement. Many of the older children hated the Orphanage but there was no resentment in me against the Alexandria. Compared to what I had heard about such places the Alexandria was heaven. My conversion had resulted

in a changed attitude toward everybody and everything.

DREAM OF PREACHING

I read my New Testament as much as possible. Shining like a bright star in my dreams was the thought of going out preaching some day, just like my preacher friend had done. I would go through the country districts preaching in school houses, telling others what she had told me.

The head matron, whom we all feared, came upon a group of teen-age girls in the hallway. We were talking in our loudest voices. Not one of us had as yet found the tone and volume control on our speaking system. Sternly the matron told us to quiet down and try to act like ladies. She singled me out as one of the chief offenders. When she left I turned to the others, "My voice is too loud! That's what she thinks. It is all the better to preach with."

One day one of the matrons checked me up on a small mistake. I broke into a flood of tears and went screaming off into a corner. I heard her say to one of the girls, "I can't understand that. What is wrong with her?" I did not understand either why I exploded in such a violent outburst of emotion. I wished to make it right with the matron but what could I say? How could she understand that I felt all torn up by the roots?

My stay at the Alexandrian lasted just long enough for me to make a few attachments. I came to know and enjoy some new friends at the Junior High

School. Then my guardian made arrangements for me to go to the Okanogan Valley to live.

She was at the Vancouver station to see me off and told the conductor to take good care of me. She saw to it also that I was well fixed with spending money. Everytime the fruit and candy man came by he did business. Twenty-five cents for a pillow seemed quite a bargain. Several hours later when his shift was over and he got off the train, he took his pillows with him. I felt cheated. He explained that I had not purchased the pillow but only rented it.

My supervisor was at the Summerland station to meet me. She was a social service worker employed by the Child Welfare Department. We were to become well acquainted as she was the "go-between." She kept an eye on me in my new home, worked out problems between me and my foster-home and saw to it that my guardian's wishes were carried out. Most important of all she was a friend and counsellor. When everything went wrong with everybody else, one had the feeling that the supervisor had one's best interest at heart.

MOTTS, MY NEW FAMILY

The Motts, my new family, were at the station also. There were four children; the eldest of them was a year younger than I. They welcomed me to their home and spoke warmly about my being their new sister. Mr. Mott was then engaged in fruit farming. He had been a Holiness Movement preacher but moved to the sunny Okanogan when his wife's health failed. Their house was set on the side of a hill over-

looking beautiful Lake Okanogan. The entire countryside was luxurious with peach and apple orchards. The family table was laden regularly with fresh vegetables from the garden. In early childhood I had more than my share of beans and coffee; now I daily enjoyed the new-dug potatoes, tomatoes from the vine, freshly picked corn and all types of fruit. In their house there was no arguing, no profanity, no drinking nor smoking. The children had never seen a deck of cards nor smelled beer or wine. The family read the Bible and prayed together daily.

On arrival at their house my emotions were mixed. The new family was nice but the person I loved most was far away. I loved my preacher most because she had loved me when no one else did. She had been mother, father, brothers and sisters to me since the hour of my conversion. Her letters meant so much. Her interest made me believe in myself. My guardian was nice too but I had only seen her twice.

All mixed up inside and very lonely, I sat at the kitchen table and cried. It was silly to cry but the tears kept coming just the same. In an effort to comfort me Mrs. Mott drew me into conversation. She wanted to know why I was unhappy. That was a hard question to answer because I was glad to be at their house and could not explain why I felt upset—so lost. Then she asked, "Are you saved?"

With all honesty, I said, "No."

"All of our family are saved," she said, "right down to Preston. As young as he is, he loves Jesus too."

Looking at me again more closely she asked, "Don't you consider yourself a Christian?"

Without hesitation I replied, "Oh yes, I'm a Christian. I got converted through the school house meetings."

It struck me that there was something funny about this family.

CONVERTED OR SAVED—WHICH?

The people through whom I was converted never used the word "saved." They said nobody could know they were "saved" until they actually got to heaven. They believed that they were the only true followers of Christ in the world. Their ideas about what it took to be a real Christian were very definite. They said the true church could be identified very easily for they practised a number of things that set them apart from other groups. They did not build churches; their meetings were conducted in rented halls, school houses and private homes. The preachers did not receive salaries and went out preaching *two by two*. Nor were any collections taken in the meetings. If the number of believers in a city grew they formed new groups and met in several different houses.

When the Mott family told me they were "saved" and that they went to the Baptist church, I felt sorry for them. I wished that they belonged to the true church. "If only they could have been in the country with me and heard what I heard, they would be truly converted," I thought.

Their regular attendance at the Baptist church was a big problem to me. They insisted that I go with

them. When I said that I did not want to go to church, they thought that was a strange attitude for a Christian. It did not seem strange to me because to my knowledge the followers of Jesus did not build churches. I did not intend to have anything to do with anybody but the true Christians.

Resolved to settle the question for all time I wrote my preacher friend and said, "These people are trying to get me to go to the Baptist church. Didn't you tell me churches are worldly and wrong? Please tell me, is it wrong for me to go to one? If you say I shouldn't go, I won't go and they can't drag me." Anxiously I waited for a reply.

When the next letter came there was no mention of church. My guardian had told the preacher that if she gave me any advice contrary to her wishes, she would not be permitted to correspond with me at all. Thoroughly disgusted because I had to go to a place where they knew so little about the real thing, I went to the Baptist church. Sympathetically I wished all of them could hear what I had heard and be converted like I had been. The only thing I liked was the fudge the Sunday School teacher gave out each Sunday to those who learned the Bible verses.

Regularly in conversation at home the matter of religion came up. They labored to convince me that my ideas of heaven and who is going there were too narrow.

"Heaven will be very small if just you and your friends are going there." Mrs. Mott would say.

I had heard that the way to heaven was straight and narrow with just a few people on it, so I would

reply, "I don't care how small heaven is or how few are there. If there is just Jesus, the preacher and I, I'm going anyway!"

In vain they tried to explain that the true church was made up of believers from many different groups and denominations.

Every morning they had prayer around the family altar. All of the children prayed including the youngest. After some days Mr. Mott said, "Bernice, wouldn't you like to pray?"

I thought, "God can hear me even if He doesn't hear them."

Faltering and uncertain, I prayed my first prayer at a family altar. Cock-sure of myself in some ways I had sense enough to know that my prayer was no masterpiece.

The meetings in the local Baptist church were not evangelistic enough to suit many of the townspeople. Consequently certain of them conducted inter-denominational meetings Sunday afternoon where it was the custom for each person to stand up and testify. The leader had heard about my peculiarities so he said, "Bernice, you have been converted, wouldn't you like to testify?" Perfectly sure that God would be pleased with my testimony but that the rest of them were still outside the door of salvation, I stood up and stuttered out a few sentences. My thought was that what I said might help the others—if only they could have been with me in the school house!

