

# **I Saw Thee, Philip**

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## Chapter 1

EVEN at his dad's funeral, Philip O'Meara looked fearfully at Uncle John. He tried to concentrate on the priest, who was droning through the burial service in Latin. He tried to remember when to stand up, and when to kneel, and when to cross himself. But his distraught mind was like ancient Gaul: it was divided into three parts. Here was poor dad—dead--and it was only a year since mom had died of a heart attack. He had no home any more, and most terrible of all, he was going home with Uncle John and Aunt Caroline to live. And they were Protestants.

He hardly knew how to relate himself to the thought of it. It seemed unbelievable that so many disasters should befall him, all at the same time. It was hard, also, to feel too grieved over dad. Somehow, folks seemed to think he ought to be just devastated. But he wasn't. Indeed, he was almost ashamed to admit it to himself, but his main feeling was a kind of relief; he wondered why, but it was really because dad had not particularly endeared himself to anyone. He and Philip were almost strangers.

Uncle John sat respectfully enough all through the services. Of course, no one expected him, a Protestant, to do a thing. But just the same, Philip felt a vague premonition of fear for his own future. He had not been as faithful to the Church as mom had wanted, he pondered. Mom just had to make him go to Mass once in a great while, and to Confession at least once a year. But he figured that most fellows of fifteen and sixteen were allergic to religious things. He thought it was not anything to worry much about, so long as mom worried. But to live--to have to stay on and on and on with people who did not even believe in Confession and Mass! And who would be glad if he neglected it and was unfaithful! Folks who would never chide him if he stayed away forever! The thought was monstrous. Philip could hardly adjust himself to it.

He made up his mind right there at the funeral that they would never foist their silly religion on him. He would be adamant. He would show them a thing or two. He had heard that Protestants are always trying to tear down what it has taken centuries to build up. And even though he had not been a very good Catholic in the past, he would try to make amends and do differently in the future.

But his swirling thoughts that led him in a maze had to stop, for the funeral was over at last, and uncle and aunt helped him, oh, so kindly, to get his things together to go home with them. Uncle helped him finish up the last business, sort

out the things he wanted to keep, and sell the rest. Their kindness and unselfishness puzzled the lad.

Arriving bag and baggage at the big farm in South Dakota, Philip loved the place from the very first. He had his own room in the upstairs of the large, roomy farm house. His bedroom alone was as big as two of the rooms in the cramped cold-water flat he had shared with his father in the big city. There was a great deep bed, covered with bright, home-pieced quilts, and a huge bureau where he could store all his things and have plenty of room to spare. His room at home not only had been small and crowded, but the only window in the room opened onto a dingy, grimy brick wall. The only way he could see daylight at all was to lean out and look up the narrow canyon of space to the dreary, smoke-filled sky. He had to have the gas lit in the daytime to see at all. (Electricity was not at all common when Philip was a young lad, back near the turn of the century.)

Here on the plains, his windows opened to a vista of prairies, hills, and space, space, space. Philip was intrigued in spite of himself.

Uncle John gave him a horse and a saddle the first day he was there. The horse was a young yearling mare, nervous and active. Though he did not know the first thing about horses or their care, he had read enough cowboy stories to have dreams of riding like the wind across great expanses of prairie and plain. He looked at Uncle John in a new light entirely. Not a bad fellow after all! But then--his religion! It was hard to believe that Uncle John was dad's brother. They were the same height, and both had blue eyes, but here the resemblance stopped. Where dad's voice was harsh and irascible, Uncle John's was mellow and tender. Even Uncle John's movements seemed more thought-over and purposeful.

When you asked dad a question, he would spout off at once, garnishing every opinion with profanity. Uncle John would stroke his chin, rumple his thatch of graying sandy hair, then give you an opinion you felt you could bank on.

Philip soon learned, after warily observing for a few weeks, that Uncle John was the queerest Protestant he had ever seen. He did not keep Sunday at all. Philip was amazed also that Uncle John did not try to force his beliefs upon him, as he had expected. He seemed to sense in his kind way that Philip would not welcome any gestures like that, and refrained, until Philip caught himself getting curious. He did not even make him come in to what he and Aunt Caroline called "worship," where they read the Bible and prayed morning and evening. Philip stayed and listened sometimes, though, if he happened to be there. He never knew till years later how uncle used rare psychology in just "letting him alone."

But the oddest thing of his queer Protestant belief was uncle's rest day. He started it, of all times, on Friday! He told Philip, when he asked him about it, that God always started days on the evening before--not at midnight. And Philip noticed too that he kept it all day Saturday, until sundown. Philip could not get over the queerness of the thing. And uncle and aunt seemed so happy about it. They got a lot of pleasure out of going to a little frame church out in the edge of the next small town, and they stayed there all morning. They did not even urge Philip to go, as he was sure they would do. But they did ask him not to do any work around the place that day. It seemed that it was set down somewhere in their belief that no one on the place was supposed to do any work on their Sabbath--not even horses. Philip was really amused at that. Horses keeping Sabbath!

"Pretty soft for me," Philip snickered to himself. "I take it easy on two days a week."

And he did indeed. Uncle did not ask him to work on Sunday. But at home, even with dad and mom alive, no one had been so particular about Sunday. Mom baked chicken, pork, or beef roast, and whipped up a cake when she took a notion. He and dad went to the ball games, cleaned out the coalbin, or took his bicycle apart--whatever they took a fancy to doing--and no one thought a thing of it. But here! Uncle John got as much of the barnwork out of the way as he could on Friday, and aunt baked and cooked all the food she could that day for what they called Sabbath.

And her food was the best he had ever sunk his teeth into. Mom never made prune whip like auntie made, with about a quart of cold, thick cream whipped and beaten with some mashed seeded prunes. Sometimes she piled it up in a tender pie crust and topped it off with chopped black walnuts. Boy, was it good! And she could bake beans till they tasted better than any mom had ever made boiled with a big ham hock; and he thought he had liked beans before. And auntie's cottage cheese, glistening with cream fresh from the cool springhouse, was not like anything he had ever tasted before. Of course, mom had bought hers, but aunt heated a big pan of clabbered milk just so warm and no warmer (or it would make the curds hard and grainy, she told Philip). Then she poured it into a cheesecloth bag and hung it on the clothesline to drain. When it was dry, Philip watched her empty it into a flat brown crock and stir fresh, sweet cream into it. Boy!

Big, crusty loaves of homemade bread, emerging from the great oven, wrapped in towels and oiled all over with sweet butter, bore no resemblance whatever to the stuff they called bread that emerged from the bakeries near his old home. The lad

put on weight and felt better than he had ever felt in his life. Philip really began to live, though he was not so to designate it himself. He fell into the groove of farmwork, and life was very pleasant. The years flew by, and Philip grew up.

The time he stayed with Uncle John and Aunt Caroline convinced him of two things. First, that though they were sadly misguided and in error in the matter of their religion, they were very good and honest and reputable. A mother and a father could never have been more loving and kind than they were to him. Secondly, even though they were steeped in this maze of mistaken devotion to a false belief, the whole town loved them, and Uncle John O'Meara was one of the leading citizens.

Then, because he had learned to love them, an ambition came into Philip's mind. If only he could find some book or locate a place of real authority that would convince his relatives of the error of their ways! If he could just get the religious aspect of their lives straightened out, no one would be more perfect than they.

He finally decided to ask Father Kelly, the priest in the local church, about the matter the next time he went to Confession. Uncle and aunt would be valuable additions to the church. He believed firmly in their integrity and innate honesty. Surely, if he could show them that Peter was the first pope and that there was only one real church come down from Christ and the disciples, they would listen to reason and would change. Philip was convinced that they honestly and truly thought they were doing what was right. He knew that if they saw their course was wrong, they would gladly follow the light.

To Philip's chagrin and amazement, Father Kelly did not help him in his plans at all. He listened to Philip's eager confidences with a face set like an iron mask. He did not seem impressed even when Philip enlarged on the virtues of his beloved uncle and aunt.

"You see, it is this way, Father," Philip had begun eagerly, searching his religious adviser's face hopefully for commendation and agreement. "I was afraid to come to uncle's house when father died.... I was afraid to live with Protestants. But they're not like I thought they'd be at all, Father. They're just--well, good-and I really mean good. I have never heard uncle swear. I know for a fact he doesn't even drink liquor or smoke, and I think he'd rather die than cheat or lie or take advantage of any body. I think, Father, if you'd show me some way of convincing them they're wrong in their belief, they'd be just about perfect. They'd make just wonderful Catholics," he added hopefully.

But the priest shook his head. "The hardest people we have to deal with," he told the lad, "are in that Protestant sect which is called the Seventh-day Adventists. You see, Philip, unfortunately they base all their teachings on the Bible, and there is nothing they will listen to but Bible. We couldn't convince them they're wrong."

"Why, don't we base our beliefs on the Bible, too?"

"Oh, no, Philip, not entirely. In the Handy Catholic Dictionary by our good Father, Bertrand L. Conway, he recognized the problem. Listen to what he said: 'If the Bible is the only guide for Christians, then the Seventhday Adventist is right in observing the Saturday with the Jew.' In the very first Index of forbidden books, issued by Pope Paul IV, all Bibles printed in modern languages were enumerated. And even reading the Bible has at some times and in some places been counted as heresy."

