

*The
Infidel Doctor
of Salem*



Effie M. Williams

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

By

EFFIE M. WILLIAMS

Author of

“The Revival in Tin Town”

“Trials and Triumphs of Eva Grant”

“The Man of His Counsel”

FAITH PUBLISHING HOUSE

Digitally Published by

THE GOSPEL TRUTH

www.churchofgodeveninglight.com

Chapter I

Salem and Swampville

Salem and Swampville, towns in southern Missouri at the time of which I am now about to write, had risen to places of prominence. They prided themselves in possessing various good graces. In fact their fame filled all the country round. Salem boasted of having the best ball team in the country. Her steady nine had carried off the banner for several seasons, and their slogan was, "John to catch, and John to pitch, we'll dump them all into the ditch." This slogan came into existence because of the ability of two cousins, who were members of the team—John Odes and John Wells. They were the dread of all the baseball teams in that part of the country, for John Odes knew just how to curve the ball so that none could strike it, and John Wells understood the signs given so that his catcher's mitt was right there in the right place and at just the right time to receive the ball behind the bat. Their skill at the bat equaled their skill as pitcher and catcher. All ball teams felt that they were already losers before entering the game, when they caught sight of the two Johns.

Why should not Salem boast of her nine? They had beaten the Oklahoma Indians four to one and the Boston team twelve to nothing. So, should a stranger stop to inspect Salem and take in the beauties of that place, and inquire of an old settler for a church where

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

he might pass his time on a Sunday morning or evening, he would hear the reply, "No, sir, we hain't got nary church here, but we got the best baseball team in the hull country. If you want to see a real game, the boys will play this evenin' [meaning afternoon], so come to the ball grounds and watch the boys skin 'em alive." This the visitor would usually do, and the boys of Salem would do honor to their reputation, and amid much yelling, stamping of feet, throwing of hats into the air, and occasionally a fist and skull fight between some members of the different ball teams, Salem would again carry off the honors of the day.

Swampville, too, was not without its cause for pride. They boasted of having the largest saloon in the whole county, not excluding the county seat, and one of their girls carried the honor of being the most graceful waltzer at the last barbecue. This honor was awarded her by three men, and a prize of a silk opera shawl was given her. Of course Swampville had reasons to be proud, and after the barbecue a large dance hall was erected so that the belle of the village might have occasion to display her grace to the inhabitants of the village at their own good pleasure. This was often done. Together with the saloon and the dance hall, Swampville was a place known to all for miles around.

As these two towns shall occupy so noticeable a place in my story, I shall take time and space to describe them somewhat to my readers.

Swampville and Salem were two towns in southern Missouri. Their close location at the time of my story made them rival cities, as each was trying to outdo the other and aspire to more glory. A few years prior to this narrative these two little villages were merely sawmill towns, as the swamps around them were covered with timber. As the timber was cut down and the land cleared the towns

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

discarded the old sawmill shacks and nice dwellings were built in their stead.

As I have already stated, these towns were rivals; if sugar was ten cents a pound at Salem the price would be nine and one half cents at Swampville. Thus in all things they rivaled each other, until the news came that a new railroad would be built to the town of Swampville. True enough the road was built, and this meant the boom of Swampville and the death of Salem.

There was no church building in Salem; neither was there one in Swampville. It is not to be the source of alarm when it is known that the population of both towns would not reach the thousand mark and was made up of the rough men usually found around logging camps. Some of them had families, and the wives of these men did justice to their husbands, with few exceptions. The majority of these women could curse as loudly as their husbands, fight as quickly, drink as much booze, and chew as much tobacco. Is it any wonder that the children of such parents were untrained, only in the way of vice? Having had no training they knew nothing of discipline but, as is the rule in the forest among the wild animals—"Might is Right," the one who could whip the most boys was considered leader of the gang.

It was to this place that Dr. Molt made his appearance one day after he had attached M.D. to his name and carried off high honors in his class in medical college. He was desirous of finding a good location, and for some reason decided that Salem was the very place for him. He did not care that the little village had no church building, for he boasted of his infidelity. There is no God, and why spend money on buildings to worship an imaginary something that is not? Science had proved too much for him to believe the imaginary story of Moses about the creation of man. And anyone who would believe

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

the story about Jonah's being swallowed by a whale could be made to believe anything! So the Doctor came to Salem, bringing his infidelity along with him and priding himself in so doing. His good wife, however, could not be convinced that there is no God, for she had been reared in a home where the God of heaven had been revered by both father and mother, and his blessings had been asked to rest on the family around the family altar both morning and evening. She was not easily persuaded to abandon that faith. While her husband often tried to ridicule her faith, he it said to his honor that he never denied her the privilege of attending church services when convenient for her to do so.

So immediately upon their arrival in Salem, finding no church building there nor any religious services, Mrs. Molt began to take steps toward having some form of religious worship.

Chapter II

A Revival in Salem

Excitement ran high in Salem. A covered wagon was seen standing near the little village, and a strange man was asking where he might find lodging. Of course the whole town wanted to see the newcomers, and in the course of a few hours the wagon had been visited by the major part of the little city's population. The untrained children climbed over the wheels of the wagon and asked the questions, as follows: "Where yer frum?" "What's yer name?" "What yer down here fur?" "Do you all own them there horses?"

These questions were addressed to three young ladies and a young boy who were inmates of the schooner. At first they were met with amusement, but this eventually became contempt as one burly young fellow whose bare feet protruded from a pair of trousers which struck him mid-way between the knee and ankle said in a drawling tone loud enough to be heard by the four in the wagon, "I wonder what meanness they done? I bet you they have done somethin' or they would not come to this place."

After a few weeks these four understood the calling forth of this remark, for they found that this part of the country had often been visited by some secret service men and someone who had been

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

among them was taken away under arrest to face some charge for crime which he had committed in the place from whence he came.

Just a few weeks prior to the coming of this wagon in the little city of Salem there had been great excitement in that place, for a young man had been among them as bookkeeper for a sawmill firm. For many weeks he had been boarding in the one hotel in the village and his actions had been very peculiar. He was one who would not mix with the crowds. He spent his time in his own room in the hotel and when the hotel became crowded for room and he was asked to share his room with another he refused to do so, paying extra money that he might be alone. He had very little to say to anyone, but carefully watched all the men who came into the hotel for their meals. The hotel keeper's daughter tried to be very friendly with him, and while he never was snobbish in any way, his actions proved that he wanted to be left alone. Often she would pass his door when he would be alone in his room, and as it was in the summer time and quite warm, she would notice that he was always either reading or poring over something that looked very much like a photograph. Whenever he would catch her looking at him through the open door, if he was looking at this photograph, he would always hastily conceal it. Of course she thought that he was looking at some picture of a girl who, no doubt, was a sweetheart left behind. This she told among the other young girls of the village, letting them know it was no use for them to "set their cap for Francis Murrey, for he already had a girl somewhere else."

But one day just a few weeks before the arrival of this covered wagon in Salem, Francis Murrey walked up to a man who was also boarding at the hotel and who had given his name as Tom Peffer, and asked him if he knew anyone in the country from whence he came by the name of Richard Bowles. Tom started quickly, which

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

was noticeable to all around, and then asked, "Why do you ask me such a question as that?" Upon which Francis Murrey threw back his coat, displaying a star which showed him to be a secret service man, and told them Tom Peffer was none other than Richard Bowles and wanted in Kentucky on the charge of murder. So he took this man away with him on the next train.

This was only one time of many when these men would come into the community and take away someone who had been working in the lumber camps. So the inhabitants had come to look upon every newcomer with suspicion, thinking he had done something wrong and came there to evade the law.

The truth about these people was that they had come from central Ohio and for the reason that the winters there were too severe for Mr. May and he was searching for a place where the winters were less severe and also where he could use what little means he had to best advantage. Hearing of the work to be had in this locality he turned in that direction. He had a nephew there who had corresponded with him regularly and who had urged him to come that way.

When the news was circulated through the town that there were three more young ladies there, the young men began to make plans for the next dance and also to call upon them and make their acquaintance. This was arranged through the girls of the village making the acquaintance of the May sisters and then calling again with their brother or their boyfriend. It was quite a surprise to all of them, however, when a dance was arranged, the May sisters invited, and they were informed that the May sisters never attended dances. They were then invited to the Sunday ball game and were informed that it was out of the question also. Neither of these girls claimed to be a Christian, but they had been reared in that Christian atmosphere

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

that gave them a reverence for God and also for the day which is set apart to worship the Lord.

Mr. May finally found a suitable place for his family and began to work. He also sought for a place in which he might have Sunday school. This was found in the school house, and with the consent of the directors he soon organized a Sunday school and also met each Wednesday evening in prayer meeting. He found these people eager to have something like this in their town, and he also found among those rough people some who knew how to talk to the Lord. The prayer meetings and the Sunday school were well attended and after a few services he made inquiry as to where he might get some minister to come preach to these people. He was informed that there was one of the Methodist faith who came once each month to a school house about two miles from Swampville. He procured his name and address and wrote him, stating the need of the place. In a few days he received a favorable answer and time for services the following Sunday was set.

Brother Light came. The little house was filled to its capacity. Many were standing in the aisles and around the walls, while the rostrum was full of the children of the town. As he arose before those people, many of whom were only half clothed, his heart was touched and his voice quivered with emotion as he began to address that crowd. Here was some of God's own creation, his own handiwork, and yet they knew nothing of God and were totally ignorant of their Maker and of the Word of God. He arranged for meetings once a month. After a few visits to that place he announced a revival to begin on the date of his next monthly appointment.

The meeting began. Brother Light told of the love of God and His Son. His preaching was solid truth. After a week's teaching along this line he then began to thunder the judgments of God to

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

those people and exhort them to come to God, confessing their sins. This had its effect, and the altar was filled with earnest seekers almost every night. Among those claiming pardon were the May sisters. At the close of the meeting twelve persons went to the river about two miles from this little village and followed the Lord in baptism.