ONLY A BABE

As time went on my short-comings became clearer

to me. The Motts were wonderful Christians. I had words in my vocabulary that a Christian should never use. They had never heard some of the expressions I used.

"Bernice!" said Mrs. Mott, "Be careful how you talk! The baby is copying you."

"But it's not swearing," I said defensively.

"No," she replied, "but it's the first cousin to it. Christians are different and don't use slang and worldly talk."

I tried to do better and then—"Oops! Out it came again!"

Then I felt ashamed.

Often when I sat down to eat by myself, I would be half-way through the meal before I thought of giving thanks to God. Somewhere I had heard that even pigs know enough to give thanks when they eat. They at least look up to heaven and say, "Grunt, grunt." The whole thing was causing me to wonder. I went to Mr. Mott with my problem. He was kind, and quite a philosopher. Worried I asked, "Do you think I really got converted?"

He said, "Bernice, if anybody ever got converted you did. But it takes time to develop Christian character. You are just a babe in Christ and have many things to learn. As you live for Christ and grow in grace you will acquire habits that are becoming to a Christian."

It took several months for the Mott family to convince me that what I got in the country and what they had were the same. The important thing was a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ as Saviour. Heav-

en was still small but not as small as I first had thought. The Holiness Movement people would be there and some of the Baptists. They were just nicely "in" when my guardian moved me to Kelowna, British Columbia.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Walking In The Light

Affectionately I bade the Mott family "Goodbye." Had I been permitted to decide I would have stayed right there with them but my guardian thought it best for me to live in Kelowna, forty miles up the Okanogan Valley. In Kelowna I was to receive medical attention and hoped to be cured of a bad skin condition which caused me much embarrassment. The doctor was a friend of my guardian's from college days.

Through a chain of circumstances that was rather wonderful in itself, I found myself living in the home of Mr. and Mrs. John Lindahl. However, at the time it did not seem wonderful to me. The Lindahls belonged to a small, progressive church known as Evangel Tabernacle. It was affiliated with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, sister-organization to the Assemblies of God in the United States. My bags were no more than set down when Mrs. Lindahl said, "We'll be going to church tomorrow night. Would you like to go along?"

Tomorrow was Tuesday. I thought, "They could have at least waited 'til Sunday. Now what do these people have that they are so enthusiastic about?"

Uppermost in my mind was the thought that now I was in Kelowna where the *true* Christians had several meetings weekly, I would be able to worship with

them. It would please my preacher greatly to see me attend their meetings regularly. They had rescued me in the country and to their cause my heart was bound with strong ties.

PERILOUS POSITION

In my limited experience as a Christian I had formed definite ideas on religion. Along the way I had been warned about the Pentecostal people. Of all the heretics in the world they were the most dangerous. I had been told that if hell had one place hotter than another they would certainly be consigned to it. Not only were they in error but they were extremely subtle about it. They had a way of snaring others so that they were completely trapped before they even knew it. At once I saw the danger of my position. I was living with Pentecostal people! It was true I had been wrong about the Holiness Movement and some of the Baptists but there could be no mistake about these Pentecostals.

At that moment my journey on the straight and narrow road that leads to life seemed more perilous than I first had visioned. There was need for prayer, "Please, God, help me stay on the straight and narrow road. I want to follow Jesus. Don't let anybody influence me the wrong way."

In the service at Evangel Tabernacle that first Tuesday night my prejudices prevented me from enjoying anything—well, almost anything. When we arrived home from the service Mr. Lindahl said, "Well, Bernice, how did you like it?"

My immediate reply was, "I didn't like it at all."

After all one could not afford to be polite to *heretics*. In the face of my impudence he had every right to slap my ears and trim me down but showing no aggravation at all, he continued,

"Didn't you like anything about the service?"

"The orchestra sounded good," I conceded, "but what was all that moaning and groaning about?"

Even though I had not the slightest inclination to be satisfied with any of their explanations, his reply seemed quite satisfactory: "When the preacher says something the people believe they say 'Amen.' That is like saying, 'Preach it, brother! We're right with you.' Then too, God loves to hear our praises, so we make no apologies for the praises of the people."

Obviously the safest way would be to stay entirely away from their Pentecostal church. I asked permission of my guardian, through my supervisor, to go to the *true* church. I believed that I was choosing the group with whom Jesus would have fellowshiped had He been in town. My guardian's answer was clear, "You must attend church with the people with whom you live. How can you be part of their family if on Sunday you gather your righteous robes around you and go marching off to some other church as though you were better than they?" My arguments were of no avail.

They could insist I go to the Pentecostal church but they couldn't force me to listen. I would be inattentive. Nothing they said would make any difference to me. Like a duck in the rain, I would let all the preaching run off. Nothing must soak in. I wished it were possible to plug my ears with cotton.

THEY PREACHED CHRIST

It was not easy to be inattentive—the meetings were much too interesting! They preached “Ye must be born again.” John 3:7. Why, that was the same theme my preacher spoke on in the school house! When the wind blew nobody could see it but the effect could be seen. It had been that way in the miracle of my own conversion. The miracle could not be explained but the results had been obvious to all.

Week after week the Pentecostal preacher exalted Christ, “Who his own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness.” 1 Peter 2:24. From their pulpit it was often repeated, “Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.” The more preaching I heard the more clearly I saw the power of the blood of Christ to cleanse from sin, and the marvel of His atoning death.

SPEAKING IN TONGUES

The odd thing about the Pentecostal people was their belief in the Baptism of the Holy Spirit with speaking in other tongues. That was what made them stick out like a sore thumb from other evangelicals. I was in the process of reconciling their seemingly correct attitude toward Christ and the atonement with their peculiar teaching about speaking in other tongues when along came an evangelist who preached for two weeks on the Holy Spirit. As he went through the Bible he was always pointing out some scripture on being filled with the Holy Spirit. When he got in-

to the New Testament it was written so plainly, nobody could miss it. He quoted the eighth chapter of Acts and Acts 10:46 "For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God." To this he added impressive evidence, Acts 19:6 "And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied." Not forgetting the personal testimony of Paul in 1 Cor. 14:18. "I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all." His solemn warning was, "Forbid not to speak with tongues." I had been under the impression that there was not one verse in the whole Bible that dealt with speaking in tongues. But I was wrong. The Pentecostal people had not made it up—it was in the Bible!

Heaven was getting bigger all the time. It was clear to me now that the shouting Pentecostals would not be barred from that wonderful place where the saved of earth will sing in mighty chorus, "Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb."

DIFFICULT DECISION

I decided to go all the way with God, no matter what the cost. It meant going against the wishes of the preacher who had won me to Christ. As a result of my decision I sought the Lord and was soon filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking the praises of God in an unknown tongue. It was then up to me to write and tell my preacher what had happened.