"May I ask why, Father?" Philip was so astonished he was actually trembling.

"You see, my boy, the origin of our faith is certainly not the Bible alone, but the Church, which gives us both the written and the unwritten word. We believe some things not in the Scriptures because of the infallible witness of the Church as to their divine or apostolic origin. And also, if common people read the Bible, you can see how they can sink into heresy, such as your uncle has, until I can see no hope for them--ever. People who go as far into error and heresy as your relatives have, put themselves beyond all hope of help from the Church, and the fires of perdition are ready for them."

Philip sat without speaking for a moment, sunk down with the horror of the thought. The priest spoke again, as if the continued silence of the lad were uncomfortable to him. He seemed to wonder what Philip was thinking.

"You see, my boy, a lot of these Protestants have for their battle cry, 'The Bible, and the Bible only!' But we can laugh them down in a hurry, for they keep the Sunday for their Sabbath, just as the Church changed it. It is funny to hear them call it the Sabbath--it is not, of course; the Sabbath is Saturday, and always has been. The change of the day is of Catholic origin. History verifies that, and only a person ignorant of the history of the Church could deny it."

Philip looked up with interest. "Is it, Father, is it?"

"Surely, and it is a mark of the divine, infallible authority of the Church to change the rest day to the Sunday, in honor of the resurrection of the Lord. The Church has that right, though Protestants are fond of denying it. So you see, Philip, we cannot do much about the Seventh-day Adventists. When they say, 'The Bible,

and the Bible only,' they mean exactly what they say. We cannot defend infant baptism or purgatory or the infallibility of the pope or the Sunday rest day if we go just by the Bible, for those teachings simply aren't there. That's the reason our belief in tradition is so important. Let me read to you what Joseph Fea di Bruno wrote on tradition in Catholic Belief. He puts it so beautifully:

" `Like two sacred rivers flowing from Paradise, the Bible and Divine Tradition contain the Word of God, the precious gems of revealed truths. Though these two streams are in themselves. on account of their divine origin, of equal sacredness, and are both full of revealed truths, still, of the two, Tradition is to us more clear and safe.'

"Doesn't he make it clear and beautiful, my lad?" But one look into Philip's marble-pale face showed the priest he was not wholly convinced.

Philip found himself outside the rectory, half angry, chagrined, frustrated, his mind in a turmoil. His cherished plans for saving his dear ones were collapsed like a deflated balloon. He was so depressed and discouraged that he forgot to meet Uncle John at the post office as he had said he would do when they parted that morning, but walked the entire five miles home, thinking all the way. If there was no way in the world, or in his religion, to save Uncle John and Aunt Caroline from certain and everlasting destruction, there was definitely something wrong somewhere. Surely there was some way. They were so good. Did not God see how really good and honest they were? What kind of God was it who could not see that? Uncle John helped the widow Mead and her whole family one winter when she was sick and unable to work. Philip knew that, for he went with him and auntie many a time when they took food. Moreover, he had taken wood to her many and many a time.

Old Thomas Heywood, who lived in one room behind his shoeshop, broke his leg on the ice. Uncle brought him right out to the farm and established him in the kitchen bedroom so that they could take care of him.

Philip could multiply stories like that by the dozen, of good deeds they had done so unobtrusively that few people knew of it.

It seemed hard to believe that if his religion was right, as he had always firmly believed it to be, then uncle and aunt had no chance of ever being in heaven. In spite of all their goodness, kindness, and charity, it was not for them. This was inconceivable. Somehow, he felt that heaven would be peopled by folks like them.

He had never heard Uncle John use any swear words or any vile or filthy language. He did not drink; he did not even smoke. People always said that Uncle John's word was as good as a bond. The gambling dens and the pool halls offered him no temptation whatsoever. All this was so queer that he could not figure it out. The lad plodded along, scarcely noticing the miles, so engrossed was he in thought.

Now take dad, for instance. Philip had been assured ever so many times that dad was even now out of purgatory and in the realms of the blessed. He had paid out good money for these prayers, and it had been no end of comfort for a while. Yet dad was never the man that uncle was. Philip knew of several stores where he owed for groceries, and he had hidden many a time from the collectors. Dad would get dead drunk, and squander their living money like water, so that he and mom really had it rough to get along lots of times. There was many a time when food and coal were so scarce that Philip was no stranger to hunger and cold. Yet dad always had money for drink.

And that was not all. If he was drunk enough, he could surely be ugly, too, and his fist was heavy. Philip had run from it many a time. And as for smoking--dad smelled from every pore. He never had his pipe out of his mouth except to eat or sleep. Once mom got terribly wrought up because he smoked in bed and set fire to the bedclothes, and nearly burned them up. As for cursing and swearing, dad could turn the air blue even in good humor, but if he was mad--wow! He always did pretty much as he pleased and counted that Confession would clear matters up for him--and to think that dad was even now in heaven, in a heaven where there was no place for Uncle John and Aunt Caroline. Uncle John, who went all out to help the poor and the needy and the sick! Poor old dad--if there were no whisky, no pool tables, no cards, no smutty stories, would he find happiness even in heaven?

Philip did not go to church any more after that. And he did not try to argue his uncle down any more, as he had tried to do once or twice, when they disagreed. He just sat and listened, and said nothing. But he was learning a lot. He smoked, but not around the folks. He swore once in a while, too, when he was with the fellows in town; for he had heard it all his life, and it came like second nature to him. But he didn't swear at home. It didn't seem right to talk that way around Uncle John and Aunt Caroline. And Uncle John, seeing the change, said nothing, but prayed.

## Chapter 2

IT WAS not long till it seemed as if Philip had lived here always. The cold-water flat, precarious living, drunken brawls, and city noises became only an ugly memory. Philip had chums and pals all over the county, and went fishing and hunting and had a great time when the work was done. His best friend, Bill Barnes, lived on the next farm down the road. Bill had a horse, and it was he that initiated Philip into the ways of horses, and who taught him to ride like the wind across the plains. It was a dream come true. They had great times together. Neither had paid much attention to girls till Philip took a real interest in Grace, Bill's sister. She was a pretty girl in a husky kind of way.

Much to Bill's disgust, Philip came to enjoy the society of Grace even more than his own. It seemed almost traitorous, but he did not seem able to do a thing about it. He was left out. Philip and Grace went to spelling bees, to singing schools, to ice cream socials, and to Sunday school picnics. Soon Bill had a girl friend too. Then they had foursome parties, which all of them enjoyed.

Just about that time, the papers were full of the news of Cuba's troubles with Spain. The situation grew worse, until finally the United States felt it necessary to declare war on Spain. President McKinley declared that conditions in Cuba were intolerable to the United States and that the only way in which they could be bettered was by compelling a peace in the island. He said that in the name of humanity and civilization the cruelty in Cuba must be stopped. Young fellows everywhere were enlisting and going to war. Bill Barnes enlisted and tried his best to get Philip to join him.

"Come on, Phil," his friend urged. "Here's your chance to see some of the world you'd never see if you were left on your own. Let's see the West Indies at Uncle Sam's expense! It's our big chance. Let's go and enlist!"

But Philip had no mind to go to war. He was living in the airy cloud of new love. He had already convinced Gracie that he and she should link their lives together, and the tenant house on Uncle John's farm looked better than all the tropical isles and all the wars hitched together. Uncle John, who loved Philip as he would love his own child, urged him to stay and settle down. Wars and uprisings did not disturb the even tenor of his good life.

"I will do well by you, Philip," he told the young man. "You and I will make that little house fairly shine with new paint and wallpaper. Aunt Caroline and I have a lot of furniture we can let you have, and I want to get you some new things, too. You can have all the garden you want, and all the milk and eggs and butter you need. I will be able to pay you some cash, but you know that ready money is a bit



scarce sometimes. The young orchard is beginning to bear, too, and it won't be long till we will have all the fruit we can use." So, while Bill went to war, Philip happily engaged in the mundane, homely toil of papering and painting an old house at the end of a long country lane.

Nothing could have been more auspicious than the setting-out that Philip and his wife had on their wedding day in 1899. At least, he and Grace thought so. The tenant cottage of four rooms downstairs and one upstairs seemed like a fairy castle of beauty to the fair-haired young bride. It was so handy and convenient, too, everyone said. Philip and Uncle John had put a pitcher pump on the soft-water cistern and installed an iron sink in one corner of Gracie's kitchen; so she had an abundance of soft water for her washing and cleaning and dishes. All the water they had to carry was for drinking and cooking, and it from a pump right in the dooryard. "Maybe we can get that in the house sometime, too, honey," Philip remarked, his eyes aglow with pride and accomplishment.

Gracie's kitchen stove had a big granite reservoir on one side, too, and it was so handy to keep water hot for cleaning and dishwashing. Her mother gave her a good dish cupboard, and Aunt Caroline contributed a food safe with punched tin doors which Philip painted a clean light gray. Fine refrigerators, such as she was to have in her older days, had not even been dreamed of yet. Her Sunday school class and her chums gave her showers and her wedding crockery, which was displayed behind the glass doors of her dish cupboard. Her mother let her take her own bedroom furniture, and Uncle John and Aunt Caroline gave them a dining room suite.