A new day had dawned for Salem. The people were stirred. Immediately steps were taken to erect a new church building, where they might have a suitable place to worship. Lumber was soon on the ground. It was not long until a place of worship had been erected that would do justice to any little city. But while the Lord was working among these people the devil was working also. When one building was erected the people seemed to think they needed another building also; for some did not believe the doctrine taught by Preacher Light, and therefore did not feel that they could worship with any of his followers. Accordingly another building was erected directly across the street from the first one. These two churches became rivals one of the other.

So there was a division among the people of Salem to the extent that they were not willing to use the same kind of songbooks in their song service and always tried to arrange it so that they would have services at the same hour so that there would be no opportunity of passing from one church to the other. One evening as Preacher Bennet, the minister who pastored the flock of the faith of Preacher Light, was coming to preach to his people he heard them singing, "Will There Be Any Stars in My Crown?" and as there were services across the street at the same hour, he heard them singing also, but their song was "No, Not One."

This attitude was manifested in their lives, for so antagonistic were they to each other that often these two faiths would live

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

neighbors one to the other and not speak for weeks at a time. But we shall leave these two churches quarreling with each other, while we turn to another point of interest.

Chapter III

The Work Family

Some few years have elapsed since the beginning of my story. We shall go now to a scene near the little town of Swampville. About one mile west of this interesting little village lived a farmer, whom we shall call Mr. Work. He proved himself worthy of this name, for from early morning until late at night he was busy and saw that all others under his roof were busy also. His good wife toiled from early morning until far into the hours of night to care for the family of little children. Mr. Work was not a strong man, but he had that way about him which compelled others to do, and as he did not strain himself to hard labor he had very little mercy on those who labored on his farm. His children were, therefore, compelled to labor far beyond their strength. They could get but a limited amount of schooling, as all the farm work must be done in the fall before any of them could think of attending school. Many times the boys would be gathering corn in the field, and would cast an occasional wishful glance over their shoulder at the boys and girls playing games on the playground at school, which was only a short distance from the Work home.

Etta, the eldest girl, although a frail child, was not excused from this hard labor, but had to have her share of it even to the heavy work in the field. While her girlfriends were enjoying visits with each

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

other at some social gathering, Etta must stay at home to do some task, for Mr. Work was loud in his protestation against “havin’ his gal gad about without her mother. Too much of that was being done and home was the place for his gal and there was where she should stay.” When the work was so that she might attend school she did so and did credit to the limited time given her, for she stood at the head of her class. She was diligent in her studies and improved every moment of time given her to get an education. This helped her in after years, for she never let time drag on her hands, but always found something with which to occupy her time. Her diligence in study never became a lost art with her.

As Etta was a naturally frail child, this hard work and exposure began to tell upon her. At first she only complained of a tired, languid feeling, and this was accompanied with a slight cough. She noticed also that her temperature rose each day and at these times she would often be compelled to lie down. At first her parents paid no attention to it, as they thought it might soon wear off, but after giving her tonics to build her up and cough remedies to break up the cold, which was all to no avail, she was then kept in the house and her mother took her place in the field. But Etta got no better. The mother feared the worst, but Mr. Work seemed to be blind to his daughter’s condition. At last when he saw that all remedies were failing to do her any good, Dr. Molt, from Salem, was called. After a careful examination, many questions, nods, and “uh, huhs,” he wrote a prescription to be filled at the drug store in a neighboring town.

As Dr. Molt took his departure, Mr. Work followed him to the gate to hear the decision. As the medical professor told him his daughter had only a few short months at best to live, a heaviness

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

gripped his heart which seemed almost to smother him, for in spite of his hardness as a taskmaster, Mr. Work loved his children.

“Your daughter has tuberculosis in the last stage,” said Dr. Molt. “One lung is almost entirely gone, and the other one is so badly affected that she cannot possibly last any longer than spring.”

At this Mr. Work began to remonstrate, to which Dr. Molt replied, “If you are not satisfied with my examination and the decision that I have made I shall be glad for you to call another physician, and I will meet him here in consultation.” This was agreed upon, and Dr. Thornton, the one who had been the family physician until Dr. Molt came to Salem, was called.

Etta was no longer a child, but a young woman, with the thoughts and ideas of a young woman, and as she saw the family physician meet Dr. Molt she knew her case must be alarming. However, Dr. Thornton talked to her in a friendly way, and, after a careful examination, upon taking his departure he shook her hand and with a smile said, “Now, Etta, be a good girl. Take your medicine. Keep perfectly quiet, and in a few days you will be able to be skipping about here. And then a few weeks more and you can go with your brothers and help gather in the last of the corn. Just be encouraged, for you will be all right.”

Etta glanced from one to the other, and she saw something in Dr. Molt’s face which she understood well to be contrary to the statements of Dr. Thornton. As these two turned to leave the room she called to Dr. Molt to return.

“Well, and what do you want of me now?” inquired Dr. Molt with a forced smile, as he again reached her bedside.

“I want to know what is wrong with me,” said she, as she gazed up into his face with an appealing look.

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

For some moments Dr. Molt remained silent, and then said, “Well, Etta, you will have to obey orders if you ever expect to be well, and you know you have not done this. I have told you to remain absolutely quiet, and stay in bed, also that you take certain kinds of food to build up your body, and you have failed to do that.”

“Yes, I know there is something else, and I want to know what it is, for if my case is dangerous I want to know it,” said Etta, as the tears sprang to her eyes.

For some time Dr. Molt stood looking down at Etta, noting the tears roll down from her eyes and wet the pillow. He seemed to be weighing something in his mind, and at a loss to know just what to do. He began toying with the charm which hung from his watch chain. He would look first at Etta and then from the window. At last he spoke, “I did not mean to tell you this, but as you have pressed me to do so, I will have to tell you that if you haven’t tuberculosis you have every symptom of it, and unless you have very good care you cannot last long.”

“Thank you,” said Etta, through her tears, for these words fell upon her as a death knell. Be it said to the honor of Dr. Molt, that although he boasted of his infidelity, his word was as good as his signature. Etta knew this, and therefore knew that he had spoken the truth to her.

As Dr. Molt took his departure he left the usual instruction that if she did not get along well to let him know. As it was late in the evening Mrs. Work went immediately to do the evening’s chores, leaving Etta to herself. The mind travels fast. She began to look back over her life. She saw herself nine years back, when a girl of fourteen she knelt at the old-fashioned altar in a country schoolhouse and there yielded herself to God. She remembered how she arose shouting the victory and telling what God had done for her. But in

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

looking over her life she saw also how she had let the grace of God leak out of her heart and she was now to stand before Him empty handed. She was not ready to meet Him.

When Mrs. Work returned she heard sobs from the bedroom, and went in to see about Etta. She found her weeping bitterly. “Do not cry so, Etta,” said her mother, “you know that doctors do not always know, and you have a chance to live a long time yet. You may outlive both these doctors, who can tell?”

“It is not of that, that I am thinking, Mamma,” said Etta. “But I am not ready to meet God.”

“Do not let that bother you,” hastily replied her mother. “You know you have always been a good girl and everybody likes you. You surely cannot be very bad, or you would not have so many friends.”

“I know, Mamma,” sobbed Etta, “but these friends cannot help me now. I know that I am not right with God.”

Chapter IV

Etta Finds God

It did not take long for the news of Etta's condition to reach the towns of Swampville and Salem. As she was well known in both places and a favorite of many people, many were the comments made, both yea and nay. When Granny Tattle heard the report, loud and long were her denunciations of the father who had worked his children so hard.

"I just knew it would come to that," she said, "I told Mrs. Work she would not have a girl very long, and that consumption was already working on her, but she would not believe me. But I guess she sees that I know a thing or two, if I am old. Some folks will not take advice till it is too late. Mr. Work will see now what he has done. I think the neighbors should take a hand in this, and wait on him before he works some more of his children to death."

It did not take Granny very long to don her bonnet and make the rounds of the village. Before she returned home for the evening, had anyone taken a mental vision of Etta from the description given they could only have seen a wasted bit of flesh drawn tightly over a framework of bones, with sunken eyes peering from deep hollows. She could also be seen lying off in an abandoned room all alone with no attention, while her father railed and abused the rest of the family

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

because of her illness and her inability to do her share of the work. It surely was just awful the way things were going in the Work home, for Granny Tattle told them, and of course she had always been the source of information to the village of Salem.

This information given to the neighborhood by Granny Tattle led many of the neighbors to go to the Work home to see poor Etta. Instead of a wasted bit of framework lying in a room all alone many were met at the door by Etta, who always gave them a smile of welcome, for although her condition was serious and she had been told by Dr. Molt to remain in bed, often she would disobey orders, especially when she knew she had no fever. The neighbors also found a father who was very attentive to his daughter and ready to grant her slightest wish.

While Granny Tattle was making her rounds of the village of Salem and the surrounding neighborhood, Etta was also very busy, but on a far more important matter. She was calling on God for the need of her soul. She was also becoming acquainted with her Bible, which was opening to her in a marvelous way. Many had been the time when she had burned the midnight oil to finish reading some novel which had been loaned to her by some of her girlfriends, but now the night oil was being burned that she might learn more about what God had said in his Word regarding her. She was finding the information which she desired. As she read she would pray, not a petty prayer, spoken with no thought of what was said, but from the depth of her heart she cried out to God, "O Lord, make me just like the Bible reads." She found God's Word said, "We know that we have passed from death unto life," and that was the cry of her heart—to know that she had the promise of eternal life. She would cry out, "Make me to know it, Lord; make me to know it."