For days I worried, afraid my preacher would cast me off as a friend, since so soon I had fallen in with *heretics*. Of all the people I knew, I loved her

most. She had been wonderful to me when I needed a friend. In return I gave her the devotion of my teen-age heart. Since she did not believe in the Pentecostal people, it was likely that my decision would mean a breach in our friendship. Furthermore, it seemed the height of ingratitude to turn my back on the ones who had rescued me in the country. But there was no reconciling the two groups. My preachers consistently refused to fellowship with anybody who associated with other religious groups.

With difficulty I set myself to writing a letter of explanation to my evangelist friend. The letter went something like this:

Dear Frances,

I'm sorry to have to write something I know will displease you but I don't know what else to do.

When I first came to Kelowna I rejected the message of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit as preached by the Pentecostal people. Then I saw the truth of it in the Bible and now I have the experience myself. It may seem to you that I have been side-tracked but I want you to know that I love Christ now more than ever. I must put God first.

Assuring her of my love and gratitude to God for the message she brought, I signed my name. It seemed I could hear the door shut on a wonderful friendship.

Anxiously I waited for her reply. When it came it was warm and affectionate, filled with tender regard and concern. I read the familiar handwriting, "I understand that these people have been in a position to influence you unduly. I will keep on praying for you that you will come back to the true way." Today she labors, preaching the gospel in Japan.

What a day it will be when we all get to heaven! Perhaps one day when we are walking down one of heaven's boulevards, she and I will meet at an intersection. She will look twice to make sure who it is. Then she will exclaim in surprise, "You here? Why I gave up all hope for you. I thought my labors were in vain."

With joy I will reply, "Yes, not only am I here but there are millions more of these Pentecostal people in heaven."

CHAPTER 8

Guardian Takes Away Religious Freedom

Life Buoy, Lux and Ivory—I tried them all!

I ate yeast cakes and drank carrot juice—still no success!

I read all the advertisements on complexion care and carefully followed everybody's advice on home remedies. But in spite of constant medical care my bad skin condition failed to improve.

Beyond that my problems were few. Like most teen-agers I was a sound sleeper and a slow riser. My supervisor averted a major crisis in our house by buying me an alarm clock. I set it on an overturned dishpan so that I would be sure to hear it in the morning.

At dishwashing-time my mind wandered in a dream-world of books. Suddenly, in the midst of scrubbing the kitchen floor Saturday morning, I would leap on my bicycle and take a quick spin around the block. Except for minor irritations, such as arise in any household where someone is growing up, we got along famously. The happiest days of my young life were spent with the Lindahl family.

At the high school my academic standing was good. At church I entered whole heartedly into the activities of the young people. Our church was not large but it was growing. Through my activities on

the editorial board of the high school paper I was inspired to write our church news in a local weekly.

My supervisor now was a young social worker not long out of college. Regularly she called at our house. In later years she confessed she was almost afraid to come because of the barrage of questions with which she was greeted. What my guardian thought was all important to me. The supervisor knew her wishes and passed them on. As a counsellor and friend, this young social worker had completely gained my confidence.

Just before Christmas, during my second year in high school, she broke the news concerning plans which my guardian had for me. "It has been arranged for you to spend the Christmas vacation in Vancouver. You are to have a complete medical check-up," she announced. That was good news! It would be a wonderful day when the unsightly blemishes on my skin disappeared.

Just one thing bothered me, so I queried my supervisor, "Are you sure I'll be back by the time school starts again?" In the Lindahl house I was firmly planted and had no desire to be dug up by the roots again.

In the eyes of my pals at school I was plain lucky. After all, who wouldn't like to take a trip to Vancouver during the Christmas vacation? Excitedly I discussed it with the young people at the church. The trip was to pay big dividends. While in Vancouver I would visit the large churches and find out how they did things, then we would put their ideas to work in our group.

We had a wonderful Christmas and then on the twenty-sixth, I bade the Lindahls "Goodbye." They prayed with me before I left. Later they told me that as I walked out the door, Mr. Lindahl said, "I have a strange feeling that Bernice is not coming back." His wife dismissed the thought as a mere notion.

RECEIVING HOME

After enjoying family life where there was the sense of belonging, the receiving home in Vancouver was a dreary proposition. The woman who ran the place was good-natured and well liked by the children. The Children's Aid Society maintained the receiving home and used it as a clearing house. Children stayed there while awaiting placement in foster homes. Some of the children had been in and out of the receiving home many times. Either they could not adjust to the foster homes because of their own personality problems or they were unfortunate enough to be placed in unsuitable homes. They were everybody's children—nobody's child. Some of the teen-age girls were on the verge of earning for themselves a term in a correction institution. For each one the normal picture of living was distorted. What we all needed and wanted most was lacking—to be loved and wanted by someone. But I had in the back of my mind the assurance that I was wanted in the Lindahl home. The sooner I got back there the better!

The Vancouver visit had been arranged so that I could have special medical care. Immediately on arrival I began a tour taking in one doctor's office after another. One doctor said I should wear a different

type of shoe, another said that I needed glasses and still another said that I must have my tonsils removed. The doctors had not begun to solve my complexion problem, when I took an attack of acute bronchitis.

Impatiently, I lay ill in the receiving home for three weeks. The fog horns blew incessantly. Lonely as could be I dreamed every hour of my return to Kelowna. My guardian sent flowers and my supervisor called regularly yet the days dragged terribly. I thought of little else but the return to Lindahls.

One night after I was well enough to be out of bed, the Mother of the receiving home entertained her brother at dinner. The older girls were well acquainted with him as he often visited his sister. He talked freely of his business plans. He had just rented a suite of offices and was making plans to move his business from eastern Canada.

After dinner they asked me to join them in a game of cards. At Gerard's I had learned to play bridge, rummy, cribbage and solitaire. Nevertheless, I had left off card-playing when I began the new life with Christ. I begged to be excused and apologized for holding up the game. The conversation had been going along nicely and we were all quite happy with each other so some explanation had to be given. I told them of my conversion and dedication to God. My attitude wasn't too surprising to them. The gentleman said, "I have met people who believed this way before." He commended me for sticking to my conviction and then I excused myself and went upstairs to bed.

Late that night, when the card game had been in

progress a long time the guest felt sick and came upstairs to the bathroom. A dull thud and groans awakened me. The house Mother hurried up the stairs, calling her brother's name. By the time the physician came the man was dead. The whole house had been aroused and was in hysteria. Nervous and scared, I lay trembling in bed. Then a few lines of scripture came to me. Over and over I repeated, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Soon I drifted off into a deep sleep. In the morning one of the girls said to me, "What kind of a person are you? A man dies in the room right next to you and you turn over and go to sleep. Not one of us slept a wink all night." I told her that it was the Bible verses that put me to sleep.

