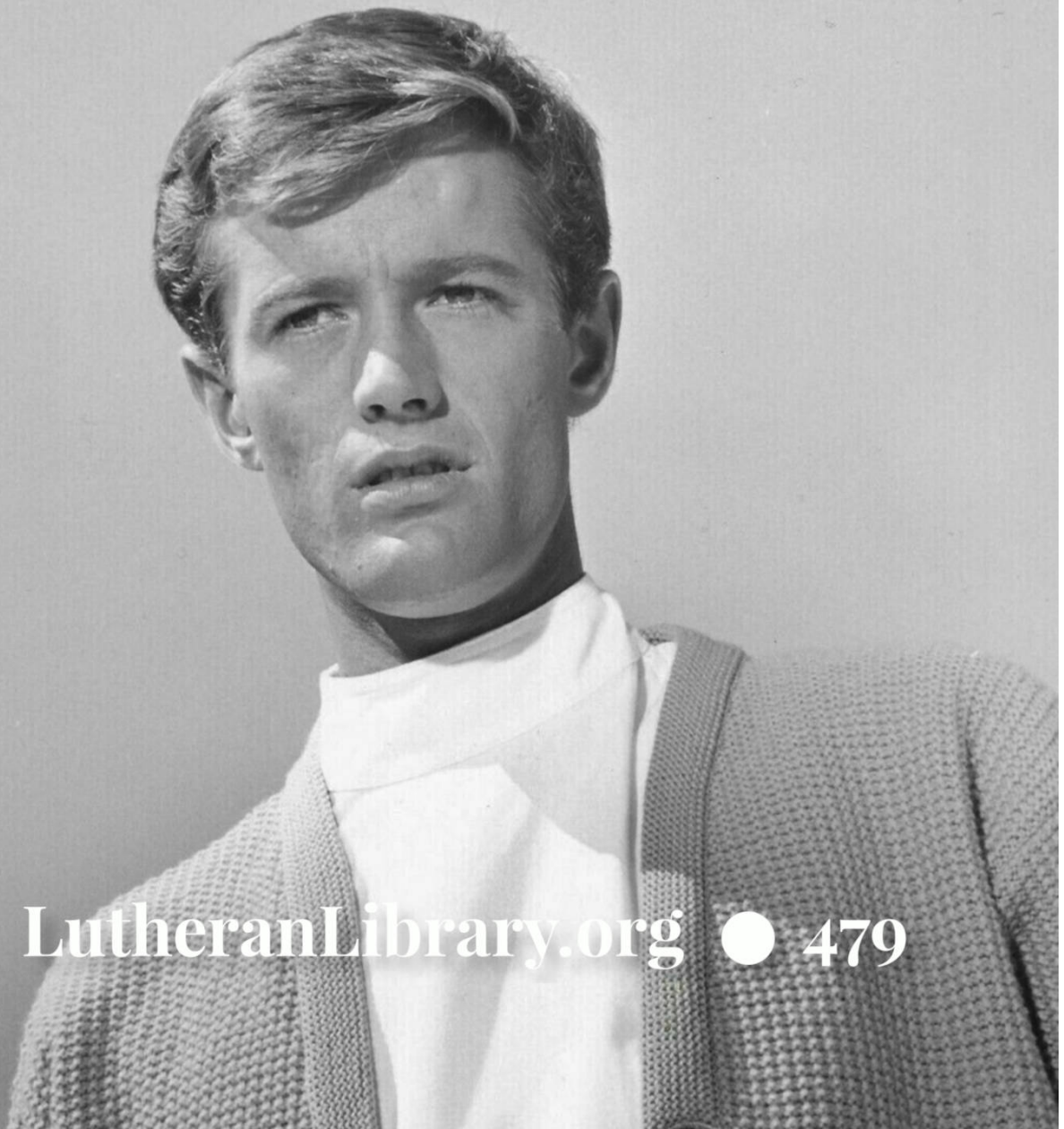


Dan E. L. Patch

Aamon Always



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Aamon Always

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Aamon Always

By Dan E. L. Patch

CHIEF OF POLICE, HIGHLAND PARK, MICHIGAN; AUTHOR OF "PAST FINDING
OUT"

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Dedication

Dedicated to my beloved daughter
MARGARET
whose Christian life and radiant smile
inspire me to greater service for Christ

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How Can You Find Peace With God?

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Preface by Lutheran Librarian

In republishing this book, we seek to introduce this author to a new generation of those seeking spiritual truth.

Dan E. L. Patch began his public service as a patrolman in the Police Department of the City of Highland Park. Within fifteen years, personal qualifications brought him through the various ranks to the position of Chief of Police. A quarter of a century of faithful service gave a feeling of joy and explicit confidence to all citizens who respected the law and who liked to see it administered without fear or favor. Professional competence was attested by the honor conferred by the Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police when he was made their President for the years 1941-42. In later years he served as Chief of Police of Ypsilanti, Michigan.

By J. McGill Reynar, *Secretary of The Christian Business Men's Committee of Detroit.*

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Foreword

“JUVENILE DELINQUENCY” is a common phrase in every American city, indeed, in every nation. And how I hate to hear people talking about this condition in much the same way as they discuss the weather. Moreover, they are doing the same thing that Mark Twain said they did about the weather — *nothing*. We are hiding behind a propagating factor — our own moral misbehavior.

What causes this condition? Adult delinquency! We don't like to admit it, because when we do we step on our own toes. Who is responsible? God! How that answer amplifies our egotism. It fosters our attitude of self-sufficiency in shifting our responsibility. Yes, of course, God is responsible! Has He not ordained that man shall live under three laws — Physical, Moral, Spiritual?

Then is not God to blame for existing conditions? we ask skeptically. No, God is not to blame, we are! Why? we naturally protest. Again the answer is evident. We defy God's law of moral responsibility, and God's laws are fixed, demanding a penalty absolute and sure. Therefore, the consequences are inevitable: “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” “God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children.”

Those who defy God and place themselves in opposition to the physical laws of gravitation, momentum, or chemical reaction must suffer the consequences. When we defy God's moral law, civilization suffers the consequences. Hence, “juvenile delinquency.” When God's spiritual law is defied, the soul of man suffers the consequences.

Provincial law holds no cure or solution for all these problems, no matter how high the plane of self-righteousness; therefore, this volume is presented, pointing the way to the Door of Hope.

DAN E. L. PATCH,

HIGHLAND PARK, MICHIGAN.

1. Life's Equations

LIFE! Incapable of being clearly defined! The stumbling block of science! It was all about him, that aesthetic essence of existence, but what was it? Life!

Aamon, the outcast, was perplexed; he thought, wondered, thinking the same thoughts and asking the same questions that every individual with a faculty for normal reasoning has asked himself since time immemorial. Life was a enigma to him and doubly so concerning his own being. To others it was a period of time between birth and death. To him it was an unrecorded existence between these unknown portals, laden with trials and tribulations.

Yes, Aamon, the outcast, wondered! He was justly entitled to wonder. Life! Whence came it? Whence came he? Why was he living? It meant everything to him. How one life involved so much uncertainty was appalling! He was mystified, caught in a quagmire of tangled thoughts, faced with the concern of material existence, national existence and a complicated individual existence. And the struggle had only begun.

As an outcast, only one course of action presented itself to him. Fight he must! He was facing the battle of life in cold, inescapable reality. But what was he to do? What could he do? He had never been concerned about it before. His father, the only father that he had ever known, took care of that. But now his father was dead and he, a outcast, had no place to lay his head. Oh, that he were in the grave beside the father whom he loved — the one who had done so much for him! Death would be a blessing compared to the avalanche of trouble that had suddenly descended upon his young shoulders, and all because life had ceased to function in the one who had been his father, his protector, his ever-ready counselor in time of need.

He surveyed the dell into which he had fled as a haven of refuge in order to get away from the tormenting accusations of his older brothers. It was seething with life — all forms of life. Scarcely ten feet above him a mother robin was perched on the side of her nest feeding her young, while at the base of the tree a chipmunk scampered through the leaves toward a old

stump. On the dead stub of a stately old oak nearby a woodpecker incessantly hammered, vying for attention with a saucy gray squirrel that chattered beneath at the mouth of his den in the trunk of the tree.

Beyond these immediate surroundings, floating through the shimmering sunlight, a number of butterflies displayed a blaze of color, as they hovered over a prolific dogwood in full bloom. It was midspring and the evidence of nature's coming to life was to be seen everywhere. Yes, everywhere life was lending itself to the enchantment of the season.