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

This continued calling upon God soon got her in close touch with Him, for his Word says, "If we draw nigh to God he will draw nigh to us." And in coming close to Him many things were revealed to Etta, to her great surprise. She found that she would have to put away many things that were displeasing to God. Etta had always been a very proud girl, and although God had not blessed her with an attractive face, she tried to make herself as attractive as possible. In doing this she had always tried to attire herself in the latest fashion, many times wearing dresses which were not modest and also articles of clothing which were too tight and very injurious to her health. She always dressed her hair in the latest style also, and although she did not have beautiful hair and very little of it, after she dressed her hair she had all appearance of having an abundance of it, and it was arranged beautifully.

One evening Mrs. Work started to do the evening chores and Etta asked her to let her prepare the evening meal. As she had been feeling rather strong that day Mrs. Work consented, with the usual admonition that if she became fatigued in the least not to think of finishing the meal, but to lie down immediately. This Etta promised to do, and Mrs. Work then had a good fire going before she started to do her work for the evening. No sooner had her mother left Etta alone, than Etta knelt down by the flour barrel in the pantry and began to talk to God. As she did so a picture of herself came before her in her clothing that she knew was injurious to her health, but which she had worn that she might be in line with the fashion of the day. For some time she sat there on her knees, groaning aloud, while the Spirit talked to her soul. At last she arose and, ascending the stairs, she gathered together every article of clothing which she felt would displease the Lord in any way and especially those articles which she had worn so tightly that she knew them to be injurious to her health, and these she carried to the kitchen, consigning them to

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

the flames, just as her mother returned from her milking. Mrs. Work went immediately to the wood-box to refill the stove with wood and as she opened the stove door she saw what Etta had done. She rested a surprised gaze upon her daughter's face, but Etta said, "O Mamma, I gave that up for the Lord, and I mean to get right with Him no matter what He asks me to do."

"Yes, and you may want them again someday," said Mrs. Work, as the tears filled her eyes, for she thought that her daughter was not only afflicted with tuberculosis, but that by her continued reading of the Bible she had become afflicted mentally, and was losing her mind. She did not know how true this was, for God's Word says, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," and Etta was seeking with all her heart to be cleared of self so that she could be just as the Lord desired her to be.

The following Sunday after the incident which has just been related, a number of neighbors came to spend the afternoon at the Work home. Etta spent some time with them, but it seemed she could not get interested in their conversation. Something seemed to be calling to her to get away alone with God for a while; so excusing herself she crept upstairs, leaving the visitors. This was no more than they expected, for they thought she wanted to get away from them to take a rest and chose going upstairs instead of to her own bedroom downstairs so that she would not be annoyed by their conversation. No sooner had Etta reached the room upstairs than she fell on her knees beside the bed and began to pour out her heart to God. It seemed that the victory was almost hers, when all at once her "make belief" came before her. She said not one word, but arising, she went to the dresser, and gathering the false make-up together, she went downstairs again and in the presence of her mother and the visitors she consigned a whole armful of it to the flames, saying as she did

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

so, "Mamma, I am giving that up also. I mean to go all the way with the Lord, no matter what He asks me to do. I do not know what more He will ask me to do, but whatever it is I mean to do it, for I mean to get right with God."

This act was convincing proof to Mrs. Work that without any doubt Etta was certainly losing her mind. This was rumored among the neighbors until they no longer visited in the Work home, but as they would pass by, men, women, boys and girls, would crane their necks to catch a glimpse of the crazy girl.

When Granny Tattle heard the report of Etta's supposed mental derangement she said, "No more than I expected, for the girl always did act queer and was none too bright. But how could she be with all that she has had to stand? I always said she would land in the crazy house, but what a pity. You know she never did take to learning very much."

These reports were not unknown to Etta, for rumor reached her that steps were being taken to send her away. But she said nothing. She clung that much closer to the Lord, seeking Him with all the earnestness of her soul. One day as she was seeking Him, He revealed Himself to her to make restitution. About one year before her illness she had made a waist for her Aunt Barbara, who lived about one-half mile from their place. In making the waist she was very careful in the cutting so that there was about one yard or more of goods left which she said nothing about, but, going to the store where she knew her aunt had purchased the goods, she bought enough to make herself a waist also. She had laughed about it to her mother many times and spoke of how she had used her strategy in getting her as nice a waist as her aunt's, and with less money. But this yard of goods came between her and the Lord, and the Spirit spoke to her soul to tell Aunt Barbara about it. Etta spoke of it to her

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

mother, and her mother informed her to let that pass away from her mind, for she had not charged her Aunt Barbara anything for making the waist, and she knew she would have gladly given her the yard of goods, so she need not worry anything about it.

“I know it, Mamma,” said Etta, “and that is what makes me feel so mean about it. If I had spoken to her about it I am sure that she would have given me the yard of goods, and I would now feel clear in it, but as it is I feel that I have stolen it from her and need to tell her about it.”

“Well, you are not going to tell her anything about it now,” replied Mrs. Work. So the conversation ended for that time.

But the Lord still talked to Etta, and three days later as she was again in prayer the Lord came near to her and she felt that victory was surely hers. But just as she reached out to the Lord, that yard of goods came before her again. She arose from her knees immediately, put on her wraps, and started through the room. As she reached the door her mother called to her from the other room and asked her where she was going, to which she replied, “I am going to make things right with Aunt Barbara about that yard of goods, for I feel that when I get that out of the way I can then reach God.” She passed on out the door, through the yard, and into the road, not looking back or listening to the call of her mother to return.

“Poor child,” said Mrs. Work as she saw that her calls were fruitless and that Etta really meant to go to her aunt’s. “What will we do? I would much rather see her laid under the ground than to have her lose her mind. I wish that I had hid that Bible and never let her start reading it.”

It seemed Etta’s feet became light as feathers as she sped toward the home of her aunt. She was met at the door by her aunt, who saw

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

her coming up the road, and her first greeting was, "What on earth is wrong, Etta, is your mother sick? What brings you here this time of day?" Etta fell sobbing into her Aunt's arms and began to tell the story of the yard of stolen goods. Their tears mingled together as Aunt Barbara assured her again and again that she was welcome to the goods; she wanted nothing for it; she gave it to her gladly, and did not want her ever to think of it again.

"I know you would have given it to me had I said anything to you about it," sobbed Etta, "and that is what makes me feel so mean. I feel just like I am a thief, a real criminal."

Again her Aunt assured her that she was welcome to the goods and never to think about it again, adding, "I cannot understand, Etta, why you would let such a trifling thing as that trouble you."

Here Etta looked into her Aunt's face and said, "Aunt Barbara, I mean to get right with God no matter what the cost may be. I am not right and I know that I shall soon have to go out to meet Him, and I am not ready. I could not let a yard of goods stand between God and me."

This brought the tears to her Aunt's eyes again, and burying her face in her apron, she sobbed, "O Etta, pray for me, too, for I am not right either."

"Pray for you, Aunt Barbara," exclaimed Etta, in a surprised tone, "Why I am not fit to pray for myself." And with these words she turned and hurried toward home, for she knew her mother would be very anxious for her to return.

How light she felt, but yet she did not have the real knowledge she desired—that of knowing that she had passed from death unto life. When about half way home she paused beside the road, and looking up, said, "Now Lord, I have done that also; what more can

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

I do? You know. Lord, if there is anything else, if you will just reveal it to me, I will do it.” She had no more than uttered these words until her faith reached out and touched God. The glory of God flooded her soul, and she did not try to restrain the praises of God which fell from her lips. It seemed she almost flew the remainder of the way home, so eager was she to get there and tell the glad news that she had passed from death unto life.

As her Aunt shall now pass from my story, I shall take time and space just now to say that this little act of restitution on the part of Etta was the means of sending the arrow of conviction to this Aunt’s soul, and although she had belonged to a denominational church for many years, she found herself void of the saving grace of God and began to seek Him with all her heart. It was not long until she found Him, for He has promised to be found when anyone seeks Him with the whole heart. She became a devoted saint, one whose life was full of good deeds. As Dorcas of old, many poor around her praised her for the coats and dresses which came their way by her ministering hand.

Chapter V

Etta Meets Persecution

The news of Etta's new-found joy was not received as she thought it would be, for no one knew the real joy of her soul but herself. Instead of rejoicing with her, the news was received with resentment, followed by persecution.

Etta had been so concerned about the need of her soul that she had not noted the change in her body. Those tired, languid feelings had gone, and she now could climb the stairs without any shortness of breath. But as she knew nothing about the healing power of God and knew also that there was no power on earth that could reach her case, she took for granted that her time upon earth was of short duration. So she began to call upon the Lord with all the earnestness of her soul that she might be spared long enough to tell the people of Swampville and Salem what the Lord had done for her.

She was soon able to walk to town and return without feeling any fatigue, and she also knew that she was feeling stronger than she had felt for many weeks. At last the truth dawned upon her that God had not only saved her soul but He had given her a new body as well.

This she included in her testimony, and it brought forth many remonstrances and persecutions. Etta's former companions turned from her and her company was not desired among any of the people

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

of Swampville or Salem. Her father also turned against her, and her life in the home was anything but pleasant. This drove her to her knees many times that she might have grace, rather than give up her new-found joy, to die at her post of duty. She soon became a power in prayer, so much so that her father forbade her praying in the home, as he said he could not live there if she did not stop her constant praying. For her to stop praying meant as much as for her father to cease taking his food daily. So she still prayed often, calling the smaller children and her mother for prayer after her father had gone to the field.