Every day away from Kelowna seemed an age. As soon as I was well I went expectantly to my guardian's office. Surely there could be no more delays—after a talk with her I would be on the train to Kelowna. It was a privilege to talk with her. She had great authority over my life and most good things came through her hand, yet I had seen her only a few times.

DISAPPOINTING NEWS

She enquired about my health. Then she quizzed me on how things were at the receiving home. I thanked her for the flowers she had sent. It had been an honour to receive flowers from her. The other children had looked on enviously.

Then I popped the question, "What day am I going back to Kelowna?"

"You are not going back."

I was aghast. She surely wouldn't move me from Lindahl's now! I dreaded the thought of a change. Surprisingly enough I had the audacity to argue with her, but not the sense to know it would do no good.

To leave the Kelowna High School, where a competition had developed between another girl and me as we vied for first place in our class, was unthinkable. The whole school had taken an interest in the friendly competition. "Haven't you heard that I am doing very well at school?" I asked her.

Her reply was, "If you do well there, you'll do better here. I want you to go to the very finest schools where you'll get the best education. I'm expecting you to go far. The Doctor says your tonsils must come out, so wouldn't it be best for you to stay in Vancouver where the hospitals and medical care are the finest?"

Cleverly she convinced me that I wanted to do what she wanted me to do. Having gained that point she then dropped the real bomb, "While you are here in Vancouver I do not want you going to the Pentecostal church or any church like it!" Her words left me stunned.

Then she asked, "Are you still in touch with that woman who preached in the school house?"

"Yes, we correspond regularly."

"You are not to have anything to do with her either, or go to any of their meetings."

My much-respected guardian was taking on a new look. She was bent on tearing me from my religious

moorings. But if I went down under each of her edicts I never failed to come up arguing.

I stammered a protest, "The church means so much to me. If it hadn't been that I stood up for Christ in those meetings in the country. I don't know where I'd be now. That woman preacher is the best friend I have."

With that my guardian began to ridicule the letter that she had opened which was written by the preacher to me. She laughed at the affectionate opening and closing. To her it was mere piffle, so trivial and worthless. Defiantly I thought, it may be twaddle to her but it means everything to me. Purposefully, my guardian had set about to explode my dream and tear down my idol.

She continued, "If you defy me, I'll put you in a Roman Catholic convent. There you'll do what you are told." Whether she really would have I don't know. She had won every round so far.

I had one more question to ask, "If I am not permitted to go to the Pentecostal church, to what church shall I go?"

She named it.

"Why they don't even believe in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ!" I exclaimed in amazement.

With that she lost her temper and commanded me not to criticize other churches. Later I learned that it was her church I had criticized. The interview was brought to an abrupt conclusion.

The visit had proved enlightening. I now knew that I was not going back to Kelowna, that my guardian thought I was developing into a religious fanatic,

and that she thought I was about to ruin my life by sticking to the narrow-minded ideas I got in the country. If I didn't have sense enough to save myself from failure—she was going to do it for me.

CHAPTER 9

Standing Alone

The imperial edict had been delivered. I was perplexed and bewildered yet hoped something would happen to make my guardian change her mind. It was soon evident that she had no intention of relenting.

Only through his persistence did my pastor from Kelowna get to see me in the hospital when I had my tonsils removed. Haughtily, my guardian referred to him as "that little Italián" and reluctantly granted him permission to see me for a few minutes only. When he told her that he felt it was most unfair to cut me off from the church and friends of my choice, she said she was doing it for my own good. He declared that she had no right to do it and that she could be proved wrong in court. In face of his threat she said that if the matter of my religious freedom went to court she would prove, on the testimony of her Doctors, that it was bad for my health to attend a Pentecostal church.

After discussing the problem with other ministers, the pastor decided that it was right for me to submit to my guardian's wishes, even though we questioned her judgment. God was giving me an opportunity to stand up for my convictions in the face of opposition.

GUARDIAN AND NEW FAMILY COLLABORATE

During the next four years I felt the pressure of my guardian's interest in my religious life. Through the people I lived with, she pressed for changes in my life and thinking.

My new home was located in one of Vancouver's fine residential areas. The new family was composed of Mr. and Mrs. H. and their son. The boy who attended a private school eyed me with frank curiosity. He was five years younger than I. In the years that followed there developed between us a tie of genuine affection.

Lord Byng High School was the largest I had ever seen. My first day there I felt like a country girl lost in the big city. When I got home that night, Mrs. H. said, "How did you get along in school today?"

"Just wonderful, thank you."

"Did you get to know anyone?"

"Yes," I said, "I met three of the nicest girls I have ever seen."

"Did they ask you anywhere?"

"Yes, they asked me to their house and the Mother served us cake and milk."

Mrs. H. nodded approvingly, "Did they invite you anywhere else?"

"Yes," I said, "they invited me to go to the theatre tonight."

"And," said she, "what did you say?"

"I said, 'It is nice of you to ask me but I don't go to the theatre. I was converted when I lived in the country. Of course, I don't blame you for going

because I know you don't have anything better to do.' "

Mrs. H. was wide-eyed in amazement, "You told them that!"

I said, "Yes, that's the truth—I did get *converted in the country*. If I had not been converted I wouldn't be here now."

Then she warned me never to talk to anyone that way again. "That idea may be alright out in the sticks where nobody knows anything but you are now living in one of the most aristocratic sections of this city. Here people have education and culture. That idea will never go over around here. If that is the way you intend to live you are going to be a very lonely girl.

When my Pentecostal friends in Kelowna heard that I was living in a household where they were set on talking me out of my old-time religion, they got in touch with their friends in Vancouver. I well remember when one of those friends called on the telephone and asked for me. The lady of the house, said, "What is your name please?"

So they gave it.

"And to what church do you belong?"

"Sixth Avenue Pentecostal Tabernacle."

Bang went the receiver and down went my heart!

She was so right when she said that I was going to be lonely. And especially so if she succeeded in cutting me off from my religious friends—the only kind I had.

IMPOSSIBLE SITUATION

Christ is the great problem-solver—but Christ was my problem. How to stay true to Christ and still please my guardian and the people with whom I lived was a problem impossible of solution. What I believed to be Christian consecration, they thought was narrow-mindedness. They were apparently sincere and so was I.

One Saturday during my first weeks in their home a near-crisis arose at the dinner table. The day had gone very well, harmony filling the house. Mr. H. said, "Let's all go to the theatre tonight."

He looked at his son. There was a ready answer, "Sure Dad, let's go."

Then he looked at his wife. She was in favor.

Then he looked at me. My water glass was shaking in my hand. I was having a hard time adjusting to the discipline of their home. Fearful of his disapproval but nevertheless determined, I said, "I'm sorry, Sir, but I don't go to the theatre."