"Not many young folks have it as fine as you two," Gracie's mother had told them. "When pa and I went to housekeepin', I thought I was doin' fine. I had a bigger log cabin than most folks had, and I had a long-legged skillet, a Dutch oven, a trivet, and an iron pot. Pa's father built us a bed in one corner of the cabin, and we filled a big homespun bedtick with prairie hay--that was our spring and mattress both. We carried all our water from a spring a mile away."

And so the two, Philip and Grace, settled down on their small spot of happiness and began a life together that was to last for more than half a century, and it has not ended yet. Even in old age, they are not divided.

Philip worked for Uncle John, and the arrangement was more than agreeable to both of them. Philip took over most of the heavy chores, and with responsibility lying heavily upon him, he proved to be a great comfort and mainstay to the older man.

They talked over plans together. Naturally, Philip was for the new, while his uncle leaned toward the old and tried modes of agriculture. But he was never arbitrary. He would laugh and give in, and Philip was often gratified that they made money over his suggestions. The farm prospered as it had never done before.

Once he suggested they sell all the chickens, which were of so many breeds you could not tell what kind of chick an egg would hatch.

"The way I see it, by this article I've been reading," Philip told his uncle excitedly, "stock deteriorates by inbreeding. Let's get all one kind, Leghorns (they're good layers, but not so good to sell for meat), Rhode Island Reds. or Plymouth Rocks. As for me, I favor Plymouth Rocks."

Uncle John stood and regarded the young man fondly. "All right, Philip," he said. "You've got a good head on you. I like your judgment--that is, your judgment about the farm," he added a bit humorously.

Philip looked at Uncle John a second time. "What did he mean by that?" he asked himself, but he thought he knew. Some things about his life, he did not like.

One winter evening, when they had been married a little over a year, Philip came home from a neighbor's house with a book he had borrowed. He had returned a borrowed tool and stayed for a chat.

"It's a history book of some kind," he said gleefully to Grace. "Looks like it's history and religion mixed. Mr. Clayton says it's a wonderful book, and I can keep it as long as I wish. I like to read things that help me to learn. I figured I might by chance find something in here to show uncle where he is wrong. You know how I have always wanted to find something."

Grace was sewing. She looked up at her husband and smiled. He was so eager, so impulsive, so ambitious.

"You might by chance, too, find out you are wrong. Remember, you got no help from the priest," she said. "Your uncle is a mighty smart man, and it would take a smart writer to prove him wrong. I'd hate to attempt it. What is the name of the book?"

"Oh, uncle doesn't know all the answers, though I admit he knows a lot of them. This book is Daniel and the Revelation, written by Uriah-Smith. Not very many folks know much about those books of the Bible. Mr. Clayton said so. I may be able to tell uncle a thing or two one of these days. He may not be able to explain Daniel and Revelation himself."

"Yes, and again you may not be able to," Gracie persisted with conviction. "He may be able to shoot to smithereens any argument you offer. In all my life, I have never met anyone who knew more Bible."

"Not a chance here," boasted Philip. "Smarter men than Uncle John have been mistaken. I hate to see such a good man all mixed up in his thinking, and that's the reason I've been looking all these years for a chance to help him."

Looking back on that hour, Philip always said the stage was set there for his downfall: Grace singing to the baby boy who had come to bless their home the fall before; the South Dakota winter wind beating sleet against the windows; and the warm, pretty room in which to sit and study. He never forgot the hour.

When the babe was tucked to sleep in his white bed in the bedroom, Grace pulled her chair closer to the lamp, and Philip read aloud to her, glorying in her bright, interested eyes.

"Lots of men could not read like this to their wives," he told himself again and again. "Most women I know don't take any interest in anything outside their kitchens. Too dumb, I guess." It became sort of a comradely ritual, this reading aloud. Sometimes Grace read to him; sometimes he to her.

They read every night from the borrowed book, absorbed in its interesting portrayal of what the supposedly mysterious books of Daniel and the Revelation really mean. It was put in such logical language that Philip could hardly wait for the evening meal to be over, to begin reading. Sometimes he read aloud to Gracie while she did the dishes and cleaned up her small kitchen. Sometimes he washed the dishes while she put the baby to bed, to hasten things.

Finally, true to Gracie's predictions, the book began to step hard on his toes. He got so exercised sometimes that he would stop reading and pace up and down the room. It was hard to believe that some of the things he was reading were actually true, yet there were the authenticated historical sources, universally recognized. He had not found what he had fondly hoped he would find, but he found an enormous amount of evidence that he, Philip, was wrong; yet he could not let the book alone.

At times he wished he had never laid eyes on it, though he inwardly despised himself for his cowardice. He was like an ostrich, wanting to hide his head in the sand. Grace was as excited as he.

"Listen, Grace, what do you make of this?" he asked suddenly one evening. He had read ahead of her a little, promising to go back and reread it. He began to

read aloud to her from the book he had been wrestling with, almost to the point of despair.

"The time that intervened between the reign of Constantine and the establishment of the papacy in A.D. 538 may be justly noted as the time when the darkest errors and grossest superstitions sprang up in the church. Of a period immediately succeeding the days of Constantine, Mosheim says:

"Those vain fictions ... were now confirmed, enlarged, and embellished in various ways. From hence arose that extravagant veneration for departed saints, and those absurd notions of a certain fire destined to purify separate souls, that now prevailed, and of which the public marks were everywhere to be seen. Hence also the celibacy of priests, the worship of images and relics, which in process of time almost utterly destroyed the Christian religion. . . . An enormous train of different superstitions was gradually substituted in the place of true religion and genuine piety. This odious revolution was owing to a variety of causes.... A preposterous desire of imitating the pagan rites, and of blending them with the Christian worship, and that idle propensity which the generality of mankind have toward a gaudy and ostentatious religion, all contributed to establish the reign of superstition upon the ruins of Christianity." ' "

Philip hesitated in his reading and looked at his wife. He knew she was a Protestant, and he had known it when he married her. They had agreed even before they were married never to enter into any kind of religious controversy. Once, since little Albert was born, Grace had said that she would never want him to be reared a Catholic. Philip had told her he would never press a matter like that. He thought ruefully that even his marriage to his dear Grace was not recognized as a real marriage by his church. According to his church, they were living in sin.

Grace looked at him and smiled. "I told you, dear, you might find out you were wrong. I have known a lot of that about the Church for a long time. Mother's father was a Lutheran, and he used to read lots of things to us when he came to see us. We still have books at home as to why Luther broke with the Church. He saw these evils, these corruptions and inconsistencies. When they wouldn't change, he left."

Philip shook his head. He was beyond all speech. Finally, looking down at the book, he read on:

"Accordingly, frequent pilgrimages were undertaken to Palestine to the tombs of the martyrs, as if there alone the sacred principles of virtue, and the certain hope

of salvation were to be acquired. The reins being once given to superstition which knows no bounds, absurd notions, and idle ceremonies multiplied almost every day. Quantities of dust and earth brought from Palestine, remarkable for their supposed sanctity, were handed about as the most powerful remedies against the violence of evil spirits, and were sold and bought everywhere at enormous prices."

With this, Philip got up, put away the book, and without a word, put on his coat, fur cap, and big mittens and went outside. It was bitterly cold. He pulled his great-coat about him and went to the barn, ostensibly to see if the stock were all right for the night, but really to quiet the tension in his heart and mind. He knew now that he could never fulfill his long-coveted desire to set his uncle right. He was the one who was right all along! And now Philip knew the truth. But though he longed to accept it, stubbornness welled up over him like a flood. He thought of the fellows in town who would laugh him to scorn. Some would say he had changed so that he could inherit all of uncle's possessions. Then, what about Grace and her folks? They made a lot over Sunday, and he had heard them laugh at Uncle John's peculiar notions.

He took the book back to its owner in a few days, but the truths he had read had burned themselves indelibly into his mind. He and Grace, according to their little pact, did not discuss it. Each really thought it was true, but neither knew the opinion of the other. They had decided never to discuss religion, and they just didn't. But the happy evenings stopped. Philip brought home a book--some kind of love story--and tried to read it. But neither of them was interested, and he left off in the middle of a chapter and took the book back.

### **Chapter 3**

THE truths in Daniel and the Revelation were never out of their minds, though several years went by. Being thrifty and frugal, they prospered and laid by a neat little sum in the bank in the village. They looked long at a dollar before they spent it, though no one could ever accuse them of being niggardly. They did their own butchering, and their small, tight smokehouse was full when the hard, cold winter set in. Grace canned and dried and preserved fruits and vegetables until Philip braggingly and laughingly told the storekeeper in town that they raised everything on the farm but his shoes and overalls.

Two other little boys had come to keep Albert company in their home. Grace was more than busy. But there was never a day that Philip did not feel unhappy, and a hit uneasy, for he realized that he had left God entirely out of his life. His small

boys were being reared without a knowledge of the great and good God above all. He knew that was not right.

That his aunt and uncle were right in their religious belief, he was now sure. He could see now the reason for their quiet goodness. It was the life they led. without and within. But Philip could not bring himself to do anything about it. He always told himself that if he ever joined a church, he would feel compelled to join the one he knew to be right and true. Yet here were the little boys growing up without God.