Mrs. Work was soon convinced that her daughter was not losing her mind, but had really become acquainted with God, and one morning she, too, yielded herself to God. This meant more praying on the part of Etta, for she saw the need of her mother as well as of herself. One morning her father came to the house unexpectedly and found her leading the rest of the family in worship. Etta was so earnestly calling upon her heavenly Father that she did not notice her father come into the room. So before she was aware of his presence she felt the weight of his heavy boot against her, and she was landed against the woodbox all in a heap. Mrs. Work screamed, but after a few moments Etta arose with a body bruised in many places, but her soul rejoicing in the Lord.

How her heart ached! But to whom could she go, but to the One who had not only saved her soul, but had given her a new body also? And it was to Him that she went, finding the consolation that she desired, for He promised that He would be a present help in time of trouble. How she poured out her heart for grace to stand! Not knowing that God had promised the Holy Ghost to His children, she just kept calling upon the Lord for strength. One day while in prayer she looked up toward heaven and there appeared before her a vision

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

of the Christ with his nail-pierced hands and feet, and on his face the smile of assurance that all would be well for her. It seemed she felt a well of grace spring up in her soul, and she arose shouting the praises of God. She felt new strength and spiritual vigor such as David expressed when he said he could run through a troop and leap over a wall.

But Etta could find no one who believed God's Word as she did—no one to whom she could go for encouragement. As she read God's Word she found that none of the ministers with whom she was acquainted came up to the Bible requirements. None of them gave her the food for which her soul was longing. So all the instruction that she received was through the reading of her Bible and calling upon the Lord.

Spring passed into summer, summer into autumn, and the news came to Swampville that a preacher who said he could cure folks without medicine was holding a meeting in a schoolhouse some few miles from there. It was also narrated among the people of the community that he preached that people should not join church and that one had to live free from sin or would be eternally damned. Etta desired to go to hear him, but knew it would do no good to make her desire known, for her father thought she had too much religion already to take her to a place like that. Again Etta sought the Lord. Her married brother lived about two miles from this schoolhouse, and one Saturday afternoon Etta asked permission of her mother to go to spend the night at his place. At first Mrs. Work felt she should not go, as she would have to walk three miles and also cross a slough which at times it was almost impossible to cross, especially in a rainy season. There had been heavy rains for several days and she felt it would be almost impossible for her to get there. But Etta insisted, promising her mother if she could not make it across the

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

slough that she would return. At last Mrs. Work said, “Well, Etta, you may go if you will promise me not to ask Bud to take you over to the schoolhouse to that meeting.” Etta promised that she would say nothing to him about it: and so made preparation to go spend the night at her brother’s.

As Etta passed along the country road, beholding the beauties of nature as autumn had painted the different colors among the foliage in the woods, she rejoiced in her soul and sang snatches of songs. Before she realized it she came to the slough and found the water quite high. What must she do? She had promised her mother if she could not get across she would return, and she knew she could not cross that slough. As she stood there wondering what to do she recalled reading just that morning about how the Israelites had crossed the River Jordan and it was out of its banks. She remembered that the priests who bore the ark stepped into the water and it then receded and they passed over dry shod. So she looked up to heaven and said, “Father in heaven, I thank thee that thou hast made it possible for me to get thus far, and I mean to trust thee to take me the rest of the way.” Removing her shoes and stockings, she stepped into the slough. She waded into the water for some distance, stepping on chunks and fallen trees, until she had reached the deepest part of the slough. She knew she could not get across that; so again she looked up to heaven and asked God to help her. She stood there on a log for some time when, looking across the slough, she saw a man approaching on horseback. As he came nearer she recognized him as one of her brother’s neighbors. He rode up to her immediately and she began to tell him her predicament. How he laughed at her as he saw her standing there barefoot. But Etta did not care for that. She joined her laughter with his, for she knew she must be a very interesting spectacle. He rode up to the log on which she stood and invited her to get behind him on the horse and he

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

would take her across. This she gladly did, and was soon across the deep water on dry ground again. Thanking the kind neighbor for his kindly deed, she then turned her face heavenward and thanked the Lord that he had helped her across. When the neighbor had again crossed the slough, Etta washed her feet in a pool of water at the edge of the slough, dried them on the skirt of her petticoat, replaced her stockings and shoes, and went on toward her brother's house a very happy girl.

Her sister-in-law saw her coming and met her at the gate. As she opened the gate for Etta to pass through she threw her arms about Etta's neck and exclaimed, "Oh, I am so glad that you came. I have been wishing that you would come all week. We were just getting ready to go to church over at the schoolhouse, and you can go with us." This was just what Etta had desired, and as she did not have to ask Bud to take her, she consented to go with them.

They went. It would be impossible to describe that meeting, for as the minister and his wife began to sing, "I Am a Child of God," Etta could do nothing but stare open mouthed. There was something that welled up in her soul which brought tears to her eyes and an occasional "Praise the Lord" from her lips. Then when these two sang, "I'm Glad I Counted the Cost," it was almost more than poor Etta's soul could stand, for she realized how she had counted the cost, and how she had paid the full price, and the prize which she had obtained was not only the salvation of her soul, but the healing of her body as well.

At last the minister arose to address that crowd of people. Etta sat there wondering if she were really listening to the voice of man or to the voice of God. The words spoken went straight to her heart, and it was Bible from beginning to end. It was just as her heart had been speaking to her ever since her conversion.

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

After the service closed for the evening she had a long conversation with the minister and his wife and found them to be well acquainted with the Lord and with his works. Their experience was like hers, even to knowing that the Lord heals. At last she had found a people who believed as she did.

Chapter VI

The Wittmans Find the Joy of the Lord

Many years passed. Great was the change in both Swampville and Salem. Both towns could boast of two church buildings gracing the city, with steeples standing out against the sky. The people of each place were now well versed in the orthodoxy of each religious belief.

Salem no longer boasted of her baseball nine, for the pitcher joined a league team in Chicago, thus breaking up the team. Swampville had also discarded the old dance hall. With the coming of the new railroad, nice dwellings began to be built to grace unseemly sites. Low, swampy places in and around the little city were drained, and what was once a wet marsh became valuable land, yielding to the labor of the farmer.

Again there was quite an excitement in the little town of Salem. It was not a covered wagon this time, for that day was almost passed for the country. This time a minister of the gospel had made his appearance in the town, together with a little band of workers, and his messages were stirring the people. No such preaching had ever reached the little town before. The local minister had preached there once each month, and the evangelist had visited them once each

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

year, while the presiding elder had paid them his quarterly visit, but all of them had never stirred the people as did this man.

One could not be attracted to the personality of Evangelist Straight, for although a large man, he was very hard to approach and was a man of very few words until he mounted the pulpit, when he did not lack for words. His messages were so like the Book that those who heard felt they were listening to the word from the Book, instead of from the lips of man. Mrs. Straight was a very frail woman, and at first sight one would conclude that she had not many days upon this earth, for she was the picture of a consumptive. The meeting had been in progress one week, when one evening Evangelist Straight called for a praise meeting. A number of those in attendance that evening arose and thanked the Lord for what He had done for them. One sister gave her testimony as having a hard time to serve the Lord. She said she had been saved for thirty years, but in all that time she had surely had a hard time serving the Lord. Many times she had been down in her experience, and things that she desired to do she failed to do, and many times the things that she really did not want to do she did, so that with it all she surely had had a hard time to get as far as she was; but she determined to go on, and desired that all would pray for her that she would not fail. As she sat down, Evangelist Straight gave her a pointed question, "Sister, just what do you want us to pray for you for? Do you want us to pray that you may still continue in having a hard time in serving the Lord, or do you want us to ask the Lord to give you a real experience that will enable you to find joy in serving the Lord?"

This caused the poor sister some embarrassment and raised a big laugh in the audience. No sooner had this subsided than Mrs. Straight arose and began to tell what the Lord had done for her. She thanked God that he had pardoned her sins, and then later filled her

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

with the Holy Spirit, which sanctified her nature so that she loved everybody, even to her enemies; and although many times she had severe trials and temptations she could say that Jesus kept her through it all and she found His service sweet to her soul. She further stated that God had not only saved her soul but that He had healed her body as well; that she had recently been near death's door with tuberculosis, but that God had raised her up, healing her body and giving her new life: and that at that present time she was stronger than she had been for many months.

People stared open-mouthed, for nothing like this had ever been heard within the precinct of Salem. Various were the remarks made after the meeting closed for the evening. As the minister and his wife were staying in the home of Dr. Molt, many were the questions to which he was subjected the following day.

But, regardless of the testimony, everybody within reach of the little city attended the meeting. Dr. Molt and his wife attended. The store-keeper and saloonkeeper attended. Deacon Smith and Granny Tattle were there. Mrs. Wells, wife of the former baseball catcher, and a daughter of Mr. May's, spent her evenings listening to the man of God preach that man must live without sin, must be born again, must be redeemed. For many years she had been a member of one of the churches in the city, acting as superintendent of the Sunday school, teacher of a Sunday school class, class leader, organist, and many times song leader. But one evening after Evangelist Straight had given a sermon on "Redemption" she saw herself lost and away from God. Knowing that the man of God had given conclusive evidence, she knelt at an altar of prayer and surrendered herself to God. This caused quite a stir in the little city. Those of the particular faith to which she had formerly belonged

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

were stirred as they saw one of the main props go from under their foundation.

The following night Evangelist Straight preached on “The Sinless Life.” Those present saw it meant a life of righteousness, or else one was not right with God. Some of the professors of religion who held to a “sin-you-must” religion were angered almost beyond the mark of control. When the invitation was given for those who desired to seek the Lord to kneel for prayer a number of those professing religion left the building. Some men stood around the door, among them one big, burly fellow who said when the preacher came out he meant to knock him down or make him take back the statement that if you committed sin you were on your road to hell. He said he knew that he was a Christian, but that he committed sin and knew it, that everybody committed sin, and that preacher was as big a sinner as ever came to that town. While they were talking another man came up to the door. He had not been there for services, but came that he might get his mother who attended the services that evening. As he came to the door he heard this man say, “He is a dirty liar, that is what he is.”