He said, "You don't go to the theatre? What nonsense! You are no better than we are. We are going and so are you! When I say you are going, you are going!"

I thought, "Lord, what do I do now?"

The question was answered for me. Mrs. H. seeing my distress, turned to her husband and said, "We have discussed this long enough. Leave her alone."

They went to the theatre without me. Through the years that I lived with them, when she got after me, he would say, "Alright, Dearie, leave her alone." When he felt like lecturing me on religion, she would

let it go just so far and then say, "Now let's drop the subject."

My first and last school days in Vancouver were spent in their home. When Mr. H. left one company and became a buyer for another, they sold their home. I lived with two other families before moving back with them. The first family had three little girls. Their chief reason for having me in their home was that they needed a baby sitter, vegetable peeler, dishwasher and general housekeeper's assistant. The little girls wore fancy, newly starched dresses every day. Ironing those twenty-one dresses each week and doing a fair share of the general housework kept me busy. One of the High School teachers complained to my guardian that her usually excellent student was lagging because of lack of time to study. My guardian had me moved.

In that home, as well as the one in which I lived next, I sometimes gained permission to attend a young people's service or some special gathering with my Pentecostal friends. Nevertheless my guardian's orders remained the same. I regularly attended the church of her choice.

In the church-of-her-choice I taught a Sunday School class of twelve-year-old boys. Most of them attended private school. It was not unusual for one to come back to the class after an absence of several weeks and explain that his family had been in Europe. Even on a class picnic, when the menu had on it only hot dogs, mustard and sand, they never forgot they were gentlemen of breeding. When asked to teach the Sunday School class, I had wondered if my services

would be acceptable since my beliefs were Pentecostal. The Vicar of the parish said, "That's alright. There are some good people among those Pentecostals."

Probably my guardian felt that attendance at such a church would wean me away from my seemingly radical views. On the contrary—every time I sat through their services, I knew more certainly what I wanted. When the Sunday School Superintendent commented on the temperance lesson, I was shocked. His views and what I had told my boys were entirely opposite. He said, "To be temperate means to refrain from doing too much of anything. It is alright to drink wine but don't drink too much." Then he made an honest confession. He pointed to the sore on his lip and said, "I got this from smoking my pipe too much. Don't do that." To a born-again Christian his temperance lesson was a flop. The Mohammedans do much better than that.

WHY SO FEW?

For a long time I knew only one girl at the High School who believed as I did. It troubled me greatly that the born-again believers should be so much in the minority.

One year I was president of the public speaking club. At the end of the year it was customary to have a party. In the general discussion at the club meeting it was decided that we would have a dance. I said, "It seems that everyone is in favor of having a dance. We'll have to appoint someone to take care of the arrangements—the president won't be there."

"What is wrong with the president? Why won't she be there?"

My answer was, "As most of you know I was *converted in the country*. I don't go to dances, but that need not hinder your dance. You can certainly have it without me."

Someone spoke up and said that after such a wonderful year together it seemed ridiculous to have the main event without the president.

I said, "I'm sorry, kids. I don't mean to spoil your fun but I honestly cannot attend the dance."

By way of compromise they arranged a banquet, followed by a dance. I agreed to attend the banquet and leave before the dance.

On the night of the event, by the time the banquet was drawing to a close, my mind was on my exit. I did not want to get into any embarrassing situations and I did not intend to stay for the dance. I wanted to be true to God and my convictions and I knew that that was what it took for me to be true. The club was made up of wonderful, clean-cut young people; most of them church members. I liked every one and certainly did not feel superior to any of them. To stay for sociability's sake would have been a pleasure but I knew what I had to do.

The crowd knew that the president planned on leaving. In good spirit they made an effort to persuade me to stay. One of the nicest looking boys in the group came and asked me to dance with him.

"Thank you, Dave, but I just can't do it. I don't even know how to dance."

"Well, that is no problem," said he, "I'll teach you."

By this time there was quite a group gathered a-

round. Everyone was in a gay mood and it seemed they had plotted together to draw me into the fun. Soon there was a line-up of good looking boys, all of them volunteers to help teach me to dance.

To slight their invitation and to appear a wet blanket was the last thing I wanted. But I could not go back on what I had received on taking Christ as my Saviour, "Kids, thanks very much for everything. Go ahead and have a good time. I must go now."

Without an escort of any kind the president left the party and caught the first streetcar home. I felt lonely and uncertain. Most of the girls and boys I had just left were from good families. Their dress was better than mine. There was no question about their background. They had good reputations and most of them if asked would have said, "Yes, I am a Christian."

Could it be that I was mistaken? Was I making life harder for myself by tenaciously clinging to strange, narrow-minded ideas? Did I really get *converted in the country*? Was I the girl for whom old things had passed away and all things had become new as a result of my decision to serve Christ? Now it all seemed like a dream.

When at last I was home in my own room I earnestly sought God with tears. I confessed once again my faith in Christ, thanked Him for His blood shed for my sins, and pleaded for His guidance. I was weak and miserable but He was strong and merciful. In the days that followed I learned more and more of His grace and keeping power.

CHAPTER TEN

Fighting The Good Fight

My diary, kept during teen-age days, reveals that for me, it was a period of unusual turmoil. What every child needs most, the thing he wants and thrives on best, is to have a mother and a father who love him and also love one another. I did well in school but hated special days when the parents were invited. Other girls proudly walked the school halls with their Mothers but I wished for a trip to Mars.

In conversation one time with one of Mrs. H.'s friends, I remarked that Mrs. H. never commented approvingly, never conceded that I had done well in school even if I had. The friend replied, "She may not say it to you but she has mentioned it at the bridge club. She seemed quite proud of your school record." To know that she approved even a little, pleased me greatly.

FAITH UNDER FIRE

My religious views and practices were ever subject to criticism. I have no memory of approval on that score. In all discussions on the subject I was bound to lose.

The H. family always said grace at their meals. Their boy often rattled off the Latin grace that was used at the private school. His Father would demand

that it be repeated in English, then demand that it be repeated more slowly. Finally, not only God but all of us knew our gratitude had been expressed.

The first time I was asked to say grace, I repeated what we had always said at the Lindahl table. It was not so much a set grace as a prayer, and in it was, 'Bless this food to the nourishing of our bodies and us to Thy service.' Mr. H. looked up in amazement, "Why she says it just like my old man used to say it."

From what he said about his Father I gradually formed a picture of him in my mind. He was a Bible-believing, God-fearing man. He gave generously to the church during his life time and in his old age had little of this world's goods. His son felt that his Father's religion had been a liability and did not intend to so burden himself.