Aamon had never noticed so much activity. The place was abounding with life. There seemed to be animation everywhere. But that was not the right word. "Animation" did not fully explain it. Awe-stricken, he searched his mind for a word to fit the occasion but failed. There was no satisfactory explanation within the scope of his knowledge, that was adequate to describe this manifestation of life.

Slowly, he found his way to the bottom of an overhanging bank and lay down upon a carpet of green grass, alongside a little spring that originated in the hillside. Even the spring was invigorated by the call of nature! He marveled as he watched it effervescing from the clear white sand at the bottom of the little pool that served as the fountainhead of a tiny rivulet that trickled over the brightly colored stones to the river several hundred feet below.

He lay and watched the spring for a long time. Its untiring energy was fascinating, but its charm was not sufficient to keep him from dwelling upon his own troubles.

"I told you he is not our brother!" The taunting words had rung in his ears and re-echoed in the very depths of his heart, as he fled from the accusing presence of his three older brothers.

"They are not my brothers," he reflected, as he searched the outline of his own image in the pool. They were not his brothers! He would not own them if they were. He was going away. They did not want him!

Seething with anger, he studied the mirror-like pool. "So I am a freckled-faced 'sheeny'! Picked me up in Europe. Never had any father nor mother!" he snapped viciously, repeating the cruel accusations that his brother Justin had flung after him as he fled through the back door.

He put his thumbs against the tragi of his ears, crowding them shut, and held his head in his hands spread across his forehead. For some time he lay leaning on his elbows in this manner, thinking of the significance of

Justin's statement and what prompted it. Then he went over in detail the accusations that all three of his brothers had hurled after him.

"I knew it! I knew it! I always knew it! He's nothing but a red-headed, freckled-faced sheeny' that father picked up in Europe; probably never had any father," he repeated, rebelling against the accusation.

"Look at his face! It's like the map of Jerusalem. There's not a drop of Barton blood in his veins! There's a nigger in the woodpile somewhere. He's no relation of ours and I'm glad of it," were the tormenting words added to the insult by his youngest brother, Basil. "I can't see what father and mother were ever thinking of in trying to pawn a 'kike' like him off on us as their own son!"

"Brother? Bah! Who would own him?" How those words stung and cut to his very heart's core.

"Boys, boys," said Chase Barton, as he reprovved his two younger brothers with a sarcastic smile. "Remember God's chosen people! You should be happy that Aamon is one of them."

"Well, then, let the Lord take care of His own," was Basil's vicious snarl that still rang in his ears. "We don't want any of the responsibility."

Aamon had listened to this blare of accusations until he could stand it no longer. Chase Barton and his younger brothers, Justin and Basil, might all be older than he, but they had no right to taunt him with the accusation that he had no father. He was just as good as they, even though they did not want to own him as their brother. He had been raised in a Christian home and treated the same as the other children, and no distinctions had been made before.

But doubt now seized him. He was red-headed. His face was freckled. His nose resembled somewhat that feature of a Jew. He was born in Europe. And the awful truth that he was adopted, which had just been brought home to him through the reading of his father's will, confronted him. He was not his father's and mother's son, as he had always supposed.

Were he able to give vent to his feelings in a flood of tears, he might have found relief, but anger would not permit that. He was the victim of cruel circumstances over which he had no control. Who was he? Why had he never been told? The answer was obvious. Had his father lived until he became of age, the question of his genealogy would never have been raised; but now death had revealed this distressing secret. Who was his real father and mother? Where were they? How could he find them?

With a faraway look, Aamon studied his reflection in the pool in front of him. Even though he had removed his thumbs from his ears, he was deaf to the commotion created by the birds and the animal life about him, in their enthusiastic answers to the call of spring. Slowly the muscles of his face relaxed as he thought back over the few short years spent at the Barton home. Life had been sweet — one continual round of wholesome pleasure, Christian joy, and contentment. Every day had been a happy day, until one morning a year previous when Mrs. Barton had suddenly died and he was left motherless. She had dearly loved him, and he loved her as a devoted son. Her death was a severe blow, but his young heart was brave, and he assumed his share of the added responsibility which the family had been called upon to bear. This continued until the wound in his heart was reopened by the sudden death of Mr. Barton, scarcely twelve months later. And now this new trouble, more horrible than death! He was a nameless outcast with no rightful place to lay his head.

A great lump of despair arose in Aamon's throat, and caused the tears to roll down each cheek. Drop, drop, drop, they fell in the pool with tiny, rhythmic splashes. Of course, he could go back to the house and endure the insults of his three foster brothers, but it would be home no longer. There was only one thought of encouragement, one remaining tie left — Jeanne, his foster sister, who was near his own age. Her presence in the home was the only inducement for him to return.

He reflected upon what it would mean to part with her. She meant so much in bringing words of comfort to him. A vision of her loveliness gave consolation to his troubled heart, and he was enchanted with the beauty of her presence. Hidden beneath her long lashes were those large violet-blue eyes, appearing a most black within the shadows which seemed to beck on him. Such eyes, serious with depth and thought, gave him confidence in her sincerity. How could he entertain the thought of leaving!

His grief was too great for him to think further. He couldn't reason. There was no other plan of action of but to go away and leave it all — all his troubles that had descended like an avalanche to engulf and pin of him to the spot. But he couldn't go away and leave his brothers to fight over the Barton estate that provided for his future needs. No, his father's will was very specific in setting aside certain stipulated amounts to be used for the necessary expenses of his children in going through high school, as well as a liberal allowance toward their college education should they so desire.

Their initiative was the first consideration. Moreover, Aamon and Jeanne's education was definitely provided for in a mandatory endowment which was to be held in trust by the Board of Regents of the local university, who were to allocate it in accordance with the educational requirements of these particular heirs. Chase Barton, the eldest son, who had just received his degree at law, was made the executor of the estate, and was charged with the responsibility of carrying out the provisions of his father's will.

Though he did not fully understand, Aamon was aware of this. But the shock came in the discovery of what had been a suspicion that he was only a foster son. This knowledge seemed to so change his brothers' demeanor toward him that he was crushed. He couldn't fathom the cold, heartless change that suddenly came over them. Certainly he was not responsible for the fact that he had been made a protégé in Europe, instead of being born of the house of Barton, as he had always believed.

Following the death of a baby boy, two years younger than Jeanne, Mr. Barton, upon the advice of his physician, had taken his wife abroad, leaving his dental office in the care of a loyal employee, who had been in his service since graduating from college and was capable of caring for his practice during his absence. The trip had a twofold purpose other than permitting Mrs. Barton to recuperate from a general breakdown. It would allow them to visit the place of her birth. Her brothers and sisters, whom she had not seen since childhood, were still living in an urban community in Switzerland, where they followed the watchmaker's trade. Naturally, she wanted to see them as well as her mother, who had returned from the States to the land of her forefathers nearly twenty years previous, following the death of her husband. Then, too, Mr. Barton had the hobby of searching into the archives of ancient Greek and Hebrew history, particularly in its application to Biblical translations. Consequently, they spent a period of more than three years abroad before returning to America, when they introduced Aamon as their son.

Many questions were asked, because of the mystery attached to the fact that this child's port of entry was through Canada and in the custody of Mrs. Barton's sister who had returned from Europe with them. It was only natural that many looked upon the delicate, undernourished child with an eye of suspicion as to his lineal descent. But the Bartons kept their own counsel, and when no information was forthcoming it was generally conceded that it was a family secret and not one to be discussed. To all

intents and purposes, as far as the knowledge of the world in general was concerned, Aamon was the son of Alice and Andrew Barton. Nor was the immediate family ever advised otherwise until the will was read, disclosing their acquirement of this European foundling by means of adoption.

There had never been any papers filed, legal or otherwise, and so outside of the clause in the will, which certified to Aamon's right as a heir, there was of no evidence of his sonship. That, the attorney pointed out, was indeed a very interesting question. What were his rights in view of the fact that his birth could neither be affirmed nor refuted?

Aside from this will, Aamon knew little, and so little that his sun sank beyond the horizon of hope, and left him to face life in the unfathomable blackness of despair.

2. Complications Develop

THERE WAS JUST CAUSE for the tear-stained face that Jeanne displayed when she was called from her room by the executive head of the household, Chase Barton, and told to find Aamon. Not that she had any other thought than to obey the command of her brother. To her, his word was law, the same as her father's had always been. But her heart ached with a load of grief — grief of such magnitude that it was almost unbearable. She had been present at the reading of her father's will by Mr. Soules of the firm of attorneys who had drafted it. She had heard the discussion that followed afterward, and the more she understood the legal terms and their queer phraseology, the heavier her heart became.