One Sabbath morning he got up as usual and did the necessary chores. Out of respect for his uncle he did no work about the place that day, but he did things around the house, and he and Gracie often went to town to do their trading for the week. While he was waiting for Gracie to finish getting breakfast, Philip went to the front door and looked out. It was early spring, and the beauty was breathtaking. Up the lane he saw Uncle John and Aunt Caroline getting in the buggy, all ready to go to church. They were always up betimes on the Sabbath, and you would think it was a real workday, the way they hustled around and got all the chores done. The church was six miles away, and they were never late. Philip smiled a little at the pleasant memories that came crowding in as he saw the old horse jog off down the road.

He could smell the breakfast cooking on the kitchen stove. He smelled the coffee and the frying side meat, and he heard the sucking sounds the oatmeal was making as it boiled. A skillet of potatoes was frying on the back lid and Gracie had a pan of fresh eggs to fry in the grease when she had taken up the meat. He always liked that.

It was a typical breakfast. Not such as he had eaten when he lived at Aunt Caroline's--no. Grace did not know how to cook the way aunt did.

Standing there, he seemed to see himself as he must have appeared before the God of all the earth. Suddenly a terrible revulsion of feeling came over him so strongly that he thought he was going to faint right there on the floor in Gracie's clean kitchen.

The urgency for obedience to what he knew to be right and good and had known for all too long seemed to lay hold on him like the teeth of a steel trap. He began to shake from head to foot. He stepped out onto the kitchen porch, then out onto the grass of his dooryard.

Like one in a dream, he walked down the narrow white gravel walk to the front gate. He heard the crunch of his feet in the gravel, and yet he did not hear it. It was as if he were an onlooker at a drama; yet he was the main actor. He heard the children pattering and playing about in the house; he heard the snapping and sputtering of the frying meat; and yet he did not hear them. Something was taking place in his heart and his life that he had never experienced before.

Paul, the persecutor, met it on the Damascus Road, and recognized it for what it was. Matthew met it when Jesus passed the seat of custom and told him to follow Him. Taxes meant nothing after that. That other Philip met it when he learned that the Lord had seen him before he had ever laid eyes on the Lord. And Philip O'Meara met it there in his front yard on the flat plains of South Dakota.

He seemed to see, beyond the serene blue of the summer sky, the Lord, high and lifted up, and lovely beyond description. He saw himself for what he was, full of pretense and sin--ten million ugly, heinous sins, filthy and horrible--before the awful presence of the High and Holy One. Oh, the goodness and grace of Jesus, the Lord!

How often had he heard Uncle John talking to Him as to a loved and trusted Friend! And how good, how pure, and how true were the lives of those who loved and trusted Him! All the reasons why he had not accepted Him long, long ago seemed so utterly silly now.

With sinking heart he saw himself as the chief of sinners, and he was suddenly in a panic. for fear there was no help for him, for fear it was too late. He was so brazen and wicked. He knew the truth, and yet he had not loved it and cherished it; but he had rather run from it and ignored its obligations, even rashly denying it at times.

With a cry Philip fell to his knees there in the thick grass by his dooryard gate. He was not mindful now of what anyone might say or of who might see him. One thought possessed him: to get rid of the crushing weight of sin that was killing him!

"O God!" he cried, the tears gushing out of his eyes. "O God!" He threw himself face down on the grass.

Grace had set the table and filled the children's plates. Then, she filled Philip's coffee cup and went to the door to see what was keeping him. Her heart was in her mouth when she saw him lying in the grass by the gate, seemingly writhing in

an agony of pain. Was he dying? What on earth had happened? Was it a seizure? Apoplexy? Heart attack?

Thrusting the granite coffeepot back onto the stove, she ran outside, her heart nearly bursting with fear. Philip must be sick, terribly sick-lying there on the grass "Philip! Philip!" she screamed, and was beside him, touching his face, his cheeks, his hair. "What's the matter, dear? Are you sick? Did you faint? What can I do for you, dear?" She had her arms under his head. She was lifting him, turning him.

Philip turned a tortured face toward her. It was wet with his tears. His mouth trembled so that he could hardly speak--then he tried to tell her what happened to him there by the gate. He tried to make her understand. He did not seem to care then that he was a big man, crying and weeping over his sins there on his front lawn, in front of his wife, who might think him silly. It all seemed so logical and so reasonable now, and he was sure she would understand. She always had. No man ever had a truer wife. She did. Her arms were tight around him, and she was crying too. She understood, as he knew she would. There was not another woman in the world like her.

"Oh, Philip, this is from God, and let's start together, today, right now, and live good lives like your folks. And bring up our children as we should. I'm so glad! glad! I've been worried about the way we were living without God."

"That's what I mean, Gracie, and I've got to start today. Somehow, I feel if I don't break loose and start today, I won't have another chance. And strangely, I'm not afraid of the consequences. I'm not doing it from fear; but there's a joy. Oh, I cannot tell you, Grace!"

"You don't need to try, Phil, for I feel it, too. I just wonder why we didn't do it long ago. Let's both start today. And, Philip, you don't know how different you have been lately--so much more gentle and thoughtful and kind. You haven't gotten angry with me or the children as you used to. You're more soft-spoken, Phil, and with the children, too. I don't suppose you've even realized it."

Philip looked at her, amazed. "Have I been different, Gracie? Have you really noticed a difference? Oh, I am glad-I have been so troubled lately that I have felt as if I could die! The Holy Spirit uncle has talked of so much must have been speaking to me."

"Oh, yes," cried Grace. "And, Phil, another thing, you haven't cursed nearly so much as you usually do, and I'm so glad. I've always hated for you to use that kind of language around the little boys, they take up things so quickly."



Philip got up then and lifted Grace to her feet, his face lighted with an inner illumination strange to them both.

"Come, my dear," he said tenderly. "Let's go in and read some from the Bible, if we have one, and begin the day as we should."

"Oh, yes; we have a Bible, Philip--the one that Aunt Caroline gave me for Christmas."

Hand in hand, the two went back into their little house.

Baby John had finished his cereal and was chewing solemnly on a large piece of toast. Albert and little Philip were playing train around the cookstove with pieces of stovewood, oblivious of the blessedness of the hour.

Philip stood in the door, looking down at his little ones with his eyes alight. "This is the last Sabbath you'll just play around, boys," he said. "Beginning next week, you all go to Sabbath school."

Little Albert ran to his daddy. "Can I go wif Uncle John and Aunt Caroline?" he asked in his soft little-boy voice. "Auntie says there's pictures 'n' 'tories 'n' pretty songs. Albert wants to go."

Philip felt ashamed that he had steadfastly refused to let the children go with his uncle and aunt. And here, little Albert had wanted to go. "Surely you can go, and daddy and mother will go too," he said, lifting the little fellow onto his knee.

Then putting the child down, he seated himself and looked at the coffeepot and the meat plate on the breakfast table. The meat was cold, and white grease had congealed over it.

"Grace," he said, a bit hesitant, "you don't know much about it, but we really should not use either pork or coffee. I did without both of them all the years that I lived with uncle and aunt, and was the better for it. I felt better than I ever had in all my life. Maybe you don't know it, but diet has a lot to do with health, and disposition too!"

"I know more than you think, Phil," answered his wife, laughing. "Remember, I have talked to Aunt Caroline a lot. And remember too, we've eaten many a wonderful meal over there. I will be glad to do what you think we ought to do, and I am sure if your folks do it, it must be right. I have a great deal of faith in them. Their food is different, but I thought it tasted very good."

When Grace had scraped out the meat and thrown it to old Shep, the collie (even he refused to eat it), she got some fresh eggs out of the basket on the porch and

fried them in a little butter. She laughed happily as she prepared a second breakfast, as if she were in the midst of a great adventure. And she was. The greatest adventure she had ever had.

Before they ate, Philip opened the Bible she had brought to him, self-consciously, curiously, even a little cautiously.

"I-I don't know much about this--this Book, though if I'd had any sense, I would have," he confessed, a shy grin on his sunburned face. "I have heard uncle read it a lot, and to be sure, he sets a great store by it; but I don't know where to start. I was always afraid to learn. Ma told me it wasn't for common folks to read--too confusing. She said the priest told her that, but of course I don't go along with it any more."

"Why, I should say not," Grace answered indignantly. "As if reading the Bible could do anything but good in a person's life!"

"I see that now," her husband answered, "and see how much I might have learned if I hadn't been so stubborn and determined to have my own way." Philip was fluttering the pages aimlessly. "Where shall I read, Grace? Shall I start right in the beginning?"

"You could--but there's the twenty-third Psalm; it is always wonderful," offered Grace helpfully. "And, well, that place where John 3:16 is, ought to be good. But I don't know just where it is. I have never read the Bible in my life that I remember. We went to church and listened to the preacher, but I never read the Bible."

Philip fingered and fumbled till just by chance he found the twenty-third Psalm, and he read it. Then they ate their breakfast, all excited and happy over their new venture.

After his meals, Philip had gotten in the habit of smoking a couple of cigarettes at the table, then drenching down his satisfied feeling with another scalding cup of coffee. He had often seen his father perform such a ritual, and when he got into his own home, he fell into the groove easily.