“Who is a liar?” inquired this young man, as he joined the crowd.

“Why, you are,” retorted the big fellow, “if you side in with that preacher.”

No sooner had he made this remark than out came this young man’s fist and down came the other fellow, with the young man landing on him as he struck the ground. Over and over they rolled, and as Evangelist Straight walked from the building that evening he reached the doorstep just in time to hear someone cry out, “Enough, enough.” Turning his head, he saw two men having a fist and skull fight. He did not tarry to learn the particulars, but walked on to his room.

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

At this time there lived in the little town of Salem a man by the name of Wittman. He had charge of a sawmill near the town and was noted for his cursing, drinking, gambling, and disregard for religion. His wife had belonged to a church ever since their marriage, and was a charter member of one of the churches in Salem. His son and daughter-in-law, who lived in the home with them, were church members also. Neither of them belonged to the same church. So great had been the contention in the home at times regarding the particular faith of each that Mr. Wittman had often remarked to them. "If religion is like that, I would rather stay where I am."

Mrs. Wittman, with her son and daughter-in-law, attended the meeting held by Evangelist Straight. Each became very much interested. One evening Mrs. Wittman invited her husband to go with them. After much persuasion he consented to do so, stating that he would only stay long enough to hear the sermon, as he had some other things which needed to be done.

He sat eyeing Evangelist Straight, remarking to his wife occasionally that he felt like a fool sitting there and he was sure that man could not tell him anything. Many were the unkind remarks made by him, until Evangelist Straight arose to speak. Such a message! He felt that someone had been telling the preacher about him, for the preacher bared his life better than he could have told it. Then came the exhortation to seek Him who could show the way out. How miserable Wittman felt, and how much he desired to go forward. Something seemed to be pushing him, while it seemed a voice spoke almost audibly in his soul, "You are lost and you know it." Yes, he knew that he was lost, and he knew also that he had seen the way to safety that night. How much he desired to find the way! But he looked about him and there he saw his former associates—those with whom he had drunk and gambled. He felt that he could

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

not afford to let them see him so weak-kneed, so he sat still in his seat. But he could not breathe freely. Something seemed to be closing in on him. To get relief, he left the church-house, thinking he would be all right when he reached home.

Mrs. Wittman was also made to see her need that evening, and went forward for prayer, but did not get satisfied in her soul. Upon returning home she informed her husband that she had laid aside her religious profession and meant to seek the Lord until she knew she was right. This only made matters worse for him, and he was unable to take any rest that night. All through the hours of the night he rolled and tossed on his bed, unable to sleep. The next day he told his wife that he was not well, and did not feel like working. Excusing himself to his family, he went upstairs. Mrs. Wittman followed him some time later climbing the stairs softly so that if he should be sleeping she would not awaken him. But upon entering the room unnoticed, she found him lying face downward on the bed, weeping bitterly. She stole silently away from the room as she had come, and left him alone. He knew nothing of her visit. That evening she again asked him to go with her to meeting, but he replied that he did not feel able to do so; to which she replied, "If you do not feel able to go with me I do not feel that I should leave you alone."

The evening was spent in almost complete silence, except an occasional remark. As they were preparing to retire for the night, Mrs. Wittman knelt down beside her bed and began to ask the Lord to make her just what He desired her to be, just what she really should be to feel satisfied. Many times she had knelt beside her bed before and while her husband never objected to her doing so, he paid very little attention to her more than to ridicule her at times when in an ugly mood. But this night she had only spoken a few words in prayer when she felt his arms thrown around her, and as he laid his

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

head on her shoulder, he said, “My God, Molly, pray for me, for I believe that I will die.” He then laid his head on his arms on the side of the bed and began sobbing and calling on the Lord for help, confessing his sins to God. Mrs. Wittman also began calling on God to save them. And God, who is all love and mercy, heard their cry and sent the light of salvation into their souls saving them both that night.

They arose laughing, crying, and shouting, just as the door opened to admit their son and daughter-in-law, who rushed in telling them they, too, had found the Lord.

We shall here have to draw the curtain, for words cannot be found to express the joy that was in the Wittman home that night.

Chapter VII

Dr. Molt Convinced

The news of the conversion of the Wittman family spread like wild fire through the little town of Swampville. The following evening the house was filled to its capacity so eager were the people who were acquainted with Mr. Wittman to see if there had really been a change in him. They did not have long to wait, for he joined in the singing. When opportunity offered, he arose and, before the men with whom he had associated heretofore, he boldly stated that God had saved him. He told how miserable he had been for the past two days. Then, turning to those men, he said to them, "Friends, I want to tell you now, I love every one of you. But you will not find me in your old haunts any more. I am done with that kind of life. I am not turning against you, but against the kind of life that you are living, and the kind that I have lived with you. I thought I appreciated you as friends and that I loved you, but somehow tonight I just cannot express my feelings, for it seems to me if I could just lay down my life here before you so that you might see and understand the wonderful change that has come into my soul, I would gladly do it."

For some time Mr. Wittman stood there exhorting his old associates to turn from their evil way. Then, turning to Evangelist Straight, he grasped his hand and, throwing one arm about his

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

shoulder he said, “God bless you, Brother Straight, only God knows how I love you, for you showed me my condition and pointed out to me the way to God and to peace.”

This had its effect on the congregation. That evening a number came forward, among them the son of Granny Tattle. He wept and pleaded with the Lord for forgiveness, but it seemed that he could get nowhere. Evangelist Straight was kneeling beside him when he cried out, “O Lord, take it away from me; don’t let it bother me.” At this Evangelist Straight began to interrogate him, to find that whenever he called upon God there was something that came before him. “I cannot get to God until I get that out of the way,” said he, as he arose from the altar.

The following day he told his wife that he meant to take a little trip into the country; so he started out toward the home of Mr. Laird, who was known to all the country round as Squire Laird. He had not reached the country road which led from the little village to the Laird home when he met Mr. Laird coming to town with a basket of eggs. The usual greetings were exchanged between the men, and then Mr. Laird was informed that the young Mr. Tattle had started to his place.

“Well, Bud, I am sorry that you did not start sooner, for it would have been just as well for me to come to town tomorrow as today,” said Mr. Laird, as he shifted his basket of eggs to the other arm.

“But it is just as well that I meet you here,” replied Bud Tattle, as he fell in line with Mr. Laird and started back toward town. “There is something that I want to talk to you about,” said Bud, “and I hardly know where to commence.”

“The best thing that I can say to that is to commence at the beginning and then you are sure to get it all right,” laughingly replied Mr. Laird.

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

They both paused again, and as Mr. Laird set his basket of eggs down by the roadside he turned to Bud, saying, "Now, old boy, just be free with me. You know you have not worked for me for several summers without finding me ready to help whenever you needed it. Now, what is it? Are you out of a job and need work? You know if you are that you can always find work with me and I shall need a hand soon on the farm. If you need work now I shall be more than glad to know that I can depend on you for the summer."

"That is not it," replied Bud, "but you know that I have been attending that meeting in Swampville."

"Yes, I heard about that meeting," said Mr. Laird. "I spoke to Mrs. Laird that we ought to come in to hear that man preach, but it seems that first one thing and then another hinders until we have not been able to get in yet. How long will it continue, do you know?"

"No, I do not know," replied Bud. "But I want to ask you about something. Did you ever find out what became of that big Plymouth Rock rooster that you bought from Mr. Watson that disappeared while I was working for you two summers ago?"

"No, I never found out what became of him. I have always had my suspicions that he went back to Watsons, but they said not. I went over there just purposely to see if he was there, but you know they have so many Plymouth Rock roosters that I could not have told him from any of the rest of them. I surely was sorry to lose him, for you know I paid five dollars for that bird."

"Yes, I know that you paid five dollars for it, and I want to tell you now what became of it," said Bud. "I stole that rooster, and some of the boys went with me and we had a chicken roast. I have been attending that meeting and went to the altar, but I could not get to God until I told you about stealing that rooster. Every time that I

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

get almost to the place where I can reach God that rooster seems to perch before me. I want to pay you for it now so that I can get it out of the way. Here is five dollars.” And Bud held out his hand in which was a five-dollar bill. “Take it,” said he, “for I want to get this off my mind. And I want you to forgive me for causing you all this trouble, and to suspect your neighbor. Take the money, for I want to get to God.”

Mr. Laird stood as one transfixed staring at Bud while he made his confession. Tears began to roll over Bud’s cheeks as Mr. Laird gazed at him. For some time they stood thus. Then Mr. Laird laid his hand on Bud’s shoulder in a friendly way, and said, “Bud, my boy, I am glad to see you make such a start, and could not take your money at this time. You now have a wife and little babe to support. Keep your money. I could not take it from you. You may be assured that everything is forgiven. Go now and get right with the Lord.”

“Thank you,” replied Bud, as the two turned and walked together to town.

That night among those present at the meeting were Mr. and Mrs. Laird. Bud went forward, and regardless of those present, called upon the Lord for mercy. As everything had been cleared out of the way on his part, it was not long until he prayed through to victory. Tears streamed down the face of Mr. Laird as Bud arose praising God.

No doubt my readers are wondering how Dr. Molt with his infidel belief was receiving all this. We could not expect one who had boasted of his infidelity for so long to be won to the truth of God’s Word in so short a time, but God was talking to his heart. In fact, since the healing of Etta Work he had not been heard to say so much against the existence of God and the reality of the Christian religion.

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

Evangelist Straight and his wife, staying in the Molt home, gave the doctor a chance to study real Christian life. One evening as the evangelist and his wife retired he remarked to his wife that he felt a very heavy burden for the Doctor and that he would like for her to be agreed in prayer with him that God would enable him to wipe out every bit of infidelity from the doctor's mind while there. He said further, that if he could just leave there knowing that Dr. Molt was fully convinced that there is a God, he would be satisfied, for he could then leave him knowing God would work upon his heart.