Although Aamon had been taken care of in a financial way, that did not compensate for the grief that the document caused in revealing the fact of his adoption. Even though undue care and consideration had been lavished in Aamon's behalf to protect his right as an heir, as Mr. Soules explained, that still did not suffice. There were many things more important than money, things that money could not buy, and Aamon's birth right was one of them. Nor could it be changed to her satisfaction. She had always loved and claimed him as a brother. Now there was a gulf fixed between them that legal terms in a will could not bridge. One of the insurmountable laws of God had robbed her of a brother and left, instead, a broken heart.

Like Aamon's, her mind was in a turmoil. They were each on opposite sides of a great ravine which only love could bridge. Love was the one thing that the three older brothers could not take away from them. In fact, their cold, heartless attitude toward Aamon only served to draw her closer in sympathetic understanding.

But Jeanne's mission now was to find Aamon, and to bring him back. She knew that she could find him at the spring. That had always been their place of refuge in joy or sorrow. There they had spent many happy hours together in a playhouse that Justin had helped them to build before their mother died. It was there that they found consolation, when faced with the

loss of a mother's love and care. That was in the fall. When their father died, the bleak cold winds of late winter would not permit a visit to their haven. But now the balmy days of early spring had again been inviting their return.

Cautiously, she approached the dell and stood on the bank above the spring, surveying the prostrate form which lay before it. She tried to sing a few notes of a song in order to attract his attention, as she had done in the past when coming there unawares; but the big lump in her throat would not permit it. She couldn't utter a sound, nor was she able to attract Aamon's attention otherwise. She was on sacred ground, and the tears she saw roll from his cheeks into the pool brought a sympathetic flood to her own eyes. With a choking sob she hurried down beside him and threw her arms around his shoulders.

"Aamon," she sobbed hysterically.

"Jae," he choked bravely using the family diminutive.

"I came for you," she whispered, scarcely daring to look up.

Slowly he rose and seated himself beside her. Each of them was struggling to control emotions and regain composure.

"Chase sent me," she said simply.

"I know, Jae, but how can I go back?"

"I am sorry, Aamon. It breaks my heart. I — I wish it were not so. If only it didn't have to be, I would be so happy. But all I can do is — is to be sorry," she explained piteously.

"Jae, I know how you feel, and if it were not for you I could go away and try to forget. But how can I go and leave you — the only friend I've got. I — I . . ."

"Not your only friend. You have forgotten that Christ is our best Friend. He tells us, 'Ye are my friends, if you do whatsoever I command you.' And do not forget, too, what the Psalmist wrote: 'When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me.'" He is our best Friend and it would not be right of for you to go away. Don't you see?"

"But Justin and Basil, and sometimes I think that Chase, too, really hate me. I ought to go away even though I never could forget. They hate me because..."

"It seems that way, I know. I can't understand it. They were not that way before mother died. Only since we lost father last month have they really

been so mean and hateful toward you. It breaks my heart, yet I want to love them the same as I do you. . .”

It was Aamon’s turn to interrupt.

“Don’t, Jae,” he commanded. “I want you to continue to love them; they are your brothers, your own flesh and blood.”

“But they should not treat you so. It is Christ’s command that we love one another.”

“I shall never permit myself to hate your brothers, Jae, no matter what they do to me or think of me. I only wish that I had never been born, then all this never would have happened. They would not have to be bothered with a nameless nobody like me,” Aamon sadly declared.

“Don’t, Aamon! It hurts so to hear you say that. Someday, you’ll . . .”

“There is no someday for me,” mourned Aamon.

“‘With God all things are possible,’ Aamon,” she rejoined consolingly. “Let us have faith in God, like Abraham, and not doubt. I know it looks dark today, but the sun will shine through these dark clouds of despair and reveal God’s someday for you. Otherwise, His promises are not true. God cannot lie.”

“Yes, Jae, God’s promises are true,” he agreed; “but what I cannot understand is why God has permitted all this to come to me, to you, and to all of us. It causes one to doubt that there is a just God; it’s all so complicated.”

“That’s why I always carry this Testament which mother gave me,” Jeanne answered seriously, producing the leather-bound copy from her blouse. “Faith looks at the promises of God and does not waver through unbelief.”

Aamon’s conscience smote him. He had a Testament in his own room that matched Jeanne’s. Mrs. Barton had given it to him on her deathbed, and he had promised her that he would read it daily and let God talk to him from His Word. He had failed miserably. It was lying on his dresser and had not been read for months. God’s promises were there waiting for him, but he had not claimed them. Rather, he had grown careless and indifferent, and had utterly failed in the work that had been given him to do. He had been untrue to his mother and his God by neglecting to keep the promise he had so earnestly made her. She was his mother then. Perhaps if he had been faithful to her God would never have revealed the fact that she was not his real mother and he would have been happy.

He could not get away from the Scriptures: “The way of transgressors is hard”; and, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” These passages challenged his mind and heart.

Jeanne pointed to a verse on one of the tear-stained pages of her Testament: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.” He read it carefully, following her finger across the printed page.

“That is one of God’s promises,” she ventured.

“It is one of the Lord’s specific promises to His disciples,” he corrected; “I am not a disciple.”

“But you should be; you can be! He is willing and waiting to receive you. He is waiting to bring satisfaction, joy, and happiness into your life. Listen to His Word of promise: ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life.’ Then notice these words: ‘These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.’”

Aamon made a gesture to interrupt her.

“Just a moment more, please, and listen to this,” urged Jeanne: “‘And ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.’”

“But, Jeanne, don’t you see that those verses are not applicable to me? Christ here is talking to His disciples before His crucifixion. He is predicting the resurrection of His body, and telling them that He will see them again; telling them that they shall rejoice and that no one can take that joy from them. Don’t you see that that is not for me?” Aamon earnestly exclaimed.

“Yes, but that does not leave you out, if you are His true disciple, for has He not said: ‘I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you’? All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” God’s Word is true. It is applicable to you. He is coming again and we shall see Him as He is,” Jeanne enthusiastically assured him. “Your joy will be found in receiving Him, and fully trusting Him to save and keep you.”

“But . . .”

“No, Aamon,” she interrupted, “you cannot ask God for a physical impossibility — that my father and mother be your father and mother, or that your father and mother be my father and mother. That cannot be, but we can trust God to make all things work together for good, and give us peace of heart and mind in believing that His purposes and plans for our lives are best. Why you were adopted into our family, we do not know. That is something that father and mother did not choose to tell us. Nor do we know if your father and mother are still living. Let us pray to God that that may be so, and that you will someday be united with them here on earth, or brought into their presence in the life beyond, if the reunion cannot be in this life.”

Aamon pondered in deep thought, the tears of disappointment rolling down his cheeks. Jeanne was so overcome with emotion that she dared not trust herself to speak, but threw her arms around his neck and kissed him in sympathetic understanding.

Unknown to them, Basil had been watching from the bank ten feet above the spring. Leaning against a small oak, the roots of which kept the bank from caving into the pool below, he stood with a sarcastic sneer clouding his features. Impatiently, he tried to devise some means to interrupt the scene without having it appear deliberate. The longer he watched, the more irritated he became. When his sister Jeanne produced the Testament, and endeavored to console Aamon, he became angry. Aamon was an outcast in the home, therefore Basil did not want anyone to give him any consideration in his troubles. His only thought was: “Away with him!” He did not want him around any longer. He was a European Jew if anybody ever was, and he ought to be sent back to his people, or to the country from which he came.

Why his father had given so little consideration in picking up an orphan, he could not understand. It did not make sense. Aamon should be sent back regardless. Surely there was a place in Europe for another wandering Israelite. When Basil saw his sister kiss Aamon in heartbroken sympathy, his blood boiled with hatred. How could she be so thoughtless as to waste time and consolation upon an unwanted foundling! To him Aamon was another Hebrew chiseler, who had fallen into a heritage at the expense of the lawful Barton heirs through pure Jewish luck. If she was that fickle, she would have to be taught a lesson, too. He would put a stop to their

friendship, and with the help of his two brothers devise some way to run the red-headed “sheeny” out of the country.

Writhing in anger, he retraced his steps up the hillside to a large stone pile and selected the largest boulder that he could carry. Holding this before him, he carefully made his way back toward the tree that he had just left. The muscles in his forearms stood out, as he struggled to reach that point of vantage. Panting for want of breath, he leaned against the tree before dropping the rock into the pool beneath.