So, as soon as the meal was over, he reached into his pocket involuntarily for his tobacco. The habit was terrific. Then, thinking, he scrambled to his feet and walked to the door, trembling with the urgency of his desire for tobacco. He stood looking out at the bright fields, shimmering in the heat of the morning sun. He stood a long moment, fighting a hard battle with himself; then he went out, pumped a dipper of cold water, and drank deeply.

Walking to the barn, with a mighty effort he threw all his tobacco and cigarette makings onto the big heap of barn refuse out by the stables. But as soon as he had thrown it down and kicked it and mingled it with the cow dung and stall refuse, such a feeling seized him that it seemed he could feel every individual hair on his head. Even his skin seemed to scream out at him. He could hardly keep from leaping forward and reclaiming that which he had thrown away. Like a washed hog returning to the mire, like a dog to his vomit, he would be if he should pick up what he had thrown away.

With a grueling, horrible effort he turned away, praying aloud with trembling lips. He kept his struggle to himself and did not say a word about it to Grace. But she knew it. With unaccustomed lips she had prayed for him as she had watched him from the window of her kitchen, yearning over him in his struggle. Even though he suffered very much, she believed in his strength to overcome.

They decided to keep the news of their new living habits from uncle and aunt for the rest of that first week.

Every night they got rid of something. When they were ridding the smokehouse of unclean meats, Grace asked why such things were forbidden by uncle's church.

"It's in the Bible, I know that. Say, Grace, where's that book Aunt Caroline lent you when you asked her some question about the Bible? Still have it?"

"Yes, I haven't taken it back. It's in our bedroom on the table. It's sort of like a--well, dictionary, in a way. You can look up Bible things in it."

"Let's get it when we go in," suggested Philip. "I'd like to see what the Bible really says about pork and stuff like that. Maybe the book will tell why it's forbidden."

A little later, the two were bent interestedly over Aunt Caroline's copy of Bible Readings for the Home Circle.

"It's in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. Let's find it and read it," said Philip. Grace hurried and brought her Bible, and they, read the two chapters together.

"It says here that in the beginning man didn't eat meat at all and only after the Flood was man allowed to eat clean meat. I guess that was because all the vegetation was destroyed off the earth," Philip said.

"I suppose the Lord knows about animals and whether they're good for us. And if the pig wasn't good then, I don't think it has improved any," Grace commented.

"I don't think it has, either," Philip agreed readily.

The next Sabbath they decided to start out early and be at the church when the older couple got there, and watch the looks on their dear faces when they saw them seated, ready for worship. Even the children entered into the joy of it. Albert gave his opinion that "Unca John will bust wide open." They all laughed at the little fellow.

It was even better than they had expected. Uncle's face was a sight to behold. He could not take his eyes off Philip. The tears kept brimming over all morning, and Aunt Caroline's, too. Both of them could hardly get over the joy and the marvel of it.

Aunt Caroline proudly led the little boys to the children's department, and they had their little classes for the first time in their lives. They returned a little later, proud and very talkative, clutching Our Little Friend papers and memory verse cards. They were all agog with their adventures into the song-and-story world, and could hardly be prevailed upon to wait till they were on their way home to recount their small adventures. Nothing would do but that they go home with uncle and aunt for dinner. It was as if they had never met before and were just getting acquainted, there was so much to talk about. Aunt had to tell Grace what kind of cooking oil to use in place of lard and how to go about doing ever so many things that Grace was eager to learn.

Philip and uncle retired to the living room with their Bibles, and could hardly be persuaded to come to dinner when it was ready. But before they went, uncle did a thoughtful thing. He unlocked an old cupboard in the hall and brought out a great Noah's ark, beautifully made and painted brightly.

"Aunt Caroline and I once had a little boy, little John," he said, a trace of sadness crossing his sensitive face. "He died when he was five, so he didn't get to play with this much. I made it for him to play with on Sabbath, to help make it a special day for little Johnnie. He loved it. You boys may play with it."

In a little while they were busy with the tiny animals and the gangplank and the beautiful boat. After dinner Aunt Caroline told them the story of Noah and the ark, and Philip and Grace were as interested as the little boys.

About three weeks later, Philip rose from the table ' one evening and put his arms around Gracie as she was dishing up apple pie for dessert.

"Have you noticed anything different about me, honey?" he asked, watching her good face with pride and pleasure.

She stopped her pleasant task and laughed. "Of course I do, Philip. Not only have you licked that tobacco habit, but you don't even pine for cigarettes any more. But that isn't all you have quit entirely."

Philip stared at her. "Why, what else?" he asked.

"You have completely quit your swearing. For a while you'd forget yourself. But I have watched you carefully, and you haven't slipped once, in my hearing, for nearly two weeks. Not once."

"Why, I must have--but I didn't notice. I prayed to be able to stop--and God answered. Why, Grace, God answers even little prayers, about little things."

"Of course, Philip," Grace replied, "but swearing or cursing isn't really little. It's big; it's a commandment, you know. The one that says, 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.' "

"That's so," Philip agreed. "No sin is little, is it? I think of it as a starter sin. It can get you into deeper water if you let yourself go."

Philip suddenly felt washed clean. He realized his wife was right.

When he went back to work that day, it was as if the devil had heard him and conspired against him, which he did. Suddenly his lead horse started to bolt across the plowed field, mad with the pain of a big black Texas fly that had fastened itself onto the tender underside of his chin. Phil stubbed his toe, falling headlong and skinning both knees. He had to chase the horse until it was stopped by an Osage orange hedge that bordered the field.

When he had removed and killed the fly, he realized with deep joy that he had not given vent to cursing and profanity. In other days it would not have been so. He would have rent the very air with his useless shouted imprecations--at everything in general and at horses in particular. Now he thought how silly and immature such practices were, and he was glad, glad, glad he was growing up--in Christ.

## Chapter 4

UNCLE John sold out that fall and moved into town. He and aunt got a small house on the edge of the village. They kept a cow, a horse, some bees, and a few chickens. There were a fine orchard and some berries at the new place.

Then, too, they were within walking distance of the church. Life would be easier for the old couple, and Philip was glad, though he was sad that this phase of his life had ended. It had been happy. Uncle gave Philip enough money that he felt

able now, with what he and Grace had saved, to invest in his own land. So. after the crops were harvested, they moved to a farm in North Dakota that he had gotten at a fine bargain through a relative of Aunt Caroline's. There were many acres of fine wheatland, and a young orchard, but no house. They drove to their new place in a wagon, and lived in it until Philip built a soddy. It was neither grand nor handy nor adequate, but it was home, and Grace had a way of making every place she touched cozy and homelike. Most important, it was their own and was set on their own land.

Grace missed her pitcher pump and the full cistern and the abundance of water to clean with. She missed the deep well of cool drinking water near the house, and she missed the trees. Philip, anticipating her desires. brought willow switches up from near the river, and heeled them in near the well he had dug. A whole procession of them. like buggy whips, were soon putting forth new leaves all around the well.

"We will soon have trees all over the place," he predicted. "This will be the prettiest place in the county."

Philip. realizing the grueling cold of the more northern state they had chosen, did all he could to get ready for the hard winter ahead. He was up before day and worked till the moon was high, getting in fuel, battening things down, making things they needed. And even at that, he felt like weeping; for hundreds of things needed to be done, and it seemed as if he could not get to them.

Grace scolded him for that. "Don't try to do everything at once, Philip," she said. "We'll make out. You'll kill yourself, and then where will we be?"

It was getting very cold and snappy. One day Grace was in a bad temper because Philip forgot to get her some yeast from town. Philip knew she was not feeling very well, for it was only a matter of days before another little babe was expected. Moreover, she had scalded her right hand badly the day before when a dish of hot applesauce had come in two in her hands. He knew, too, that she worked cruelly hard, keeping the little soddy neat and clean, and supplying the almost endless needs of her little family under the most primitive conditions.

"Oh. Phil!" she said sharply when she saw he had for gotten the yeast. "How could you? Now we will have to eat soda biscuits and corn bread for another whole week! And I had my mouth all set for some homemade yeast bread. I wanted to make a really big baking before the baby is born. I wanted to make enough to last a few days."

Philip got ugly with her. "I told you I forgot, Grace. I suppose you never forgot anything in your life. Oh, no; you never did. You never make mistakes!" He detested himself for retorting to her so hatefully, for she looked so tired and worn, and drawn with pain, suffering the trials and privations of her pitifully narrow life. He was able to get out and meet people and see things--but she seldom got beyond her four walls.

"Not very often," she answered back hotly. "But I notice that you remember the things you want; your saddle, your shaving soap, your suspenders. No, you do not forget yourself, Philip!"

And with tears running down her cheeks, she ran into her crowded little bedroom and closed the door. Owl-eyed, the children watched her go. Little John then ran crying and slapped the bedroom door with baby hands. The other two began to cry loudly, and little Albert ran to his daddy, tears streaming from his blue eyes.

"Don't make my mamma cry, Daddy. My mammas'e good--s'e make little boys bwead wif butter wif sugar on top. Don't do dat. Daddy!"

Philip grabbed a jacket and flung himself out the door, knowing all the time he was a coward for running away, for she could not. She had to stay with the babies, the house, the stove, and the million duties that buzzed about her like gnats.