The following day, as they were seated in conversation, a man came running to the Doctor asking him to go visit a woman in the town who had been afflicted for many months with heart trouble. Dr. Molt had visited her many times and the last visit made he informed them that he could do no more for her and that she had but a few weeks at longest to live. The messenger who came for Dr. Molt seemed to be very excited, informing him that unless something was done immediately she would surely die. As Evangelist Straight and Dr. Molt had just been conversing on the subject of divine healing, the Doctor now turned to him saying, "Evangelist, if God is as you say He is, I think this is a good time for you to try Him out, for I have done all for that woman that I can do, and it will take someone with more power than I have to do her any good."

"Can you tell me if she is a Christian?" inquired Evangelist Straight.

"If there is such in our town I would say she is," replied Dr. Molt. "I know she is a mighty good woman."

After a moment's reflection, the evangelist said, "I will go with you." So, calling to his wife, the three of them started to visit the afflicted woman, who was a stranger to the Evangelist and his wife.

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

As they walked along, the Doctor laughingly remarked that life was surely full of surprises and changes, stating that he was doing something that day that he had never done before, going to visit a sick patient, taking with him a holiness preacher.

When they arrived at the bedside of the afflicted woman they found her very low. After Dr. Molt had felt her pulse in a professional way he moved his chair away from the bed and said, "If you can do anything for her, now is the time, for her pulse is almost gone." And he looked Evangelist Straight in the eye.

"Dr. Molt." said Evangelist Straight. "I can do nothing for her, but I am serving a God who can." And taking the woman by the hand, he said to her, "Sister, I have come to you in the name of Israel's God, and shall ask Him to help you at this time." So, slipping down on his knees beside the bedside, he began to call upon God to manifest Himself at this time. Not only did he pray for this suffering woman, but he also prayed that God would manifest Himself in a convincing way before Dr. Molt. It seemed the power of heaven settled down around Evangelist Straight as he prayed for this suffering woman. As he laid his hand upon her brow, rebuking the disease and asking for God to manifest Himself, the woman raised up in the bed, and, brushing her hair back from her face, looked at Dr. Molt, saying, "Thank the Lord." The doctor then felt her pulse. Then he reached with the other hand and laid his fingers on the pulse of Evangelist Straight, and said, "Well, I do not understand it, but I must say that something has been done, for her pulse beats as natural as does your."

At this the sister said, "As the Evangelist was praying for me I felt something go through my body like an electric shock, and it seemed that my heart just flopped over and then began to beat as

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

natural as could be. I am glad you came, Sir. I know God can do anything, and I am sure that He has done something for me this day.”

“Will you go to meeting this evening and testify to what has been done for you?” inquired Evangelist Straight.

“I will,” said she. At which Evangelist Straight turned to Dr. Molt and said, “Will you be there to confirm this testimony?”

“I will not promise you that, for I tell you I do not understand what has taken place,” replied Dr. Molt, “but one thing I can say, and that is a wonderful change has taken place some way, and I know that I did not do it.”

The three then left to return to the doctor’s home, but the trip was made in almost abject silence. There was no joking left in Dr. Molt. He had seen a manifestation of God’s power, and the last infidelic prop had been taken from under him. That evening, after all had retired, the evangelist could not sleep. He kept calling on the Lord to visit Dr. Molt, knowing that he had been thoroughly convinced that day of the existence of God. He did not know that others were awake, but in the early hours of the morning he heard Dr. Molt speak to his wife, “Wife, I wish that you would stay awake with me, for I cannot sleep. It seems that I feel so afraid. I do not know what is the matter with me.”

“Well, what do you want me to do?” inquired Mrs. Molt.

“Just stay awake with me,” was the reply, “for I can’t sleep.”

The Evangelist awakened his wife, and they spent the remainder of the night in prayer. This had its effect, for the Doctor could not rest, neither could he eat. As he began to count up the cost, he one day said to Evangelist Straight, as he shook his head, “Don’t you see what it would cost me to follow your teaching? I would have

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

to quit my practice, and how would I make a living for myself and wife? Perhaps some time later I shall make a turn in my manner of living, but I cannot afford it now.”

All persuasion was of no avail, and the last week of the meeting Dr. Molt had some excuse to absent himself from services. So the meeting closed with the doctor unsaved, but thoroughly convinced of the existence of a God who hears and answers the prayers of his children.

Chapter VIII

The Truth Locked Out

While some of the people of Salem were rejoicing in a new-found Savior, others were very indignant as to the turn of affairs. The wife of the sawmill owner had been a member of one of the churches of the village, having united with a church of that particular faith when just a young girl. She had always contributed heavily to all of the benevolent phases of that church. She was president of the Missionary Society, and an active worker in Sunday school. Her daughter-in-law was also a member of the church just across the street, and just as devoted to her faith as was her mother-in-law to hers, although they could not worship together. At the close of Evangelist Straight's meeting both presented their names to the congregations to which they had formerly belonged, asking that they no longer consider them as members, and stating that they desired to have their names erased from the church ledger, and that it should be done so by request. The loss of these two was a heavy blow to the congregations. Loud and long were the protestations against them. The young Mrs. Wells also declared she had never been redeemed, and began to seek the Lord. This, too, was a terrible blow as she was also a leader in Sunday school and church work.

Nothing could be done but to send for the pastor who visited this town once each month. Although it was not his usual

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

appointment the next Sunday the “Rev.” Mr. Crook made his appearance. Before he took his place in the pulpit he held a lengthy conversation with Deacon Smith, a member of the church across the street and also with the storekeeper who was a staunch supporter of the faith which he represented. As these two were bitter against Evangelist Straight because of the straight gospel which he preached and which had uncovered their lives, they were not slow in telling Mr. Crook many things that were not true.

At the opening of the service, after song and prayer. Mr. Crook arose, and after surveying the crowd present, among whom were the sawmill owner, his wife, his son and his wife, and the young Mrs. Wells, he began: “Brethren and sisters, I am here to defend the faith of this church, and therefore have something to say to you regarding some folks who have been using this building. We must bear in mind this building is not our own, for it has been dedicated to the Lord; and therefore we shall be held responsible for the way that we cared for it. God will deal with us in the same manner as we deal with Him. We shall all have to give account to God for our stewardship. If we do not protect that which belongs to God and which he has placed in our hands we cannot expect anything other than to receive judgment at the hands of God. Brethren, we cannot afford to let anything enter the house of God that would desecrate it or defile it. If one should present himself whom we know to be a liar, a thief, or an unclean person, and ask for permission to use the house of God, I am sure that all of you would be up in arms against him and say, ‘Do not let him in.’ ”

“So I shall have to tell you this morning that such ones have been here, only in disguise. The folks that have been using this building can easily be classed among these kind of folks, for the Word of God says they are thieves.”

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

Then, opening his Bible, he read from John 10:10: "The thief cometh not but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I am come that they might have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." Casting his glance toward the sawmill owner and his wife and then at the young Mrs. Wells, who was seated near them, he continued, "We can easily see these people can be classed as thieves, for they come stealing, robbing, and destroying. They are liars also, for the statement that was made from this pulpit that man could become as good as God and even better than Jesus Christ, is a lie of the devil, and I feel that this pulpit has been desecrated and these walls contaminated by such remarks being made here. It is very discourteous on the part of any visitor to enter into one's house and begin to demean the occupants of that home. The one who does such should expect nothing else than to be kicked out, and the door locked against him. As we know that this church has been entered by robbers and thieves, who demeaned the faith of our fathers, and then stole the flock and scattered the sheep, I say, lock your doors against the thief and kick the one out the door who dares to insult the faith of our fathers which has been planted in your hearts."

"Amen," said Deacon Smith, as he rose to his feet; "I, too, shall see that the thief shall not enter inside the door across the street."

"God bless you, brother," replied Mr. Crook. "I thank God there are some who cannot be scattered and tossed about by every wind of doctrine, but are able to try the spirits. I shall now bring you a message from a text found in 1 John 2:19: 'They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not of us.' "

Deacon Smith and Mr. Crook had never been friendly toward each other because of different religious beliefs, but at the close of

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

this message Deacon Smith grasped Mr. Crook's hand and praised him for his eloquence and ability to handle the present situation. He said those ministers, putting themselves up to be as good as God, should be driven from the country, and if they ever came back if he could only get someone to help him that is what they would get, for they would find they could not get a lighting place in Salem.

The following year, when Evangelist Straight returned to hold another meeting, both church buildings remained locked, and the keys safely guarded while the truth was expounded from the schoolhouse, where many more souls found the Lord. Some few years later a tornado swept through the little village of Salem, and both church buildings went down in kindling wood, never to be rebuilt.

Deacon Smith came to Salem a stranger to everyone. As he was seemingly of a very pious nature, often mentioning that he had been a Christian since his early boyhood, and as soon as he came to the little town had begun to be actively engaged in religious work, no one doubted his integrity. He was always ready to help anyone in need, and went so far as to pay for a number of the young girls' music lessons that they might have someone to play the piano in the churches. In this way he became a favorite among the young folks. There was not the least bit of suspicion on the part of any concerning him until one day a letter came to the little town of Salem for a Mr. T. S. Armstrong. This letter laid in the office for several days, and then was advertised in the Local News. Deacon Smith called for it. His actions when he received it from the postmaster aroused his curiosity, and as he had noted the postmark on the letter was from a town in northern Indiana, he wrote the postmaster at that place and found that Deacon Smith was none other than Mr. T. S. Armstrong himself and was a fugitive from justice, hiding in that place under

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

an assumed name. It was not long until he had to surrender to the hands of the law to answer for a dastardly crime which he had committed, and that against a young girl who was still in her teens. He was never heard from any more after leaving that place in the care of an officer of the law.