Attracted by the commotion made above him on the bank, Aamon glanced up just in time to see Basil release his hold upon the large stone he was carrying. Shoving Jeanne to one side, he sprang to his feet.

“K-swa-ssh!” The rock struck the pool of water with a deafening splash.

A great sheet of water gushed from beneath the stone on every side, as it broke the mirror-like surface of the spring. Aamon, standing between Jeanne and the pool, was drenched.

“Basil,” shrieked Jeanne, “how could you be so cruel?”

Too stunned for the moment to think, Aamon wiped the water out of his eyes, while Basil, in convulsions of laughter, rolled on the bank above the Spring.

“Why did you do such a mean thing?” Jeanne’s shrill voice rang through the dell. “You’re meaner than Satan. I wouldn’t treat a dog like that.”

“Neither would I,” Basil sarcastically rejoined.

Aamon tried to curb his temper, but Basil’s scathing laugh made it impossible. In a frenzy of action, he bounded up the bank where his foster brother lay on the ground laughing hilariously. Fearful lest Aamon get the advantage, Basil jumped to his feet to meet his antagonist. Aamon grabbed his feet in a football tackle, just as Basil attempted to kick him. The force of the unexpected attack caused Basil to fall head foremost, down the bank into the spring. It was a tense moment. Basil’s head struck the rock which he had thrown there a few moments before — then followed silence.

Jeanne screamed in terror when she saw her brother fall into the spring, lying with his head half submerged under water alongside the stone that he had struck. The blood began to flow from an ugly cut, which extended from the forehead back through the scalp, and to spread through the water in the spring. Basil, unconscious from the blow, lay as one dead.

“He has killed himself! I know he has been killed! He is dead! I know he is!” she screamed in a panic of fright, wringing her hands.

Aamon sprang down the bank beside Basil and lifted his head from the pool. Throughout the dell a death like silence reigned, except for Jeanne's earnest prayer:

"O Lord, why did this have to happen? Please grant that he will not die. Lord, we know that all things are possible with Thee, if we can only believe. We do believe, Lord, that Thou cans't save Basil. Save him now! Let him speak to us, Lord."

Aamon, still holding Basil's head, was sponging out the cut with his handkerchief, which he was dipping into the cold spring water in his effort to stop the flow of blood.

Turning to Jeanne, he said, "If you will help me lift him, we will try to get his head away from the spring, so he can rest easier."

"Then he isn't dead?" she queried anxiously.

"Let us still have hope that God will answer your prayer," Aamon replied with encouragement. "He has a very bad cut through the scalp, but it doesn't appear that any bones are broken. I am sure his neck isn't, and of that I was afraid."

"O God, we're so thankful, but let him speak to us," she prayed.

Together they moved Basil's limp form, so that he would be away from the pool. It was only a few feet to a spot where there was a green, velvety cushion of grass. He was too heavy for them to move farther. Aamon took off his jacket and after rolling it up in the form of a pillow, he placed it under Basil's head and continued to bathe the wound with the handkerchiefs that Jeanne dipped in the spring, wrung out, and passed to him.

Once Aamon thought he saw the flicker of an eyelash, but he was not certain. He felt his pulse, but still there was no assurance of life. Secretly, he hoped that life was still there. Encouragement came, then left him in doubt. He thought he discovered a faint glow of changing color in Basil's features, still that did not give definite assurance that he was all right. There was possibility of grave danger to be faced. Serious consequences might develop later from the concussion, if the skull was fractured or a blood vessel had burst in the brain.

"What shall we do?" Jeanne asked hopelessly.

"What *can* we do? you mean. We cannot carry him, and we cannot leave him here alone. I thought of running back to the house for help, but it seemed for a moment as though he might become conscious, and I did not

want that to happen with you here alone with him. He might possibly become violent.”

“Why did this have to happen?” Jeanne again lamented hysterically. “Now they will blame you for killing him. They’ll blame you, I know they will. Why did you do it? Why did you fight with him?”

Too stunned to speak, Aamon anxiously looked from Jeanne to Basil. It was a serious situation. Considering the picture that she had painted, there was nothing for him to say. What could he say? If it hadn’t been for his hasty temper this thing would not have happened. He was to blame in more ways than one, and therefore he could not defend himself. It would be better for him to say nothing.

He was a murderer! He would be considered such if Basil should die! The thought was horrifying; some thing must be done.

“You had better go and get Chase and Justin to bring the car,” he mumbled weakly. “Tell them to hurry and drive as far as they can down the lane. We’ll have to carry him that far when they come. Hurry, now, and come back as soon as you can!”

Jeanne needed only this suggestion. Without stopping to reply, she was off with a bound in search of aid for her stricken brother.

Basil, slowly regaining consciousness, yet unable to move, had heard his sister’s remarks blaming Aamon. That was a good alibi. He would deny everything, and with Jeanne’s report that Aamon had attacked him, and thrown him into the spring, the theory of an accident would be eliminated.

This was different from what he had expected. Jeanne evidently did not realize that he was more to blame than Aamon. Well, that was something she never need know. Elated, he became the villain in a plot. Through slightly opened eyelids, he watched as Aamon bathed the cut on his head. It did not hurt very much. The cool water was soothing and helped him to fight off the temptation to show signs of consciousness until it was necessary. With secret delight he studied Aamon’s nervous reaction, as he impatiently kept looking up the hill for Jeanne to return.

He could scarcely suppress a smile when the minutes slipped by and help did not come. It was great fun to see the large beads of perspiration roll from Aamon’s brow in his anxiety. He enjoyed the agony of soul and mental suffering that this worry occasioned. Craftily, he continued to play possum and watch through the long lashes of his apparently closed eyelids.

“You’ll lose a lot more than a few drops of sweat before this is settled,” Basil prophesied under his breath. “You’ll rue the day that you were born, and will be shedding blood instead of sweat, if I get my wish. It’s too bad that you were not the one to crash your head against the stone instead of me,” he muttered.

Aamon was quick to note the first audible signs of life and bent over the stricken egomaniac, hopefully waiting to be assured that he had heard aright. Basil steeled himself to the ordeal without being discovered in his deception.

“Basil, speak to me, or do something so that I will know that you are alive and can hear,” Aamon pleaded; but the prone man refrained from revealing any evidence of life.

“Hear, O God, and answer my prayer. Let Basil live. I don’t want to live and be called a murderer. Save Basil, Lord! Save him for the sake of Jeanne, Chase and Justin. Lord, have mercy and let me die in his place,” Aamon pleaded desperately.

Impatiently, he arose and started up the bank, and then turned and came back, biting his fingernails.

“Speak to me! Speak to me!” he fairly screamed; “SPEAK!”

A faint rumble of an approaching car in the lane was the only sound that could be heard. Aamon dashed madly up the bank to the top of the hill and stood waving for the rescuing party to hurry.

In the meantime, Basil with a sarcastic sneer on his face opened his eyes and looked about him. For the second time, when no one was watching, he felt the cut in his head with diabolical cunning. Saturating his fingers with the blood that was still oozing from the scalp wound, he smeared his forehead and portions of his face to make himself look as hideous as possible. Satisfied that he had accomplished the desired results, he rolled over, looked in the pool at his reflection, added a few more repulsive smears to his already disfigured features, then rinsed off his hands and laid down, before anyone could discover that he had regained consciousness.

“He’s dead! He’s dead!” Chase Barton exclaimed when he approached the prostrate form of Basil lying by the side of the spring. “Jeanne, you go back to the car. This is too horrible for you to see,” he commanded, waving his arms in excitement.

“How did this happen?” Justin angrily inquired of Aamon. “I suppose if the truth were known, you had something to do with it!”

Aamon started to explain, but was suddenly interrupted by Justin who shoved him rudely to one side.

“It’s no time to listen to alibis now,” he snapped. “The first thing that has to be done is to get him to the hospital. We’ll let you tell your story to the State police.”

Chase was busily engaged in chopping down two small poles about eight feet in length with the axe which he had brought with him.

“Here, get busy and roll these up in the edge of the blanket that we brought for a stretcher,” he ordered. “Roll them up even, and be sure that the litter will be long enough to carry him easily.”

Aamon, whose experience as a Boy Scout stood him in good stead, was the first to roll the pole evenly in his side of the blanket. Justin was having difficulty; his side was not rolled firmly enough to hold.