But he was angry, and anger knows no pity. Anger knows no tenderness. Anger forgets and stamps on love. He would go and get that old yeast, even if he did not get back all night. She could just stay by herself! As hard as he worked, she was a fish-wife to rail out like that--the way he chopped and hauled wood! The long, cold trip he made to town--why, only last week he had driven ten miles to get her apples! Philip began to make quite a case for himself as his horse pounded the mud road, drawing the light wagon after it.

But he knew down in his heart that he was wrong. He was warmed by the wood, too; he ate the food it cooked; the apples were for him too, which she had dried with such arduous labor. It was a partnership. She held up her end of the bargain. She wanted the yeast so that he would not lack for homemade bread while she was ill and unable to make it. But he had worked himself into such a fury that he disregarded the tender thoughts which struggled for supremacy. The devil rode beside Philip on that wild trip, feeding his rage and anger with the stagnant poison of self-pity.

The devil had other plans for him, too. Philip had not been out on the road ten minutes when he noticed he had picked up the wrong jacket. It was an old one he had not worn in months, and had been so torn around the arm holes he had left off wearing it. He had used it a couple of times for Spot to sleep on when it was stormy outside.

Grace must have brushed it up and mended the hole in the sleeve, yes, she had. But in examining it, Philip felt a familiar lump in the side pocket. He reached in his hand and pulled out a whole pack of cigarettes. Only one was gone. Suddenly the angry feeling of bitterness against Grace seized him again. If she could nag the life out of him every time he turned around, he would show her--he would show her that she was really driving him to the devil--and she would be sorry!

In deep anger he defiantly drew a small white cylinder from the pack, and with practiced hands that seemed not to have forgotten the cunning of evil, he put it in his mouth. Suddenly he seemed almost to go wild with the urgency of desire for the sickish sweet taste of smoke in his mouth and nose and being. It was as if the one devil had brought his seven companions back to torment him and tear him to pieces. His hand trembled so that he could hardly strike the match. The end glowed at last. Leaning back in the seat to enjoy it, he could take only a couple of draws till he threw the cigarette from him as one would hurl a venomous snake.

Phil suddenly saw how mean and thoughtless and childish he was, thinking to get even with Gracie, sick, nauseated, and miserable. And he was so selfish he could not even remember the essentials she had asked him so pointedly to remember. At last he saw clearly. Was not the bread for him as well as for her? Yes, and more. He ate twice as much as she did. And had he not remembered to get himself the shaving soap he liked, when there had hardly been enough money for flour? Oh yes; Grace had it hard, and he had been to blame. When had he ever gotten her some little treat--chocolate drops or bananas or the colored sugar she liked to keep on hand?

He had gone two or three miles when another horrible thought seized him. What if her time should come while he was gone? What if she should fall? What if her dress should catch fire while she was feeding the hard, twisted prairie hay and the cow chips to the reluctant fire? What would she do there alone with the three little children on the cruel prairie?

He remembered an old poem his mother used to recite often about a settler and his wife who lived out on the prairie. One day, in a fit of anger, he scolded his young wife harshly for allowing the cattle to wander off while he was away from



home in the woods. The estrangement was such that he left her the next morning without a good-by kiss. That evening he saw a terrible storm coming, and he remembered how afraid his wife was of storms. Sorry for his hard words. he hurried home to find her gone, hunting the cows which had wandered away again. Ma had said the piece to him so often in lieu of his oft-requested story that the words had sunk into his mind like burning irons that branded a path wherever they went.

"A penciled note was on the table spread,  
And these are something like the words it said:  
'The cows have strayed away again, I fear;  
I watched them pretty close; don't scold me, dear.  
And where they are I think I nearly know;  
I heard the bell not very long ago.  
I've hunted for them all the afternoon;  
I'll try once more-I think I'll find them soon.  
Dear, if a burden I have been to you,  
And haven't helped you as I ought to do,  
Let old-time memories my forgiveness plead;  
I've tried to do my best-I have, indeed.  
Darling, piece out with love the strength I lack,  
And have kind words for me when I get back.' "

Then Philip remembered that the settler in the story found his young wife dead, killed in the storm. He never got to tell her he was sorry for his ugly words, and that he did not mean them.

Suddenly, consumed by a terrible fear, he wheeled the horse around so fast it reared high on its hind legs, and started it at a full gallop for home. His mind conjured up all kinds of horrors. He was sure now he would not find Grace alive. He was sure now that something had happened. Maybe the children were dead, too. Passing a neighbor's house, he stopped long enough to borrow some yeast and then started home again as fast as he could go. He hoped that if she was alive, she had not tried to milk--she was not able—she--

Grace was on the way to the barn with the milk pails when Philip drove frantically into the yard. He had worked himself into such a frenzy that he was prepared for anything.

The horse again stopped so suddenly that it reared high on its hind leas, pawing the air wildly. Philip leaped out and ran to Grace.

"Gracie!" he panted. "Are you all right, honey'? You aren't sick`."

When Grace saw that nothing was wrong, that there was no flood or prairie fire, she laughed loud and long at his fears. "You silly! You dear, sweet silly! I am all right.

And I was the one who was cross--to make such a fuss over a couple of cakes of yeast. I had no business doing it, and you must forgive me, Philip. I'll try not to be like that. I always said I wouldn't nag you. dear."

Philip had his arms around her, patting her, and he made her set down the milk pails. "No, it was I, dear. I shouldn't have talked that way and I won't again, and look . . ." He darted back to the buggy. "I've got you some yeast. Mrs. Strubel gave me a pint of it. And I'll milk, honey. You go back to the house. I'll be in as soon as I can."

## Chapter 5

AFTER Corrinne, their first little girl, was born a week later, they had hardly settled down to routine again when the field secretary for the conference called on them and urged Philip to go into the colporteur work--the work of selling good books all over the county. They needed the money, that was for sure; but Philip wondered if he should leave Grace alone for days, even weeks, at a time. There were two cows to milk, water to draw, a horse to care for, to say nothing of the house and the babies, and it was winter.

But Grace insisted that the care of the stock and four perfectly good children would be no tax on her strength in the least. Besides, the books were bound to do folks good, and they could certainly use a little ready money. If Philip could make just a little money on the side, it would be very, very handy. A new house of timber was the dream of both of them. They had other dreams, too.

Grace wanted an organ and some more books, so that the children would learn the better things of life.

"There's more to life than just food and drink and shelter, Philip," she had told her husband earnestly. And he had agreed with her.

They were so far from the nearest church that it was only occasionally that they could go. Grace faithfully had a home Sabbath school. but the lack of church facilities worried her and Philip not a little. They wanted their children to get used to going to church. They wanted it to be an inseparable part of their lives.

Philip tried to sell books around home, but he did not do much good. He was always trying to get home in the evening in time to do the chores, and he was not able to leave soon enough in the morning. Grace urged him to go into it for all he was worth.

"Now look, Philip," she argued. "I'm not delicate. I have always been strong. I can do it. Philip, I can!"

Philip looked at her. More beautiful than the day he married her! For the beauty of motherhood sat upon her fair head like a crown of virtue. His heart was filled with love for her beauty of soul and her brave, good spirit.

"But what if something happened, Grace! What if . . ."

"Where is your faith, Philip" Is God dead?"

That decided him. When Mr. Kendall, the field secretary, came a few days later. Philip was ready to go. He learned the canvass for Bible Readings for the Home Circle, milked, cleaned out the barn, filled the wood box to overflowing. kissed Grace and the children, and was gone. He went so far from home this time that he knew he would be gone at least a month. To his surprise, he really began to sell books. and his enthusiasm built up.

At one place a farmer signed up for the book, then undertook to give Philip some advice. "Don't go to the next farm, young man. I tell all the agents to give them a wide berth!"

"Why?" asked Philip.

"They're ugly, mean," answered the farmer. "He'd lick you at the drop of a hat. They're so quarrelsome that we never neighbor with them."

"Why? What are they?" Philip was curious even though the description seemed forbidding enough.

"They're Lutherans, but they've never let their religion soften them. I guess Martin Luther would be ashamed of some of the folks who claim to follow him."

"I'll go to see them," Philip said cheerfully. "You see, I pray for the angels to go before me and prepare the way. If I should skip that house, I might get ahead of my angel, and that would be too bad!"

The farmer laughed at that, but he again warned Philip he might have an unhappy experience.

The house was very poor, Philip noted as he approached it down the long lane. It had warmed up a little that day, and he saw that the owner, a burly Russo-German, was up the ladder, doing something to the mud wall about the window. Philip approached him and gave him the canvass in the German language. The farmer stopped his work and eyed him malignantly from the top of the ladder. He only grunted occasionally while Philip talked. Whether it was from agreement or disagreement, he could not tell. Then in the course of the canvass the Sabbath was mentioned.

"You're a seventh-day one, eh?" the man demanded suddenly, interrupting Philip.

"Yes, of course." Philip looked proudly into the farmer's face, which was so red that it looked as if it would burst.

He was surprised that Philip was not in the least perturbed. The farmer descended the ladder deliberately, then came over and stuck his forefinger right at his chest. "And what do you think of Martin Luther, young feller, huh?"

Philip did not flinch or parry words. "A great man truly, and led of God. He led a mighty movement, sir, away from the terrible corruptions of the church."

"Why didn't he keep the Saturday Sabbath?"

Philip smiled at that. "How far could you expect a man to go? He led the people very, very far, but he died before he had fully learned the Sabbath."