Chapter IX

Etta Finds Her Place

Etta Work sat in her room reading. She felt burdened for the Lord's work. For many years she had been very uncertain as to just what the Lord would have her to do. She had been visiting among her neighbors and praying for the sick. In so doing, many had heard the gospel message. She had tried to satisfy herself with this kind of work, but that would not stop the restlessness of her soul. In her distress she visited Sister Wittman, the wife of the converted sawmill owner, and to her she unburdened her heart. Mrs. Wittman laid her arm about Etta's shoulder and said, "My dear girl, I have felt for a long time that God wants you to preach His gospel."

"Me, preach the gospel?" exclaimed Etta. "Why, Sister Wittman, what do you mean? You know there are too many men to preach the gospel for the Lord to lay His hand on an ugly, frail girl like me."

"True, there are many men," replied Mrs. Wittman, "but God does not deal with the many, nor with the few. It takes a willing and consecrated heart that pleases God. You remember that Jesse had many sons, but when God made a choice among them the youngest, weakest, and most unlikely to human eyes was chosen. Man would not think that a common shepherd would make a good king, but

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

God looked on his heart and we know what God saw there for we hear David saying later, ‘As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee. O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?’ So, you see. God made a choice that no doubt surprised Jesse and perhaps made doubts arise in his heart, but we see that God knew what He was doing. Etta, it is the willing heart that God makes choice of, and the soul that longs for God and wants to do His will. You surely owe something to God for what He has done for you. Don’t you think so?”

Etta laid her head on her arm and broke into tears. For some time she sobbed, unable to speak, and when she had controlled herself sufficiently to do so she said, “O Sister Wittman, I felt that if I could just unburden my heart to you that you would help me, but instead you have only made me feel more miserable.”

“I am sorry, Sister Etta,” said Mrs. Wittman, and her voice trembled as she spoke; “for what I have said to you I only meant for your encouragement. I want you to see that if God lays His hand on you, that you can feel safe to go in His service, for He will never leave you nor forsake you. Have you a willing heart, Etta?”

“Indeed I have a willing heart,” replied Etta. “God has done too much for me to withhold one thing from Him. I feel that the life which He has given me belongs to Him. But Sister Wittman, how can a little, frail, ugly girl such as I preach the gospel?”

“I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me,” replied Mrs. Wittman, as she gave Etta an affectionate pat on the shoulder.

The conversation then drifted to other things, and Etta took her departure, but not with a lightened heart. Each step she took seemed

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

only to deepen the burden which she had been carrying for several days. The next morning as she sat in her room reading, this burden came heavier than ever. She could not forget Mrs. Wittman's words. Laying the paper aside which she held in her hand, she slipped to her knees before the chair in which she was sitting, and cried out, "Lord, make me to know what you want me to do. As I open your Word, reveal yourself to me, and help me to know your will concerning me."

She then reached for her Bible, which lay on a stand near her, and, opening it, her eyes fell on the Scripture, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Laying her head on her arm she groaned aloud, but she closed the book and said again, "Speak to me, Lord, as I open the Book." Upon opening it again her eyes were riveted on the Scripture, "Yea, woe is me if I preach not the gospel." She closed the book hastily and then lay her head on her arm and burst into tears. Again she cried out, "Lord, reveal yourself to me. Really and truly speak through your Word." Opening the book again her eyes fell on the same Scripture, "Yea, woe is me if I preach not the gospel." For some time Etta knelt there, sobbing as though her heart were broken. But at last she began to look back over her life. It seemed a vision of herself came before her as a little consumptive when she turned to God in her despair, and then how God had healed her and given her new life. This brought forth a burst of praise from her soul. She consecrated herself anew unto the Lord, giving Him the life which He had given her. She said, "Lord, if you desire me to carry the gospel message, just open the way, and as Isaiah of old, I say, 'Here am I, Lord, send me.' "

She told no one what had been her decision, but waited for the Lord to open a way for her. This came in an unexpected manner.

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

The little town of Sandville, nestling at the foot of the Missouri hills, had also been stirred by the truth. Many had found the Lord in saving, sanctifying, and healing power, among them a Mr. Dale, who was the superintendent of one of the Sunday schools in that city, and considered the best one in all the country. Through his faithful labors the Sunday school had grown from few in number into hundreds, and he had been visited by superintendents from larger cities that they might learn his methods. Although a Sunday school superintendent, he could not refrain from the use of the weed. The word of truth had plowed its way down deep into his soul. He saw himself far below the standards of the Bible; so began to seek the Lord. He gave up all. When he asked that his name be removed from the church ledger of the place where he held membership this aroused the disapproval of the entire congregation, and he was visited by many of the members as well as by the presiding elder. When they saw that nothing could convince him to return to them they then began to heap persecution on his head. He was a blacksmith, and as many of his patrons were also members of the same church wherein he had held membership, he soon saw that they meant to do him damage for they began to take their work elsewhere.

At this time he received a call to come to an adjoining town. He made preparations to do so, but the sudden and unexpected death of his wife prevented his doing so. After the death of his wife persecutions were heaped upon him worse than ever, and many accusations as well. But there was nothing that would turn him away from the faith and confidence which he had found in God. Through his steadfastness many others were won to the truth. Soon there was a small congregation in Sandville, worshipping the Lord in rented halls, old school buildings, or private houses, wherever they could find a place to come together. It was to this place that Etta received a call to come over and help.

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

When she told the family what she meant to do, loud and long were the expostulations of her father. He first tried ridiculing such a thing, but seeing that did no good, he then tried persuasion. But as he saw Etta was really decisive, he then used his stronger method which had many times sent his family on the run tremblingly to do his bidding. But this did no good. When he saw she really had decided to go against his bidding, the morning that she left home he threw her clothes out the door as she left, saying, "You need not expect to come back, for I shall not house any daughter who will bring disgrace on me. You could do nothing worse than to start out to preach. It is just too disgusting for anything. There is nothing more disgraceful to any family than a woman preacher."

No entreaty on the part of Mrs. Work was of any avail. So Etta left to do the bidding of her Lord. As she passed through the gate she paused to look back at her mother, who was standing in the door, and her heart almost failed. But again she saw herself a hopeless consumptive, and she said, "Lord, the life which you gave me I am now giving to you." And dropping down upon her knees by the gate, she asked God to give her back her father. She felt confident that her prayer would be answered, so she went to Sandville with a light heart, where she entered into the work.

Encouraging were her messages of truth to the little congregation in Sandville, and it was not long until there was a nice little church building erected in which she could expound the Word of God. Her labors were effectual. Soon she was receiving more calls than she could fill.

Sandville was astonished also when Mr. Dale declared himself free to do the Lord's bidding, and entered the ministry. He had been a successful Sunday school superintendent and a favorite among many of the young folk of Sandville, and also with numbers of the

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

children, so that when he began to preach the gospel it was not hard for him to get folks to attend his services. In this way a number of young folks were saved.

Chapter X

Mr. Work Relents

Etta's marriage to Mr. Dale seemed to be the last thing that she could do to arouse Mr. Work's indignation to its highest pitch. Loud and long were his expostulations, even to the extent that he did not want her picture seen in the home. Accordingly, when she sent the picture of herself and her husband, taken immediately after their marriage, Mrs. Work said nothing to him about it but secreted it in the bottom of her dresser drawer. All thought him sincere in his remarks concerning his daughter until one day Mrs. Work came upon him unexpectedly and found him looking at this picture which he had found when she sent him to the dresser to get something for himself. She did not know that he had found the picture until a few weeks later, for he said nothing to her about it. But at this time she came into the room unexpectedly and found him gazing intently at it. Seeing that he had been discovered he hastily placed the picture back into the drawer with the remark, "That surely is good of Etta, isn't it? I wonder if she ever thinks of this place anymore?"

Mrs. Work made no reply, but the next letter to her daughter contained news of this incident, which sent Etta to her knees again, pleading with the Lord to melt the heart of her father and open the

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

doors of her former home to both herself and her husband. This came about, but in an unexpected manner.

A few months after the marriage of the Dales they accepted the pastorate of the church in the little town of Swampville. Much as they desired to visit in her old home and also to be friendly with her father, it seemed to be denied them, for Mr. Work seemed to be as obstinate as ever, although many times after he knew that his good wife had been to see their daughter he would inquire as to her welfare. Many times Etta had been very ill, and at these times he would be quite concerned, but not to the extent that he would make any effort to forget the past. He would urge his wife to do all that she could to aid them in such trying times. Everyone knew Mr. Work was a miserable man, yet he would not mention it to anyone. But the last prop was let fall from under him when Etta presented her husband with a son, which she named after the two grandfathers. When the news reached Mr. Work of his namesake, he could stay away no longer, and accordingly he visited his daughter to see the newcomer. He said nothing about the past, and neither did Etta. They all acted as if his visit were a common affair, and really expected. From this time forward Mr. Work's visits in the Dale home were almost a daily affair.

Little Carl was a favorite of his Grandpa Work, because he bore his name and he was also a very lovable child. As the Works lived but a short distance from Swampville, Mr. Work would often ride into town for no other reason than that he might have a romp with little Carl. He would often take the child home with him and keep him for days until his parents would almost demand that he would have to be brought home. He would return him, but always with reluctance. So it was that Carl came to be a boy four years of age with no other knowledge than that he had the finest Grandpa in the world.