They were sure I was ruining my life with religion. They were certain that Pentecostal pulpits were filled by racketeers and that the pews were filled with people who had failed in business or in love or had lost their health. When I turned down an invitation to a Scout Dance and consistently refused to attend all school dances, Mrs. H. prophesied that I would be an old maid. Not just an old maid—an unhappy old maid! Furthermore she declared that it was impossible for me to be a good school teacher as long as I held to my old-fashioned ideas.

By the time I had finished one year of university and was in Teacher's College, other girls from our neighborhood were developing into social belles. The girl next door drew forth the praise of her parents and the admiration of the neighbors by being able

to drink a fair number of cocktails at a party and still conduct herself as a lady. When compared with her, I did not show off well. Inwardly I wished they would turn the spotlight on each of us at school. There I did not fall behind.

When it came to taking a cocktail, Mr. H. said, "Are you afraid that you have a weak background and through social drinking you might turn into a drunkard?" Any mention of my background was a touchy subject with me. For all I knew I might have been hatched in a cabbage patch. Defensively, Mr. H. asked me one time if I had ever seen anyone drunk in their house.

My answer was, "No."

He said he thought liquor was used in their home like it ought to be used—in moderation. My ideal was a home where there was no alcoholic beverage at all. Because of my decision to live for Christ it had not been necessary for me to sign a temperance pledge. I wanted nothing at all to do with strong drink.

At one of their parties, a friend of the family, with glass in hand came into the den where I was doing my homework, and said, "Have a sip. It is just a harmless cocktail. There is hardly any alcohol in it." I told her that I had seen enough liquor in the Gerard household to last me a lifetime. Sometime later, at a wedding, I enjoyed generous helpings of ice cream and freely imbibed the punch. Later Mr. H. laughed heartily at some of the wedding guests who were too holy to drink liquor but had enjoyed the punch—he had spiked the punch!

Any reference to my background always upset me

a little. References to my looks affected me the same way. I would not use make-up. Mrs. H. used to say that anyone as homely as I should do all possible to improve on nature's meager endowment. I couldn't argue for my own good looks. She had the facts of the case before her. But my idea of placing emphasis on inward beauty and not no outward adornment was scriptural. If only I had known and could have quoted:

Some folks in looks take so much pride
They don't think much on what's inside.
Well, as for me, I know my face
Can ne'er be made a thing of grace,
And so I rather think I'll see
How I can fix th' inside of me
So folks 'll say, "He looks like sin,
But ain't he beautiful within!"

I felt very certain of the *do's and don't's* of Christian living. If I had given in on one point and then another, soon the testimony of a separated Christian life would have been lost.

One morning a woman down the way from us murdered her husband with a hatchet before he woke up. The whole city was horrified. As I came by the place on my way home from school, I saw a large crowd gathered around the building. Later as I was busying myself with regular after-school chores, Mrs. H. said, "Did you hear what happened down the street?"

"Yes, wasn't that terrible?"

"Do you know why she murdered her husband?"

"I suppose she was temporarily insane."

"Yes," replied Mrs. H. "She was insane and it was religion that put her off. A lot of the people who end up at Essondale were religious fanatics to begin with. If you keep going on this religious tangent that's likely where you will end up." That was my object lesson in religion for the day.

They saw to it that I read Sinclair Lewis' book, *Elmer Gantry*. I was to read it with an open mind and see for myself what a lot of racketeers the evangelists were. My knowledge of evangelists was very limited but I could not accept the fact that they were the blackguards my friends painted them. The discussions often upset me. No matter what I said or thought it was only the argument of a teen-ager against the voices of experience. But I had one powerful point in my argument—I had been *converted in the country!* Suppose all the evangelists were wrong: God was not wrong. I had been saved by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

WEARY BUT NOT WAVERING

The unfavorable atmosphere and separation from fellowship with believers was taking its toll on my spiritual life. There was no inward vigour even though I was sticking in cold principle to what I believed. I would read a scripture verse, quickly offer a silent prayer and run off to school. I always asked God to keep His hand upon my life that His will might be carried out.

The girl's counsellor at Lord Byng High School had taken an interest in me. She talked with me about life at the University. She believed that I would re-

ceive bursaries and scholarships to see me through. My appetite for education was keener than ever. My vision of preaching the gospel in country school houses had given place to a more dazzling picture of a young career woman with an excellent position and a high salary.

After I had finished my first year of university, I received a bursary to go to the Vancouver Normal School (Teacher's College) for one year. Never was a gift received with less gratitude. I told my guardian that I would work or do anything she asked me to do, if only she would let me go to the university. I wanted to reject the bursary to the Normal School. In spite of the intervention of the girl's counsellor on my behalf, my guardian insisted that I go to the Normal School.

At the Normal School I met a number of born-again Christians. Mary Beaton, a student at the University of British Columbia, sponsored an Inter-School Christian Fellowship group in the school. We won several to the Lord that year. Many others with Christian experiences were encouraged to stand true to their convictions.

Not far from the Normal School was the Holiness Movement church where the Reverend Stonehouse was pastoring. His assistant at the time was a young woman named Joyce Free. The pastor's home was a hospitality centre for a great many young people, who were in Vancouver either studying or in the armed forces. At a loss to know what to do with their spare time, they found the parsonage a real haven.

Joyce Free and I became good friends. On Sat-

urday afternoons, we went on short excursions to Capilano Canyon, Stanley Park or to some other beauty spot. Vancouver has one of the most beautiful harbours in the world. The city has a waterfront of ninety miles and is the gateway to the Orient for all of Canada. The Lions, mighty twin crags that rise to more than six thousand feet above the water, are guardians of the harbour. Within easy walking distance for all the city dwellers are lofty mountains that challenge the sportsman.

Joyce's church conducted an open air service in downtown Vancouver every Saturday night. The pastor and several others from the church would stand in a circle around a little folding organ, sing gospel songs and give brief Bible messages to passers-by. Since the service was conducted in a rough section of the city, most of the listeners were in no hurry. Some were too much under the influence of liquor to hurry, others had no place to hurry to.

At first I stood on the sidewalk looking on while the Christians presented the gospel from the circle. But it was all wrong. Had I not been saved? My place was in the circle. I knew my guardian would not tolerate it but now that I was at the street service it did not help matters for me to stand as an onlooker. I might as well participate and show whose side I was on.

We did not plan it so, but it worked out that every Saturday night after a pleasant afternoon together, Joyce and I were present at the street service. She played the organ so she had to be there. The first thing I knew, I was singing lustily with the group and

giving my testimony to the crowd. It came as natural to me as breathing. After all, I had been *converted in the country*.

ON THE CARPET

One day my guardian called me to her office. I tried to guess why she wanted to see me. Either she was going to give me money for new clothes, commend me for doing well in school or reprimand me for doing something she did not like.

She wasted no time in getting to the point. I was hardly in the door and seated when she addressed a question to me and then continued talking without waiting for my answer.