"You think well, then, of the Lutheran Church, eh?"

Philip felt very brave and as if his words were dictated by the Spirit of God. "Not so highly," he answered. "They're bound down to a creed, and you know it. They haven't gone a whit farther than Luther did."

"Young man, you lie!" The big German was fairly thumping Philip's chest now, as if it were a drum. Then he exclaimed, "They've gone backward, they have, and I want that book you're selling!"

Philip never knew what happened after he delivered the book, but he may know when the records are opened at the last great day.

Even though he was far away, he was constantly worried and concerned about his little family. He had always had plenty at Uncle John's, and the straitened circumstances of his early childhood were almost forgotten. So far in their married life, they had managed to have plenty. It did not worry Grace nearly so much as it worried Philip. She was happy that there was always enough good homemade bread and enough milk, and she always had some kind of fruit, dried

or canned. But even homemade bread got scarce presently, for the flour was almost gone, and there was no money to get any more.

When Philip got home at the end of the first month, this was the condition he found things in. He was beside himself with worry, and that morning in worship, he was touched to hear Gracie pray for some flour. She had so much faith in the providence of God that Philip was ashamed. She had cheerfully scraped the bottom of the barrel the day before and baked a fine batch of good bread. She had not said a discouraging or fretful word as to where the next bread was to come from.

Grace was a woman of deep faith. She believed in prayer, even about little things. Once, when Philip was gone from home, she lost the only paring knife she owned. That made it very hard, and she went to her bedroom and prayed that the Lord would help her find it. That night she dreamed she went out by the creek bed where she had thrown her kitchen refuse, and found the knife in a heap of peelings. Next morning she was out there before any of the children were awake, and she found her knife. Gracie was a great one to rely on the Lord--even about so little a thing as a paring knife.

Then there was the time when little Albert was so sick. Grace had one of Dr. Kellogg's medical books, and she relied on it for everything. She had no thermometer, but the child's head was so hot that she knew he had a dangerous fever. It could even be spinal meningitis, or brain fever, or anything. He had a heavy, tearing cough that seemed almost to wear the little fellow out. She did everything the book suggested that she could do with her limited resources. Baths, compresses, olive oil and camphor rubbed on the tiny chest. The child could not eat. He only coughed and coughed until he lay panting in misery and exhaustion.

Suddenly Grace fell to her knees beside her babe, and Philip never heard a more earnest, pleading prayer. He had the feeling that Jesus was right there in the room, and Grace was talking to Him personally as a dear and trusted Friend. Philip could feel the blessed Presence, and he noticed that during the prayer little Albert suddenly stopped coughing. When they looked up, he was in a quiet sleep. His little forehead was covered with tiny beads of sweat, and Grace knew the fever was broken. He slept so long and so deeply that Grace, concerned, awakened him to see if he was all right.

Remembering these things, Philip told himself he should not worry. "Grace seems to be on pretty good terms with the Lord. I am, too, I hope; yet not like Grace.

But flour--will the Lord hear a prayer about flour?"

While he was thinking, he did not notice a spring wagon pull up by the front porch. His nearest neighbor, a good German Lutheran, came in.

"Oh, I cannot stay," he protested when they urged him to take off his coat. "I was just passing by, and I thought I would tell you if you need any flour, just come over and get some. I have too much, and I am afraid the rats will get at it."

Philip looked at his wife. She did not seem in the least surprised; this was as it should be.

"Why, thanks a lot, Mr. Strubel," he answered, a little embarrassed. "Fact is, we are a little short now, and . . ."

"Come over today then. I have plenty. Pay me back when you have your wheat ground next summer if you have it to spare--if not, forget about it."

Philip could hardly keep the tremble out of his voice when he thanked his neighbor again for the kind offer.

This simple answer to Grace's prayer gave her leverage to urge him to go again full-time into the colporteur work. "I think it is what the Lord wants you to do, dear," she told him. The one month was hardly a trial. He saw now that the Lord would surely take care of his dear ones. He saw too that Grace was equal to the task.

Philip had many experiences in the work, but one was so precious that it always stayed fresh in his memory.

One day he saw a man loading hay in a field that shimmered in the heat of the August sun. On an impulse, he climbed the fence and canvassed the farmer right there by his wagon in the midst of the field.

The farmer, Mr. Bonner, had dark hair and keen, piercing eyes. He listened silently until Philip had finished. Then he answered him politely but decisively. "That all sounds very good and convincing, the way you put it, young man, but I am afraid you are wasting your time. I have put a great deal of thought into the Bible and religion lately, and I have decided that the people who have the truth are the Seventh-day Adventists. I don't believe I will invest in any book other than what they publish."

Philip was almost speechless. "Why," he stammered, "sir, this is a Seventh-day Adventist book! That is the kind of books I am selling, and I am an Adventist myself!"

This galvanized the farmer into action. He seized Philip by the arm. "You have been sent here by the Lord!" he fairly shouted. "Now climb right up into this wagon with me. You're going home with me to spend the night." He gave Philip no time to protest. "This is from the Lord," he added decisively.

Supper was ready when Farmer Bonner ushered Philip into the kitchen and filled a big washbasin with rain water for his ablutions. The wife, silent and dark-eyed, led the way to the dining room, where big bowls of potato soup and squares of hot corn bread were set to tempt their hunger. A big platter of thick slices of deep red, ripe tomatoes, a plate of fresh cookies with scalloped edges, and a pat of homemade butter looked inviting enough. A great blue bowl of big sugared strawberries and a pitcher of thick cream promised a good filling dessert.

When they had finished eating, Mr. Bonner rose from the table abruptly, as he seemed to do most things.

"Now we have a lot to do, and we don't want to waste any time," he said in his businesslike way. "I will go and do the barn chores, and you stay here and help Mrs. Bonner do the dishes. Then we can have the whole evening for our study. We will need it, and it is from the Lord."

Philip had never before had a customer take the initiative so decidedly as Mr. Bonner had done. He could only pray for, wisdom, and reflect that it takes all kinds of people to make a world.

He was glad for his much-used, worn copy of Haskell's Bible Handbook, for the questions came so thick and fast that he was subjected to a real bombardment for a while. But he took it calmly and searched out every text, making them read it for themselves. In that way he established every truth that was brought under scrutiny and question.

At three in the morning they reluctantly allowed him to go to bed.

## Chapter 6

AFTER this experience, added to his busy schedule was a visit and a Bible study at the Bonner home at least once a week. One by one he convinced them of the wonderful truths found in the Word of God. It was not easy, for the wife was well-educated and intellectual, and she challenged him every step of the way. Philip could never tell just what she was thinking. He could only pray, answer with the authority that a real truth warrants, and trust in the Lord for results.

One day, in the middle of the week, he was delivering books in a town about twenty miles from the Bonner home. He was behind the buggy, clearing out the big wooden shipping box from whence he had just taken the last subscription book. He was very happy, deliveries had been good, and he had had several blessed experiences. Another hard day, and his work in this part of the county would be done. He could sleep at home tomorrow night. He had every moment of his time budgeted so that he could be with his family on the morrow in the early evening. He anticipated playing with his small boys and eating some of Gracie's excellent cooking, for she had learned to cook the most healthful and nourishing meals he had ever eaten. She just took to it like a duck takes to

water, he thought appreciatively. But his thoughts were interrupted by the sharp ring of a pacing horse's hoofs on the gravel of the road, and a smart, rubber-tired buggy passed him-then stopped abruptly. Philip looked up. It was Clayton Bonner. He leaped from the buggy and came over to Philip.

"I have been looking all over the county for you, O'Meara," he said in his clipped, businesslike tone. "If you are through for the day, put your horse in the livery stable and come with me. It is of the Lord; we need you."

Again the helpless feeling of being led rather than leading took possession of Philip. He was on his way to the Bonner farm in less than twenty minutes. "I will bring you right back here in the morning," remarked Mr. Bonner. "You won't lose an hour."

Arriving at the farm, Philip could hardly see that the journey was of the Lord. Mrs. Bonner, even though she was silent and thoughtful as a rule and never said anything unless it "packed a punch", was taciturn almost to the point of being insulting. Philip was puzzled. He had been able to fathom to a small extent her quiet demeanor before; but now the hostility and coldness were too apparent for a mistake. She seemed to be filled with a cold, seething anger and resentment. He wondered if she had concurred with her husband in sending for him, or whether he had hunted for him against her expressed will. Surely this must be the case. He was later to learn it was.

Mr. Bonner was doing the chores, and Philip was helping her with the dishes as he had always done, when she lashed out furiously at him. "I wish we had never seen or heard tell of you and your seventh-day Sabbath," she burst out angrily.

Philip stopped wiping dishes and looked at her in astonishment. "My Sabbath! My Sabbath, you say. It is mine only as the Creator made it and gave it to man. It is



not mine any more than it is yours or your husband's. And it is a blessed gift. God is not pleased with such talk, Mrs. Bonner, and I'm surprised at you!"

Here she burst into a torrent of weeping and began to tell him how it was going to make her lose all her friends and make them social outcasts even among their relatives.

"This is a strange thing," Philip observed calmly. "The last time I was here, you gave every evidence of accepting the truths as God has so plainly set them forth in His Word. You seemed to rejoice in truth--to love it. Are you so changed that a woman of your intelligence could love error, Mrs. Bonner?"