“Here, let Aamon fix that,” said Chase, stepping up and relieving the young scout of the side he had so neatly prepared. Aamon was on his hands and knees next to Justin on the other side of the blanket in a jiffy.

“I don’t need any of his help,” snapped Justin, looking “daggers” at his foster brother.

“It looks to me as though you needed a few lessons in the art of scouting — the help of somebody who knows something about it,” Chase retorted impatiently “Besides, this is no time for petty grievances. You ought to be ashamed of yourself to quibble over such trifles, when you know it is a matter of life or death for us to get Basil to the hospital.”

Justin, “boiling” inside with concealed indignation at his brother’s open rebuke, stepped back to give Aamon a free hand. His face was blanched with anger, revealed by the snapping black eyes, as he marveled at Aamon’s cleverness in preparing the stretcher.

Watching from behind the tree where Basil had released the stone, Jeanne viewed the unhappy scene. She had started back to the car, as her older brother had instructed her, when she heard Justin’s angry words. Ordinarily, her first and only thought was to obey, but in the excitement of what had occurred, she could not refrain from returning to find out what had occasioned the outburst. Realizing she could look on unobserved, she lingered to see what was taking place.

Scarcely able to suppress a scream, she shoved her handkerchief into her mouth just in time to avoid being discovered, when Basil raised himself on his elbows for the third time, thinking he was not detected. He remained

there for a moment, with a mischievous grin covering his hideous features, while everyone's attention was centered on the young scout.

Aamon was the only one that was aware of Jeanne's presence above the spring. Their eyes had met when he arose from a kneeling position to make way for the two older brothers to lay the stretcher on the ground alongside Basil's prostrate form. He, too, had discovered Basil's deception when he first returned. He knew that when he left him to go to the top of the hill his face was washed clean, and that the amount of blood that was then upon his face must have been deliberately applied during his absence. The markings were too grotesque to be natural.

When his keen ear was attracted to Jeanne's suppressed cry of alarm, and he thereby had discovered her presence, the expression of horror and surprise that he saw on her face caused him to look about to discover the reason. Her gaze seemed to be centered on Basil. Turning in that direction, he was just in time to see Basil's maneuver.

Knowing the feeling of animosity that his foster brothers held for him, Aamon deemed it wise to hold his own counsel. There was some satisfaction in knowing that Jeanne had discovered the deceitfulness of her brother. How it could possibly work to his advantage he did not know! But there was consolation in knowing that Basil was alive, and evidently not so seriously hurt after all.

A great load was lifted from Aamon's heart. Now, regardless of future consequences, he felt that he could be happy. Anyway he could not be accused of murder. Of the whole party who helped to load Basil on the makeshift stretcher and carry him a half mile to the car, no one was more thoughtful than Aamon. The ordeal humbled him even though he knew Basil was feigning the seriousness of his injury. There was a joy in his soul that he could not explain — a joy that comes only with answered prayer. He had a right to be happy; Jeanne's prayer had been answered.

3. The Unseen Web

NO, JEANNE, ‘If a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand,’” Aamon quoted with decision. “That is one of God’s divine laws which cannot be changed.”

“But you have no place to go,” she protested.

“Irrespective of that, the house of Barton is divided. It is all too evident that I am a unwanted adjunct that must be removed. Isn’t it better that I move myself before something more drastic happens than what occurred at the dell today?”

“No, Aamon; until God definitely shows otherwise, you must stay,” she advised pleadingly.

Earnestly engaged in debate, Aamon and Jeanne were walking back home from the unpleasant scene at the spring. When Basil was finally loaded into the car to be transferred to the hospital, it was discovered that there was no room for them to ride. Glad of the opportunity to be by themselves, they readily consented to walk. During that interval, the topic of conversation naturally turned to what had just happened. Both of them understood that Basil was deceitfully playing a master stroke to try and gain sympathy for himself. Why he should do this called for only one answer! He was insanelly jealous of Aamon, and in order to gain his own selfish ends he would go to any length to put his foster brother in a bad light. What might happen next was a mystery that only the future could reveal!

Aamon argued that it was his duty to go away from pending trouble. Jeanne agreed that there was more trouble in the offing, but wisely contended that he should be governed in his actions only as God should lead him.

“But how am I to know God’s will?” he argued.

“It has never been God’s will for any one to run away from duty,” she replied meekly.

“And my duty is—”

“To pray first.”

“Pray?”

“Yes! I can give you no better example than that found in His Word when Jesus was confronted with duty in the Garden of Gethsemane,” said Jeanne, producing her Testament.

Aamon stopped by her side while she turned to verse thirty-nine of the twenty-sixth chapter of Matthew.

““And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed.”” Here she paused to make sure he was following her in thought. This was His prayer: ““O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.””

Touched with emotion, Aamon did not attempt to answer. He knew the significance of Christ’s first prayer in the Garden. His own troubles had no comparison with the anguish which was borne in his Lord’s travail.

“I will stay, Jeanne,” he said, “God willing.”

“Your cross is not an easy one to bear,” she replied with sympathetic reverence, “but it is your duty to stay in the family until you get your education, and find that you are able to face the responsibilities of life.”

Together they continued on to the house to find that Basil had been safely transferred to the hospital, where it was discovered that he was not as seriously hurt as appearances seemed to indicate. Several stitches, without even the necessity of a local anesthetic, had taken care of the scalp wound. Aside from this, the house doctor advised that his most serious difficulty was evidenced in a nervous shock that seemed to upset him. The doctor, not knowing Basil’s ability as an actor, arranged for him to remain at the hospital to await developments.

He was a patient that needed lots of sympathy and attention; however, he let it be known that he would prefer not to have many visitors, especially members of his own family, who might be too inquisitive as to how he happened to get hurt. He wanted a day or two in the hospital by himself to enable him to formulate his plans. How he would proceed to handle Aamon after he was released, he did not know; but there was no alternative, his mind was made up: Aamon must go!

At the Barton home, Aamon was given the family third degree to find out how the accident happened. He was questioned and cross-questioned as to how Basil’s head had hit the stone in the spring. Aamon’s story that Basil had thrown the stone there was looked upon with disfavor. That did not look reasonable. Besides, Basil had declared that it had rolled there by

accident. That was more plausible. Jeanne, knowing the situation, felt that in some respects one was as much to blame as the other, and therefore tried to be as liberal as possible in defending them both. Justin insisted that Aamon was trying to lie out of a embarrassing situation.

Here the matter rested, awaiting Basil's recovery. Chase was not entirely in accord with Aamon's or Basil's version of the affair. Personally, he was more inclined to pass it off as a boys' quarrel and let it go at that. He knew the tense feeling that existed between the two boys. But Justin, like Basil, was openly determined to extract the last drop of blood from this unwanted foster brother. However, as executor of the estate, Chase was very emphatic in declaring that matters would have to take a legal course.

Associated as he was with the firm of attorneys, Styles, Soules and Barton, the question of lawful means was something that could not be predetermined. Circumstances alter cases, legal or otherwise. In their judgment, the means to an end preceded and formed the basis of any legal opinion that they would be called upon to render. Within the law, of course, the two senior partners knew where the boundary line lay and their reputation was based upon their ability to stay within legal limits. Though the cloud of gossip sometimes hovered over their principles on the shady side of certain questions, that did not seem to deter them from continuing their lucrative course. They were known as fighters whose appearance at the bar on any matter they happened to defend was sufficient to sway public opinion in their favor.

At the time that Mr. Barton's will was drawn by this firm of attorneys, his son, Chase, was still in college. Now he was not only a member of the firm, but executor of the estate as well. His father's lawyers in drawing the will were now his lawyers in executing its provisions; therefore, it should be a simple matter to carry out the father's wishes in providing for the welfare of those whom he had named as legatees.

A last will and testament is supposed to express the wishes of the testator and should be carefully executed. But many a lawsuit has hinged upon the interpretation of what were the real wishes of the testator. It is one thing to execute a will, and quite another thing to have its provisions carried out exactly as the deceased intended.

Andrew Barton's will was destined to experience strange interpretations. His known will was not the will of two of his sons, Basil and Justin, who wished to divert Aamon's share into their own hands. They insisted on

contesting the provisions of their father's will on the ground that there was no evidence of Aamon's having ever been legally adopted. He was a foundling brought over from Europe and merely introduced as a son. There was no record of his birth, as far as any tangible evidence was concerned, and apparently his birth had been dated from the day he was found. When that was, only Mr. and Mrs. Barton knew, and they were dead. It was a deep mystery. There evidently was no hope that it ever would be solved.