"What is this I hear about you, down there on the street corner spouting like a soap box orator? Do you think you need a university education to go down and talk to the drunks? Is that what you think I am educating you for?"

She made it sound low and vulgar. I appeared to be the most ungrateful wretch alive.

She said, "You have had wonderful opportunities and I have seen to it that you have had everything you needed. I promised you all the education you could absorb and now I find you using it down on the street corner with vulgar people. With all I have done for you, I asked only one thing of you and that one thing you would not do. I did not ask you to give up religion. I only asked that you follow after a faith that would be more in keeping with intelligence and culture."

She continued, "I hear that you do well in your

psychology studies. I suggest that you try a little introspection. Look into your own mind and examine your mental and emotional processes. Find out what makes you think and act as you do. When your academic record is excellent and your social adjustments are good, why do you have to spoil it all by insisting on going to some mission hall? Why can't you worship God in a mighty church where, as the organ peals out its anthem, you walk down the carpeted aisle, kneel and pray, then quietly arise and go? Nobody knows you came and nobody knows you went. But you have worshipped your God. (She made it sound so dignified and wonderful.) But you have to go to a little church where they pump your hand at the door and say, 'God bless you, we are so glad to have you. Will you sing a solo today?' Is it because you have to be the big toad in the puddle?" There was a sting in her remarks.

NOT DOWN—BUT OUT

Once more I tried to explain that I did not mean to be ungrateful or unco-operative. I had been *converted in the country* and I could not go back on that experience. If it had not been for my decision to serve Christ, I would have had no opportunities at all. My guardian did not agree, "You have the wrong perspective. Your religion was a help to you in the beginning but now you should use it as a steppingstone to better things. It helped you then but it is hindering you now."

But I knew in my heart there were no better things.

Then she made her final statement, "You are through! I have done all I am going to do. You can get out and earn your own living at the first opportunity."

With all sincerity I expressed my gratitude for all she had done for me and told her that I was sorry I had not pleased her.

Feeling somewhat like the little orphan girl back in the country I turned and left her office. Step by step I made my way down the great stone stairway, praying fervently and urgently as I went, "Please, God, shall I go back and apologize? Shall I tell my guardian I am sorry and that I will try and be more broad-minded? Maybe I could take the occasional cigarette and the occasional cocktail and go to the good shows once in a while. Please, God, if I am just being stubborn and narrow-minded, let me know. I'll go back and tell her that I am sorry." If ever I needed an answer, I needed it then.

I was down the stairs and on my way to the streetcar stop. God had not given me an answer. I heard no voice and felt no unusual impression. But I remembered a young people's service that I had been in where I had stood with my hand raised, singing, "Take the whole world but give me Jesus. I'll not turn back. I'll not turn back."

I had my answer!

Now my step was more firm. To myself I said, "Alright Gerard, you sang it. Go ahead and prove that you meant it."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

No Longer A Lonely Orphan

My guardian's words kept ringing in my ears on the streetcar ride home. I tried to re-appraise the situation. Step by step I traveled back to the gospel meetings in the school house and on back from there to my beginnings. I stood between two unhappy alternatives: either to displease the Lord or to displease my guardian. Having displeased my guardian, I was overwhelmed with a sense of failure.

It was getting near dinner time when I approached home. I hoped to avoid talking over what my guardian had said but to my surprise, Mrs. H. met me at the door with tears in her eyes. Only once before had I seen her weep and that was when England was in the blitz and her Mother was in the bombed zone. Mrs. H. was also disappointed in me.

Accusingly she said, "You lived in one of the finest homes in Vancouver. I treated you as my own daughter. Now I hear that you spend your spare time with the drunks in the down-and-out section of the city."

I tried to explain that we were not there because we preferred their society but we were there to preach the gospel and help them be better people.

Scornful of my youthful zeal, she said, "Oh, yes, leave it to the teen-agers! You think that you are going to convert them, do you? They could tell you

Then she made her final statement, "You are through! I have done all I am going to do. You can get out and earn your own living at the first opportunity."

With all sincerity I expressed my gratitude for all she had done for me and told her that I was sorry I had not pleased her.

Feeling somewhat like the little orphan girl back in the country I turned and left her office. Step by step I made my way down the great stone stairway, praying fervently and urgently as I went, "Please, God, shall I go back and apologize? Shall I tell my guardian I am sorry and that I will try and be more broad-minded? Maybe I could take the occasional cigarette and the occasional cocktail and go to the good shows once in a while. Please, God, if I am just being stubborn and narrow-minded, let me know. I'll go back and tell her that I am sorry." If ever I needed an answer, I needed it then.

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CHAPTER TWELVE

Into All The World

When Jean, Velma and I began singing together in Rossland, we did not imagine to what distant places in the world our melodies would travel. Some people claim guidance from God through dramatic happenings—they hear a voice or see a vision. God led me but not in mystical ways.

My activities in the newly-formed McColl-Gerard Trio made a heavy demand on my spare time. Ours was a continuous round of radio broadcasts and evangelistic rallies. It soon became necessary for me to decide which I should be, teacher or preacher. I really liked teaching. There was security for the future in it. My salary was not large but it was regular with promise of systematic increases. A woman evangelist could look for neither professional standing nor financial security. Her treasures are laid up in heaven; she must await eternity for a word of recognition from the Master Himself.

Before I joined them, the McColl sisters were evangelists of excellent reputation. During my second summer vacation, we undertook a tour as an evangelistic trio. We travelled across Canada to New Brunswick and there spent a busy season in meetings. Our combined efforts were crowned with success. Over and over again preachers with whom we worked ex-

pressed surprise that I was going back to school teaching, when we were so effective as an evangelistic team.

ANSWERING THE CALL

My own conviction that there is nothing as worthwhile in this world as the winning of one soul to Christ, was taking a stronger grip on me each day. After one more year of teaching, the three of us travelled to Victoria, British Columbia and as a Trio launched an evangelistic campaign. I went daily to the teacher's Summer School. At two o'clock one morning I awakened Jean and Velma with an announcement, "I am not going to school tomorrow."

Sleepily they scrutinized me, "And why not?"

"I am going to give up teaching and give myself to the full-time ministry." They knew that I had been wrestling with the problem for months and expressed approval that I had decided to dedicate my life to the Lord's work.

When finally we cut all ties to enter full-time evangelistic work, we went first to Miami, Florida to campaign in Evangel Temple. From that time we have travelled continuously.

In Miami we were invited to sing at the Three Score and Ten Club. One must be seventy years old to be a full-fledged member. At sixty, one is a junior member. The program was scheduled to be sheer entertainment but the Lord so blessed our gospel songs that the mistress of ceremonies and many in the audience were deeply moved. Departing from the planned program, she had a very elderly minister come to the platform to pray. She asked him to lead

the audience and "pray God's blessing on these dear girls." The soloist who was to sing "A White Christmas" sang instead "The Holy City". With a choke in her voice she said, "I hope we will all be good enough to go there."