Just then Mr. Bonner came in, and since he heard the last of the conversation, he clarified matters a little. "I am afraid Mabel has let the minister of her church talk her into too much doubt," he said, leading the way into the living room. His wife followed silently, carrying the kitchen lamp.

"But then, a person seems to get what he wants, even if it is not the real facts," he observed, sitting down in his chair. "I told Mabel that if she wanted to hunt for a reason why she should not keep the seventh-day Sabbath, the best person to call was the minister of the local church, and she took me at my word. He didn't say a thing I could pin my eternal salvation on, I am glad to say! As far as I'm concerned, he did nothing but malign the Adventist Church. That proves nothing to me."

Mrs. Bonner seated herself and, ignoring her husband's last remark, faced Philip almost defiantly. "Mr. O'Meara, since you were here last, I did, it is true, see my minister. But that is not all. I asked the Lord for a sign as to whether I should keep the seventh-day Sabbath or not. What do you think of that?" she asked almost petulantly.

"I think you or anyone else that does a thing like that is doing a wrong and a foolish thing," Philip answered her instantly. "You have no right to ask the Lord for a sign as to whether or not you should obey one of His express commands. God would not honor a prayer like that any more than He would if I prayed for permission to steal your husband's fine Morgan stallion. If you could do that, anything would be possible. That is not the prayer of one who loves the law, Mrs. Bonner. And believe me, if you so pray in the face of all you know to be true, Satan will come and soothe your conscience and make you believe a lie."

"Why, I would not think of praying to be allowed to steal," she answered indignantly. "I wouldn't think of such a thing."

"Why not?" Philip asked her.

"That would be different from what I have done."

"In what way would it be different? A commandment is a commandment, whether it is the fourth, the sixth, or the eighth, Mrs. Bonner."

"Well, I don't see why it is wrong for me to pray for a sign," she argued stubbornly. "I can't see myself keeping Saturday, of all days!"

"Don't forget, Mrs. Bonner, that even in the days when Jesus walked the earth, the unbelieving Jews asked Him for a sign. Just think--they had the impudence to ask Him for a sign, after they had seen Him cast out devils, multiply the bread, and even raise the dead. He said they would get no sign but the sign of the prophet Jonah."

"Why, I . . ."

"Yes, Mrs. Bonner, you are like those Jews, steeling your heart against truth so plain that even a babe could see it. The Lord won't answer a prayer like that."

"But I got my answer," she protested in weak triumph. "I got it. You just read Colossians 2:16. That's my answer. You can't face that one, Mr. O'Meara!"

"Yes," her husband remarked grimly, "her pastor said you'd never be able to answer that one. I told her you would. This is of the Lord!"

Philip never felt so strong in Christ as he felt in that moment. Unflinchingly, unafraid--for who needs to be afraid of truth?--he opened his Bible and turned to the text. She was watching every expression on his face, almost with bated breath. He read, "'Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days'."

"Now, you stopped too soon, Mrs. Bonner," Philip said calmly. "You need to read the next verse so that you will really have the whole sentence that Paul was saying to the Colossians. You don't have a complete thought without it. Let us read it: 'Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.'

"Now, Mrs. Bonner, the context of these verses plainly shows that the meats, the drinks, the fast days, and the sabbath days to which the apostle had reference were, as he says, 'a shadow of things to come.'

"There were seven of these yearly sabbaths, Mrs. Bonner, mentioned in Leviticus, and they were not to be confused with the Sabbath of rest, the Sabbath of the Decalogue. We talked of this before. Surely you know more than to confuse the weekly Sabbath with the ceremonial sabbaths!"

"Oh, I knew, of course, that there were other--well, feast days called sabbaths," she admitted grudgingly, ashamed and fearful that he might think her ignorant of what is a well-known fact of Bible history.

"Then you surely know that all these ceremonial sabbaths pointed forward to the Messiah to come, and that Messiah was Jesus Christ. But the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week, why, God said in Exodus 31:16, 17 that the Sabbath must be observed throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant--a sign between His people and God that He created this world."

"Then, in that case," observed Mr. Bonner, "it points backward like--well, like a birthday, you might say, to an event in the past. That's the way I see it."

"It does indeed," answered Philip enthusiastically, "and that is not all. The Sabbath was never done away with by the Lord or His disciples, for I can show you where they all kept the Sabbath, and I can show you in history where it was changed by men, not by God. It will be kept in the new earth the Lord is preparing for the redeemed; listen, and I will read it to you: 'And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord.' Isaiah 66:23."

"Sounds logical to me," declared Mr. Bonner.

Philip was on such sure and familiar ground that he could hardly say enough about his favorite subject. The words just poured from him. "The eternal Sabbath of the Lord is a constant memorial and a sign of Christ's power to create, uphold, and sanctify. I tell you, the law of God is unchangeable, and the Sabbath is in the very midst of the law. We cannot direct a dart against it without turning it on ourselves."

Suddenly Mrs. Bonner, who was crying now, jumped up from the chair with tears streaming down her cheeks. She turned to her husband in a blazing fury. "Didn't I tell you he would say that?" She slammed her Bible down on the table, ran into her bedroom, and banged the door. They could hear her sobbing.

"Don't mind her." whispered the husband. "She is as smart as a whip, and her folks and her minister have been giving her a bad time. They hatched up this text, and she thought sure it would give her a leg to stand on. She sees now it was no use, and she is defeated, but hates to admit you tumbled down her neatly laid little structure of defense. I told her all the time that her stand was not logical. But she would not listen. This will nearly floor her. 'She hates to be considered illogical and ignorant, and she isn't really.'"

"You can't fight against truth," whispered Philip.

"I know it. I know it," Mr. Bonner answered quietly.

Philip never saw either of them any more. When he got back home, there was a buyer waiting to purchase his equity in the farm. Only a year had he been in North Dakota, but he felt the Lord was calling him away. So they sold, and made a good profit on their investment.

They went to visit relatives for a while, and Philip and Grace finally decided to move to Tennessee and prepare themselves to enter self-supporting work for the Lord. With his truth-filled books, he had left many a seed of truth to germinate. He always wondered about the Bonners, and what had happened to them. He wrote once, but got the letter back with a notice that they had moved away and left no address.

Down at Madison Sanitarium, Philip took the nurses' course. Grace kept house, cared for her children, canned fruit, made gardens; and when the children were old enough for school, she worked too.

While her husband was busy with his patients, she worked in the kitchen, in the hospital, and in the laundry. But she never forgot to pray, even about little things.

One day an expensive linen tablecloth came up missing. It belonged to Mrs. Scott, and no one could seem to find it. Grace thought she had looked everywhere. Two weeks, then three weeks, went by, and still no trace of the missing cloth. Grace took it to the Lord in prayer. That night she dreamed she got a ladder and climbed to the top of a high shelf, where in a box she found Mrs. Scott's cloth. She found it exactly as she had dreamed.

Spending many years in self-sacrificing work, Philip and Grace with pleasure and rejoicing saw their children grow up in the Lord's work. Some entered the medical work, others the teaching profession; but all of them loved the truth as Philip had learned it back when Uncle John and Aunt Caroline still lived.

Now they have a big, roomy, comfortable home, where the stranger and the wayfarer alike are always welcome. They are continually seeking out the needy and unfortunate and giving them help. Grace piles up things from her freezer in bushel baskets and sends them to the needy.

"We can never forget how the Lord has helped us," Grace says. "And how He even knew when our flour barrel was empty," Philip will add, laughing at her enthusiasm.

One day a visitor from North Dakota was in their home. Philip listened to her talk of her travels about the state with nostalgia in his heart. He was young again in his memories and could see the blizzards as they were when he had to follow a rope to get to the barn to feed the stock. He recalled the happy years of colporteur work, and their early married life. He thought of the many homes he had visited and the books he had sold.

"By the way," he asked, "in your travels, did you ever come across a family named Bonner? I once knew a family by that name, and I have always wondered what became of them."

"Were they Seventh-day Adventists?" queried the visitor.

"That I do not know," answered Philip slowly. "They ought to be, for they believed it. I spent many a night studying the Bible with them."

"Do you remember, was it Clayton and Mabel Bonner? If it was, I surely know them and know them well. Why, she is the pillar in the Hertz Church. They do not have a child of their own, but would you believe it, they took in and reared ten poor children, even educating every one of them through the academy! Oh, they are good people-salt of the earth."

"Did Mrs. Bonner ever say how she found this truth?"

"Oh, yes; I have heard her tell it many a time in church. She told of a colporteur, and how she gave him such a bad time, she was so hateful and insulting, and how he went away, and she never got to thank him. She always said she would do that first thing when she got to heaven. Say, Mr. O'Meara, you canvassed in North Dakota. Was it you, by any chance, who took the truth to this Bonner family?"

The past was so vivid that Philip could see it all, the clean kitchen; himself wiping dishes so that they could eat to their Bible study; the eager, intelligent face of the woman; how hard she fought the truth. He was glad, oh, so glad, she had won the victory. He had his big handkerchief out and was wiping away the tears, tears of joy.

"Yes," he answered brokenly. "I was the one who cast that bread on the waters. And lo, I have found it after these many days, and I am fed."

I Saw Thee Phillip