A diligent search had been made to clear up the matter, but no additional information was available. The question for the court to decide was whether Aamon was a son of not; whether he was adopted or not; and if adopted, whether he was entitled to share the estate with those known to be legal heirs. Justin and Basil contended that he was not even a citizen of this country, and therefore, if he was a mere foundling, as was supposed, he had no right whatsoever to the legacy.

During the legal battle which followed, Aamon was forced to endure many hardships. For a time, he had been permitted to occupy a room in the attic of the Barton home, but Justin made things so miserable for him that he had to move. Following this, he sold newspapers after school and on Saturdays, in order to support himself. The remainder of the time, while he was finishing high school, he lived in a boarding house on the opposite side of the city. Chase, much against his better judgment, reluctantly consented to this arrangement, so as to keep peace in the family. That seemed to be his biggest problem in connection with his duties as executor. Keeping peace had been a problem, a real problem ever since his father died.

After this, Jeanne and Aamon met only at school and then not very often or openly. Her two younger brothers, Justin and Basil, made it a point to drop around unexpectedly at various places about the school grounds where their sister and foster brother might possibly meet. So zealous were they in their attention to Jeanne that they became obnoxious. She resented it, knowing that they had but one thought in mind, that of breaking up the sisterly and brotherly affection that existed between her and Aamon.

The climax came when Aamon was chosen to take the leading part in the annual school play. Considerable publicity was given to the cast and their ability as actors in the amateur field; consequently, Aamon's popularity soared during the weeks of preparation. Every issue of the school paper and the bi-weekly "Press," published locally on Tuesdays and Fridays, enlarged upon the credit due Aamon for the success of the play.

In a fit of envy, Basil resented this. He asked to be no excused from class a half-hour early on the afternoon preceding the performance, in order that he might go to Aamon's boarding house, sneak into his room, and put sandburs in the toes of his dress shoes. It was a diabolical trick and one that few would stoop to do. But not Basil, nurtured in the malice of an unregenerated heart. He knew that Aamon would be hurrying home to change his clothes, following the last rehearsal. He would barely have time to get a bite to eat, dash into his room, get ready and hurry back to take his part in the play. There would be no time for picking sandburs. Consequently, his evil design would be accomplished — Aamon would be late, and perhaps absent from the play altogether.

To accomplish his purpose, Basil gathered several sandbur plants, and some thorns from a black locust tree. Taking his knife, he cut off several clusters of the sharp thorns, mixed them with the sandburs and took them to Aamon's room.

He experienced no difficulty in gaining admittance without being seen.

With diabolical cunning, he poked the thorns and sandburs into the toes of Aamon's new shoes. Still this did not satisfy him. Taking the suit that Aamon was to wear that evening, he whipped the sandburs from the remaining stalks that he carried until the fabric was covered with burs. Then hanging it up, he left the room as nearly as possible as he found it, and cautiously slipped out of the window.

Whatever a man does, whether good or evil, a unseen eye is upon him. Likewise in crime, whether it be a major or minor, that unseen eye directs a providential crisis in the destiny of every perpetrator. Sometimes it is a chain of unforeseen circumstances that checkmates the designed act, or furnishes a clue that leads to the apprehension of the criminal. Sometimes it is the accusing finger of conscience that robs the soul of hope, and leaves it barren and desolate. Sometimes it is utter abandonment to the influence of evil that endureth for a season. Always it is the judgment of the curse of sin. No one escapes the unseen eye which records the deeds, good or bad, of every human individual.

Basil, happy in his evil deed, made his way unseen into a deserted alley which led to the city dump. It was a place infested with rats which found in the refuse those elements that sustained life. At the hour when Basil skulked there, few of them were to be seen, but that did not change the environment.

He and the rats were in one place with one accord to escape detection. Skirting the edge of the city, he found his way home in time for supper.

Jeanne had a tempting meal of baked potatoes, cornbread, fried ham, and a baked apple for each place when he arrived.

“Why, Basil, where in the world have you been?” she asked with a good-natured smile.

“Where have I been?” he hedged, trying to conceal his embarrassment. “Why — what makes you ask that?”

“Well, you’re late. Your shoes are covered with mud, and you act as though you had been up to some mischief.”

Immediately Basil was on guard, as his thoughts raced back and forth over the events of the afternoon. Had someone seen him? Was he suspected? How much did Jeanne really know? Why was she skeptical? A thousand thoughts ran through his mind in an effort to frame an alibi.

“You’re always taking the joy out of life with a lot of your suspicions. Can’t a fellow go down to the dump and get a little mud on his shoes without being suspected of robbing a bank, or something?” he sarcastically inquired.

“Of all places to go with your good shoes on!”

“Well, I went!” he snapped angrily, expecting to be confronted in the next question for the reason, “and I had on my good clothes, too.”

“Oh!”

“Yes, I went, but I didn’t get any rats to dissect in our biology class tomorrow! I suppose, now, the next thing you will want to know is why the chief of the rat colony wasn’t waiting with a lot of big, fat specimens for me to take back to school,” he informed her by innuendo, hoping that this would satisfy any curiosity that she might have relative to his whereabouts during the afternoon.

“Rats!” Jeanne ejaculated in horror.

“Don’t like ’em, eh?” Basil hilariously inquired, secretly pleased with himself in his ability to turn the topic of conversation away from a delicate subject.

“No, I don’t, and — and I don’t like to have you prowling around that dirty old dump, either,” she emphatically informed him. “Come on now and get washed for supper, so we can get ready in time to see the play.”

“All right, little sister, I’ll even take a bath if you say so, but I don’t think that I will go to the play. I’ve seen a half-dozen rehearsals. Besides, I

have a lot of studying to do to get ready for a test. You run along after supper and I will do the dishes for you tonight, so you won't be late."

Again Jeanne surveyed her big, overgrown, impulsive brother with an eye of suspicion. All of his actions were queer. What occasioned this sudden change that had come over Basil? Volunteering to wash the dishes all alone, while she attended the school play, was a unprecedented gesture on his part. On a prior occasions it had been like pulling teeth to get him to even help, and now to have him show such magnanimous chivalry was something that she could not help wondering about.

All through the dinner hour she wondered, as she watched her brother across the table sitting alongside Justin. Chase had been unexpectedly detained at the office, which left the three of them together. Basil for some reason insisted on doing most of the talking. This again was unusual, because in most instances it was a case of eat-and-run with him. If not, he was quite likely to have a grouch on about something, the reason for which he could not or did not care to reveal. But tonight he was hilariously happy — too happy in fact to be natural.

Going to her room, Jeanne pondered over this sudden turn of events. While dressing for the evening, troublesome thoughts kept her mind agitated. She did not understand why it was, but she was suspicious of Basil's actions. She said nothing to Justin, but when she came down and found that he was ready to drive her to the auditorium, she took the first opportunity that presented itself to call him to one side and ask if he knew what Basil's plans were for the night. Justin did not know; in fact, he had paid very little attention to the unusual barrage of idle chatter that Basil had displayed during the meal.

It has been said that no man is the master of his emotions. This was certainly true in Basil's case. If he had been asked about it, he would emphatically have no denied that he was any different than of other occasions. But trying to act natural often discloses the fact of unnaturalness; and so it was with Basil. Everything he did was in the extreme. His laugh, his talk, his good nature — all were over-emphasized.

In his effort to draw suspicion away from himself, he had left the "door" ajar, exposing the first clue. He had not concealed the forwardness in his heart, nor the folly of his own acts: "For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings."

The payday of misfortune meant for Aamon's benefit was about to act unfavorably. Yet, he thought that he had concealed his acts so well that no one knew about them but himself. He was a lone wolf. He had held his own counsel, and now his own ego was complimenting him upon the successful way his plan had been carried out. He did not yet realize that the tares of evil which he had sown were soon to be found in his own harvest.

Poor Basil, he was as ignorant of what the future held for him as the crystal gazer who tries to predict the future of the officer who conceals the arm of law enforcement and is therefore not suspected, until she, through lack of occult power, finds herself in his clutches, weighed in the balance and found wanting.

4. Defiance

DID YOU HEAR what happened to Aamon? Who do you suppose could have done such a thing? It was dastardly! Outrageous! Criminal! The act of a maniac devoid of all sense of reason!

These questions and puzzled exclamations of surprise were heard from one end of the school campus to the other. It started a few minutes after the hour the play was scheduled to begin and the leading character did not show up. The first inkling of something wrong came through a telephone call from Aamon's landlady, advising the director that he would be a little late. Without giving anything definite other than to mention that he had encountered a bunch of sand burs, she left the phone to help him prepare his wardrobe, thinking that it would be only a matter of a few minutes before he would be dressed and on his way.