OPPORTUNITIES UNLIMITED

We have never lacked opportunities to sing and preach the gospel. We have carried it to civic clubs, homes for the aged, jails, hospitals, schools, camp meeting tabernacles, churches of many denominations and even railroad stations. We sang at the railroad station in Locarno, Switzerland until, overcome with weariness, we wondered if the train would ever pull out. Yes, we even sang in factories in England—to say nothing of our large street corner gatherings. A British newspaper man in Louth took a photograph of the Trio with the crowd gathered around and ran it in the newspaper under the heading, "Evangelism, 1949 American Version."

From the two weekly radio programs over C J A T, Trail, British Columbia, the pattern of our radio work altered to something more irregular and more strenuous. In almost all of our American and Canadian Campaigns we carry on radio and television programs. We have been able to use these two powerful media to send forth the gospel in most of the States and in all parts of Canada.

Step by step God has lead us into larger fields of ministry. In the past six years we have turned our attention to the foreign fields for three extensive

preaching tours. With some hesitation we set out on our first venture, scheduled to spend several months in England and continental Europe. We also planned to visit the World Pentecostal Conference in Paris, France. Whatever doubts we had concerning our reception in England disappeared early in our tour. From London we travelled to other points in England, everywhere preaching to large congregations. Our American-styled gospel music and all-girl preaching team proved an asset rather than a liability.

We were invited to sing almost every night of the Paris Conference. Through the nightly contact with the delegates and visitors from thirty-five countries, we were deluged with invitations to visit other countries. We could not go everywhere but we did preach in Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Italy, Switzerland and Sweden. In Sweden, on the invitation of Louis Pethrus, pastor of the Filadelfia Church in Stockholm, we participated in the great mid-summer convention.

Two years later we were on our way again to foreign pulpits. This time we spent several weeks in Mexico where we visited the Latin American Orphanage in Acapulco. The purpose of that visit was to acquaint ourselves with their work so that we could represent them in missionary rallies. After preaching in Mexico we flew south, preaching in Guatemala, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama. From there we continued south of the equator to Lima, Peru, where we launched a campaign with ten Assemblies of God churches co-operating.

The last country on our southern journey was Bolivia. While there we saw a wonderful outpour-

ing of the Holy Spirit at the Bible School in Cochabamba. (Acts 2:4) To that time, no one in the Assemblies in Bolivia had received the Holy Spirit. It meant a great deal to the missionaries and to the progress of the churches when almost all of the students in the school and a number of the laymen were baptized in the Holy Spirit. When we were back preaching in North America, we received word that the outpouring of the Spirit had spread across Bolivia to the church at Lake Titacaca. Missionary Everett Hale and his wife felt that God had led us to Bolivia to aid them in the spiritual warfare. For us the demonstration of supernatural power in the Cochabamba meetings was more thrilling than flying the Andes or any of the wonders of the journey.

A year and a half after our return from South America we went to Europe again. This time we took with us the Oral Robert's film, "Venture into Faith." In conversation with Oral Roberts in Sacramento, California, we laid our plans and stated our objectives. It was to be a soul-winning program, in every detail. The film would be shown one-third of the time, and we would conduct our own services the other two-thirds of the time. When the *S. S. United States* set sail from New York, everything we needed for the British tour was stowed away in the hold: the moving picture equipment, several hundred of our own gospel recordings, gospel literature, and our Pontiac which was to carry us to over forty British cities and continental Europe.

The four months in Britain was one of the most fruitful periods in our ministry. Everywhere the

auditoriums and churches overflowed. We saw hundreds of people take their stand for Christ at the altars.

From England we crossed the Channel to Cherbourg and thence by car to southern Italy. In the two months following we were to preach in Egypt, Lebanon, Trans-Jordan and the New State of Israel. What can be done in foreign lands by consecrated missionaries is well demonstrated in Lillian Trasher's Orphanage at Assiut, Egypt. We preached in three different churches in Cairo and also Assiut and Tahta, southern Egypt.

In Beirut, Lebanon, five different missionary groups co-operated in the meetings. We saw once again an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, when several of the young men received the Holy Spirit in the public services. In forty years of Pentecostal preaching in Lebanon no one had ever been baptized in the Holy Spirit in a public service.

From Damascus, Syria we journeyed south to Jerusalem and from there to almost all the places of Biblical significance in Palestine. Our view of the Holy Land proved so faith-inspiring that on return I wrote, "*The Holy Land Guide to Faith*".

Through radio, television, the printed word, overseas preaching tours, regular campaign schedules in churches at home, and in our summertime tent campaigns in eastern United States, God has led us into ever-widening fields of ministry. The simple story of Jesus Christ and what He can do has been on our lips at all times. It was the hearing of that story in the backwoods of British Columbia that transformed

my life. The marvel of the gospel is that it meets the needs of all men everywhere, regardless of race or station in life.

HAVE YOU BEEN CONVERTED?

Why do I write my story? For the same reason I have told it to thousands in our audiences across America—to influence others to give their lives to the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Philadelphia a man and wife of our congregation were in the process of adopting a baby girl. I gave my testimony in the campaign just at the time the adoption papers were about to be signed. They were so moved to think of what Christ had done for me that they legally named the little adopted daughter, Bernice Gerard —. No one knows what the future holds for little Bernice. But whatever happens, she will always know that her adopted parents named her after an evangelist because they wanted her to grow up to be a fervent Christian.

After telling my life story in Panama City, Florida, the church altars were filled with sinners asking Christ to save them. A young airman, who was one of ninety teachers on the Sunday School staff, beckoned me to come and pray with a boy from his class.

The boy had been forsaken by his parents. He was one of the city's problem children, having been before the Juvenile Court several times. The Sunday School teacher had succeeded in getting him to the class but had failed to reach his heart. The youngster was sure that nobody cared about him. He kept an icy wall between himself and others.

At the altar that night the wall of ice melted. Looking down on the kneeling, freckle-faced teen-ager, I put my hand on his brush-cut and said, "I am glad you are giving your life to Christ. I think God is going to do for you what He did for me." With all reserve gone, he looked up through his tears and said, "I think so too." A miracle had been wrought.

We have seen countless teen-agers dedicate their lives to Christ, influenced by my experience. Many of them have parents who go nowhere to church. Without any help from home, these youngsters have been successful in living lives with a purpose—serving Christ.

Looking back on the past and its miracles, I know God will give me the joy of seeing many more converted. Will you take Christ as your Saviour today?

Christ died for you.

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:6, 7.

The next step is up to you!

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. Acts 16:31.

Additional McColl-Gerard Publications

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By Bernice M. Gerard

- * An account of what may be seen in the Holy Land today to inspire faith.
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