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

One day Etta was seated in her home in Swampville, conversing with her father who had come in for his usual visit with them. Carl had spent some time with his mother and Grandpa, but at last, tiring of indoors, he went into the yard, leaving these two alone. Of course the conversation drifted into other channels. One of the Work neighbors had been very ill and her life despaired of when she called for Etta to come pray for her. Etta's healing in that community a number of years before had not been forgotten and accordingly, when all hope of her recovery had been abandoned, she called for Etta. As she had lived in the community for a number of years Etta knew her well and as she came to her home not only did she speak to her about the need of her body, but about the need of her soul, also. Prayer was offered. Not only did God speak pardon to this poor, needy soul, but reached forth his good hand and healed her body as well. This was more than her good husband could stand, and he, too, melted before God and Etta left them rejoicing together. Mr. Work mentioned this to Etta as he sat in her home, remarking that he thought it wonderful that his neighbor's wife was so marvelously healed.

“Yes, I think it wonderful,” replied Etta; “but it is no more wonderful than my own healing. I am rejoicing that God healed Mrs. Green, but I am rejoicing more that He saved her soul, for Papa, the soul is of so much more consequence. I like to visit the sick and point them to Him who is the Great Physician, but I want to see souls saved. I know if one will pay the price for the salvation of one's soul that all these other things will be thrown in by the Lord, for He has promised to supply all our needs.”

Mr. Work sat for a few moments in silence and then said, “Well, Etta, you are doing a good work. I cannot say anything to the contrary. I felt when you first started in this work that you were

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

making a great mistake, but I see differently now. And it seems that I could not associate you and your husband in any other line of work, for it is just fitting to both of you.”

Tears filled Etta’s eyes as her mind ran back over the past, but she controlled herself and talked on with her father. How pleasant was the trend of conversation as their hearts warmed toward each other! The minutes ticked away into hours. As Mr. Work glanced at the clock he saw it was past eleven. He arose hastily, saying he must be going, as his wife had asked him to bring some groceries from the store and was depending on them for their dinner. At this Carl entered the room, and Mr. Work asked that he might take Carl along home with him. To which Etta replied, “Not this morning, Papa, for he is not ready, and you know Mamma is waiting for those groceries for dinner. It would only make you later still if you should take him, so it is best not to do so now. He may go with you the next time you come into town.”

“All right,” replied Mr. Work, “I shall have to come into town again this afternoon, and I shall take him home with me then.”

“May I go, Mother?” inquired Carl.

“Yes, you may go this afternoon,” replied Etta laughingly, and, turning to her father, said, “I was not expecting you to be in town any more today or I would not have made that promise.”

Mr. Work laughed loud as he placed his arm in that of Etta’s and, holding Carl by the hand, walked to the gate where his horse stood tied to the hitching post. For some time they stood there in conversation, and then as Mr. Work mounted his horse he rode away, calling back to Carl as he did so, “Now, be ready, little man, for Grandpa will be in town directly after dinner and will take you

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

out to see Grandma.” At this Carl danced back into the house to tell his sisters of the good news of another visit to Grandpa’s.

Etta watched her father as he rode away, and murmured as he turned the corner and vanished out of her sight, “Dear Papa, how I love him, and how kind and affectionate he has become. So unlike his former self. Nothing could have brought about this wonderful change but the Lord.” She then bowed her head on her arms resting on the gate post, and let her mind again roam over trodden paths. The past came before her with all its dark clouds and also with its many bursts of sunshine. Lifting her heart to God, she said aloud, “I thank thee, Lord, for every trial through which thou hast brought me, and I am willing to suffer for thee that through my sufferings others may be benefited. It has been so hard to bear the injustice of Papa, but I thank thee that thou has melted his heart and the remainder of our lives can be spent together in the fellowship of the Spirit.”

As she said these words a sudden fear seized her heart, but she turned, and entering the house began busying herself with some household duties. Thus a half hour passed. There came a runner very much excited telling Etta that she was wanted at the Work home immediately; that something had happened to her father. She went to her old home immediately to find her father lifeless. When leaving her home that morning he stopped at the store to get the groceries which Mrs. Work had ordered, making the remark as he received them that he was somewhat dizzy, but he mounted his horse and rode on toward home. Leaving the horse in charge of one of his younger sons, he went directly into the house, taking the groceries which he had bought with him piled high on his arm. These he laid on the table in the kitchen and then looking at Mrs. Work, he gave an exclamation of, “Oh,” and staggering backward, he then sank down on the floor. She went to him immediately and raised his head

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

in her arms. There was just one gasp for breath and Mr. Work passed into eternity.

How sad were the days that followed! But as Etta gazed for the last time on the lifeless form of her father lying in the casket, while the tears streamed down her face like rain, she again let her mind roam over the past. With no regrets she saw him laid beneath the sod, and in her heart praised God for sustaining grace through the dark days that had come her way, and for the last visit with her father in which he so freely expressed himself as to the life which she had lived.

Chapter XI

Dr. Molt Finds Eternal Peace

Etta and her husband were indeed busy in the work of caring for the congregation at Swampville and also answering calls to come elsewhere to assist in revival meetings. Through their labors a number of congregations sprang up immediately and also in the surrounding neighborhood. Mr. Dale was powerful in the delivery of the Word; and cold, formal religionists were made to see their need of the saving grace of God. Many souls turned from a mere religious profession, denouncing division. Returning to Zion they gathered their harps from the willows, singing the good, old songs with the Spirit and the understanding, rejoicing in the fellowship of the saints of God and the unity of the Spirit which they endeavored to keep in the bonds of peace. The prayer of the Lord Jesus in John 17:21 was exemplified before all, for these people were one. The Holy Spirit was the director, and from among them chose a number of ministers who went in all directions preaching the good Word of God, gathering souls into the kingdom of God. Many hungry souls saw they had been living beneath their privileges, and sought the Lord until he filled them with his Holy Spirit; while others saw the evils of sectarian division and came together in unity. Thus five years passed for these two in their labors together in Swampville. In the autumn of the fifth year they received a call to a city in the State

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

of Indiana to assist in a series of revival meetings, which call they accepted, leaving the care of the congregation at Swampville to the local ministry.

The evening sun was slowly dropping over the western horizon, marking the close of another day. The autumn leaves were rustling in the evening breeze, some turning their scarlet colors toward the setting sun, denoting that Jack Frost was on his way from the Northland. A loitering urchin having been detained at school because of having failed to know his lesson, passed down the street of Pleasant Valley on his way home after the teacher had drilled him to her heart's satisfaction. He would pause to notice the beauties of the setting sun and of the autumn leaves.

But these scenes of beauty did not meet the attraction of the gaze of Dr. Molt as he lay on his bed of pain in that little city, although he lay with his face toward the open window where he could easily have seen the tinted skies and the beautiful foliage on the trees which surrounded his house. He was a sufferer from rheumatism. Being unable to attend to his practice in Salem, he bought a drug store in Pleasant Valley and moved to that place. He made no professional calls thinking that by so doing he would become better and perhaps fully recover from this affliction. But such was not the case, for he gradually grew worse. He then went to Hot Springs, Ark., where he drank and also bathed in the mineral waters of the springs. It seemed to relieve him for a short time, when his condition became alarming. He then consulted the best physicians of the State and elsewhere but all to no avail, for the decision of all was that they could do nothing for him. The rheumatic pain seized his heart and his knowledge of the human body and the diseases which affect it was sufficient for him to realize that it meant death to him unless a higher power took hold of him.

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

All his former infidelity left him as a leaf before a strong wind, for as he began looking into eternity he realized there was a higher power, one whom he must face, and he began to call upon the name of the God whom he had formerly denied. He asked his wife to send for Etta Dale, saying that he knew his present condition was no more hopeless than hers had been when he had examined her years before. He told his wife emphatically that he knew God had healed that woman.

Mrs. Molt sent for Etta immediately, but as she and her husband were away in a meeting it was impossible for them to come. When she informed the doctor that they were away a look of bitter disappointment came over his face, but he said, "Very well," while the tears rolled off his cheeks, wetting the pillow on which he lay. That night there was no sleep for him. As his wife came to his bedside quite often through the night she always found him awake. She would listen and hear him calling on the name of the Lord for help, for mercy, for pardon.

The next morning she came into the room after preparing the breakfast. As she reached the door he looked at her and a smile spread over his face for the first time in many weeks. He said, "Oh, Wife, I've made it all right. If Etta Dale or anyone else cares enough to inquire about me after I am gone I want you to tell them I have made my peace with God. How merciful God is, how kind, how loving, willing to accept in the last hour my poor, penitent soul. It seems too good to be true. I have often heard Evangelist Straight make the remark, 'They were snatched as a brand from the burning,' and I want you to tell the folks that is my condition, for I have been snatched from eternal destruction as a brand has been snatched from the burning."

THE INFIDEL DOCTOR OF SALEM

Dr. Molt ate heartily of the breakfast which his wife brought to him and then sank into a deep, refreshing sleep from which he awakened a few hours later. Calling to his wife, he requested that he might be moved from the position in which he had been lying, and then asked her to sit by him for a while. This she did, drawing her chair beside his bed and listening to him as he told of the wonderful peace which filled his soul. He gave a sharp exclamation as the pain again struck his heart, and in a few minutes he passed into eternity, still wearing that smile upon his face which bespoke of a soul at peace with God.

Dr. Molt had spent his life in accumulating wealth, but his dying testimony brought more comfort to the heart of his wife than his lands, his houses, and his bank accounts. She laid him away confident that God had received him, although it was a brand snatched from the burning.

When Etta Dale returned to her labors among the congregation at Swampville, she learned of Dr. Molt, and, although she had thanked God many times for all his dealings with her, at this time she let her mind go back to the time when she lay a sufferer and Dr. Molt had pronounced her case incurable. This had indeed been hard for her to bear, but as she thought of all this now again she raised her voice to God in thankfulness for she saw that her own sufferings had been the means of bringing help to others. She rejoiced to know that in a measure she helped to bring peace to the soul of The Infidel Doctor of Salem.

THE END