But whether it is a high-school play or the big five ring circus, "the show must go on."

In the auditorium at Lincoln High an anxious and impatient crowd watched for the curtain to rise on the first act. Fifteen minutes went by, while the orchestra played extra numbers. Several came from backstage and hurriedly sought various members of the faculty for a conference on some question which forebode trouble.

A clown was sent out to run across the stage from one wing to the other. Peeking out from behind the wing with a lot of grotesque and ridiculous expressions, he confidentially inquired:

"Did y-o-u hear what happened to Aamon?"

Running back to the other wing, he stretched his neck around from behind the wing, and grinning at the crowd he whispered as though secretively informing them of the very latest gossip afloat:

"Aamon has sandburs in his pants, and he's go-i-n-g to be late. He — he's go-i-n-g to be late. He's g-o-i-n-g to be late, and it's sandburs in his pants that kept him from keeping his date."

The crowd roared with laughter, thinking that it was all a part of the play.

Back and forth across the stage the clown raced, articulating the words of his catchphrase in a tuneless song.

Still Aamon did not show up.

Behind the scene the actors were in a panic, trying of to figure out what to do next. They couldn't call the play off with all that crowd waiting. Obviously, they would have to secure a substitute to pinch-hit in Aamon's place and go on with the first act. Perhaps Aamon would come yet and save the day.

Needless to say, the play turned out to be a failure. Aamon, through of no fault of his own, suffered a misfortune which he transmitted to the whole troupe. Forced as they were to go on, they did the best they could, but the nervous tension they were under made them appear awkward and unnatural. It seemed as though everything had centered around Aamon, and when he suddenly failed to take the leading part, chaos followed. Everyone immediately became self-conscious and did not know what to expect of the substitute. Consequently, they proceeded slowly, feeling their way through different parts, or else racing through some parts, so they could finish it as soon as possible.

Jeanne watched it a in fear and trembling. She did not know just what had happened, but like many others she knew that something very unusual had taken place in the backstage. When the curtain fell for the last time and the crowd broke up in individual groups, the question seemed to be on every tongue, "What happened to Aamon?"

The specific purpose back of Basil's plan, which was to harm Aamon, reacted otherwise. Instead of becoming the object of ridicule, he was the object of pity, and all because the blame intended to fall on his shoulders failed to rest there.

What happened to Aamon was no joke! It was an issue — one of which the character and reputation of Lincoln High rested. They had been publicly disgraced, and all because some prankster had taken the inopportune time to secretly haze a fellow student. There was no other way to account for it. Apparently, Aamon had no enemies in school who would be guilty of such a malicious act. It was not so much the crime against the person, but the crime against their school that incensed the whole student body and threw them into a state of vindictiveness.

Likewise, no the faculty was up in arms, bent of bringing the perpetrator to justice. Hazing had long been tabooed, and now to have a case like this

break out invoked the wrath of everyone.

“What happened to Aamon?” became a byword with a vengeance. Everyone was trying to find out the culprit who could be guilty of such a dastardly act. Consequently, the student body was “combed” for the slightest clue which would throw any light on the matter. No one but Jeanne had any suspicion of who was responsible. Wisely, she said nothing. Definite proof on which to base her suspicions was lacking, and her loyalty to the family would not permit her to make accusations that she might regret later. But inwardly her heart bled, nursing the secret belief that Basil alone was responsible for what had happened to Aamon.

Had Justin taken time to seriously think things over, he, too, might have had some suspicions, but he had none. Nor did he think that in relating the facts concerning Basil’s coming home late that evening, he would be the first to cast suspicion on his younger brother. But resulting from one of his remarks, an investigation was started to find out why Basil had not arrived home until after six for supper, when he left school a half-hour earlier than usual. Where had he been? Why were his shoes covered with mud? Why did he go to the city dump hunting alley rats, when the laboratory provided white ones? Why had he not mentioned this peculiar errand to others? Why had he changed his mind so suddenly and remained at home that evening?

Every question was a thread in that unseen web that served to entangle Basil in a perplexing situation. Faced with his accusers he tried to lie out at one point to cover up another, until, hopelessly ensnared, he became defiant and refused to answer any more questions. He was satisfied that no one had seen him. He would leave the burden of proof to the two detectives who had been called into the case at the request of the faculty, and who were leaving no stone unturned in order to find the guilty party.

“If you are so sure that I’m to blame, why don’t you bring of someone around who saw me do it?” Basil finally blurted out defiantly. “But, no, you don’t have anyone, so you want to scare me into a confession and have someone to pin the crime on to, if it was a crime. Besides, I have not been near a sandbur this summer.”

“Listen, son, we’re not here to pin anything on you of which you are not guilty. But it so happens that we know that you are the one responsible for what happened to Aamon,” detective Olson declared, trying to hold Basil’s gaze while the statement sank in “We happened upon the information that

puts you there just as plainly and surely as though your picture had been taken climbing in the window.”

“I didn’t climb in the window!” Basil sarcastically snapped.

“No, you didn’t climb in the window, for a ‘double-minded man is unstable in all his ways,’” quoted the of detective. “You did not go in the window, but you came out of it and left this bit of evidence behind you.”

Basil eyed the particles of mud which the detective produced and held in his hand.

“Very strange, isn’t it, that these pieces of mud should come from the same place as the mud on your shoes which you wore that afternoon?” the detective casually remarked. “Very strange, too, that the mud underneath the arch of one shoe should have several sandburs packed in it, particularly when you have not been near a sandbur for months. Very, very strange that that shoe should belong to you, don’t you think?” he continued, unwrapping Basil’s left shoe which he was carrying under his arm in a newspaper.

There it was, the evidence that could not be denied. The whole arch of the shoe was filled with dried, blue clay, packed up against the heel; blue clay that came from the sewer excavation back of the house where Aamon lived.

“That is your shoe is it not?” asked the officer.

No answer.

“You don’t have to answer, young man; but let me advise you that God’s proverbs are still true. You cannot get away from the fact that”The way of transgressors is hard, and that God has declared, ‘Be sure your sin will find you out.’ Yes, you have fallen, and now you are in the hands of the law. If you want any mercy shown, you had better start asking for it.”

A stony stare of defiance met the officer’s gaze.

“I am satisfied that this was a kid’s prank, but if you don’t see how you can help yourself by coming clean and telling the truth about the whole thing, it evidently will have to be handled as a case of breaking and entering a dwelling place in the day time. . . .”

“I didn’t break and enter — the doors were open—” Basil blurted out in defiance, catching himself when he realized that he had confessed unwittingly to having at least some knowledge of the affair.

“That’s true, but the law excuses no one. You had no right there, and now in the face of what has happened you need a friend instead of a prosecutor. ‘A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for

adversity,” the big Swede advised, quoting his native version of Proverbs 17:17.

“Aamon is no brother of mine, and I don’t want him as a friend either,” he said sulkily.

“Oh, I see!” whistled detective Olson, beginning to see through the animosity for Aamon which Basil was trying to conceal. “So that’s it! I see! I see!”

“Yes, it’s just as plain as mud with sandburs in it,” smiled the second officer. “It looks to me like a case for the faculty down at the school to handle.”

“We’ll take him down to the principal first and talk it over,” detective Olson advised, kindly placing his hand on Basil’s shoulder. “Come on, son, let’s get this over with.”

Crestfallen, Basil had nothing to do but obey.

At the principal’s office he was forced to listen to the story how Aamon had encountered the sandburs and been kept from participating in the play. The anticipated glamor and thrill that he had visualized was gone. It did not seem so funny when the principal related the facts. He added a vein of seriousness that was pathetic, and had it been any person other than Aamon he might have been sorry.

To be accused without proof surprised him, yet the principal addressed him with the assurance that he alone had been responsible for all of Aamon’s trouble. How did he know? They had not even given him the satisfaction of denying the act, therefore he was at the disadvantage of being obliged to listen to a review of the things he had done, without taking any part in the argument to defend himself.

For the first time he learned just what had happened to Aamon. With a sneering smirk he sat with his head down and visualized Aamon in his misery, as the principal related the story of how his hated foster brother had hurried to remove his soiled clothing and take a bath before donning his clean clothes. Although the principal made it very realistic, picturing Aamon as he seized his suit in the dark closet and dropped it with a cry of pain, which brought his landlady on the run to find out the difficulty, yet it did not faze Basil.

He enjoyed, in his far-fetched imagination, visualizing Aamon with fingers full of the sharp thorns, which when removed left drops of blood oozing from each wound. His secret desire for uncalled-for revenge was

being gratified. A broad smile spread across his features as the principal continued his story. Nevertheless, he lost interest in following him, because his own imagination served him better.

During the remainder of the interview Basil listened indifferently while the principal explained how Aamon's sympathetic landlady had tried to help him, and then after a fruitless half-hour of removing burs from his clothing had been forced to telephone the school that Aamon would not be able to come.

The young culprit was unmoved, and faced the principal with a cold, aggravating stare.

"Young man, you ought to be ashamed of yourself! How could you be so cruel and heartless?" the principal admonished.

Still Basil only stared.

"What possessed you? How could you resort to such a diabolical trick?" he tried again impatiently.

Basil, with an air of indifference, continued unmoved in his defiance.

Fighting for self-control, the principal arose and going over to the defiant malefactor he took him by the arm, and with the other hand lifted his chin so he could look him in the eye.

For several seconds they stood thus facing one another.

"You may go now," the principal said sternly. "You have nearly exhausted my patience. From this hour you are expelled from Lincoln High, until such time as you feel that you can apologize to the faculty and the members of your class for the disgrace you have brought upon this school."

"Never!" Basil defiantly exclaimed, stalking from the room.

5. Questions, Legal and Otherwise

FOLLOWING the sandbur episode, a chain of events took place which were to involve Basil and Aamon in a combination of circumstances that meant bitter experiences for both of them. Many days of disappointment were to be experienced before they were to come to the full realization that, “Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding”; also that it is far better to heed the admonition: “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”

Between Aamon and Basil an undeclared war existed. They were both fighting for what they considered a principle. With Aamon it was his right as an heir, his reputation, character, and good name. Basil’s fight was to keep all of these fundamentals from him. As to whether this was legal and right in all its phases was doubtful, extremely doubtful, as far as Basil was concerned. Not that he entertained any shadow of doubt in his own mind, for he believed that he was justified to take such measures as would further his desired ends.

In contrast, Aamon’s battle was one to be fought with defensive measures in order that he might be able to exist. Basil was bent on denying him this privilege through every means, foul or fair. The only living Aamon was entitled to, so he thought, was one that he hustled for, certainly not be title of claim to any of the Andrew Barton estate.

There are some things in life, however, that we cannot be deprived of, for under a constitutional form of government the law often steps in and establishes liberties that otherwise would not be enjoyed. Aamon was to receive such an advantage in the settlement of the Barton estate. Meager though it was, it was not to be a “freeze-out” such as Justin and Basil desired.

When the terms of the Barton will were considered after it was probated, it was found that the portion of real estate devised to Aamon was that

owned by the testator, and described in a deed covering the property located at the southwest corner of Grand and Central avenues, Village of Whitehall, Greenfield Township, Wayne County, Michigan. Since the deed was drawn, however, Whitehall had experienced an evolution of many and various changes. Numerous subdivisions were surveyed, improved and sold which changed its boundary. Industrial developments came, causing no a influx of new citizens which created a cosmopolitan center in the factory districts. Then the name of the community was changed twice, leaving Whitehall to linger only in the memory of old citizens and upon the records effected during the zenith of her existence. But this was not a matter that concerned the court, for still upon the corner of Grand and Central avenues was an old landmark, the first dental office of Azariah Barton, a great-grandfather of the present heirs. For the past ten years this modest frame structure had remained vacant, but adjacent thereto a modern three-story brick building, occupying eighty feet of frontage on Central avenue, had been erected. On the second floor of this new building, overlooking the roof of the old structure, there was a modern suite of six rooms, covering ten times the floor space of the abandoned office which housed the Barton Dental Clinic. This entire corner of one hundred feet of land, with the buildings thereon, was apparently that portion of the real estate given to Aamon by the Barton will.

On the opposite three corners of this intersection, the testator also owned property. The three Barton boys, Chase, Justin and Basil were each to receive one of these corners. Jeanne was given the old homestead, together with a residential apartment building, equal in value to any one of the three corners allotted to her elder brothers. In the distribution of the entire estate of which testator died seized, totaling \$450,000.00, Aamon's share was considered to be about \$90,000.

A petition to set the will aside was advocated by Justin and Basil, on the grounds that Aamon was not one of the family. Chase Barton, however, as executor of the will, acting upon the advice of his law partners, decided to probate the will and be governed solely by its terms. Because of certain reasons, the question of Aamon's legal right as an heir was not raised.

While it was generally known that it had been the intention of the deceased to give all the property of the southwest corner of Grand and Central avenues to Aamon, the attorneys contended that Aamon's share of the real property was to consist only of the twenty-foot frontage

immediately on the corner. To support this position they produced an old deed which showed the transfer of only twenty feet to which Andrew Barton held title when the will was drawn.

On the other hand, Aamon's attorneys produced a second deed covering a additional eighty-foot frontage, and they argued that these deeds covered the entire property referred to be the testator in his will.

This latter deed showed a transfer from Andrew Barton to the Barton Land Company for the purpose of securing a mortgage. However, this particular piece of eighty-foot frontage had not been deeded back to Andrew Barton until after the mortgage was liquidated. This deed showed a date prior to that of the will, but because it had not been recorded until after the will was drawn it was the plaintiff's contention that the deed had no bearing upon the case. Andrew Barton could not devise property that he did not own. His interest in the Barton Land Company could only be considered as a part of his estate to be determined by the court. Therefore, the question to be decided was whether the testator really meant to identify one hundred feet of frontage on Central avenue, or merely the twenty feet which cornered on Grand.

In rendering his decision, the judge said that while natural justice would seem to call for an equal division of all the property between a children, yet the law does not permit the court to read into the will something that does not exist. It has been clearly shown that at the time this will was drawn that there was only twenty feet of the southwest corner of Grand and Central avenues owned by the testator. While this court recognizes the absolute right of a parent to dispose of his property as he sees fit, he being the most capable of determining which of such children are most deserving in his estimation, the court has no right to substitute his own wishes of ideas of what is just and right. But there being no codicil showing that the desire of the testator was to devise the eighty-foot frontage acquired from the Barton Land Company after the date of will to his foster son, therefore, the decree of the court is that Aamon Barton's share in this estate consists of the twenty feet of frontage only, as described in exhibit number one, this being the twenty feet cornering directly on Grand and Central avenues; and in addition thereto a \$4,000 cash endowment to be held in trust by the executor for his proper education.

Like Pilate, when he delivered up Christ to be crucified, the judge was more concerned in the number of votes controlled by the plaintiff than he

was in absolute justice. Apprised that he could prevail nothing, but rather that a tumult was predicted at the next election, he washed his hands, as it were, in the secret belief that the blood of this innocent, inconsequential foster brother was upon the other children and their attorneys.

It was considered a great victory by the Barton heirs, except Jeanne. To her it was a tragedy, for the old landmark on the corner was practically valueless, because of condemnation proceedings which would take half of its width when Grand avenue was widened, and therefore the old building would have to be torn down or removed.

“A clever piece of legal strategy,” observed the three attorneys within the secrecy of their own office. “I never thought we would put that one over,” attorney Soules gleefully commented, rolling one hand within the other as he looked down upon the old landmark on the opposite corner.

“*Embusque!*” exclaimed the head of the firm, using the French slang term for “slicker.”

“Very ethically handled from a point of law,” Chase Barton agreed, winking in the general direction of his senior partners to show his admiration for their unscrupulous ability.

“Very clever of you, too, Chase, getting the condemnation check allowed for damages in the street widening, approved and cashed before the matter was probated,” attorney Styles volunteered. “I am glad to see that you are learning to catch on to a few tricks in the trade.”

“Just a mere \$5,000 is all — now in the coffers of the estate, instead of falling to that ne’er-do-well foster brother of mine that the court has wished upon us,” Chase bragged effusively.

“One step at a time, Chase, you’re still the executor. Don’t worry about a little thing like a foster brother. One with your ability should not be worrying over such a trifle,” cautioned attorney Soules in an advisory capacity. “But, I believe if I were you, I would get that young man a little closer home so I could watch him. It might be interesting as well as valuable information to know how he conducts himself. I never did much approve of letting a debtor get too far away.”

“A debtor?”

“How else would you term it? He still has part of the Barton estate that is not his be birthright, hasn’t he?”

“I wish he was in Siberia with that \$4,000 educational endowment fund that the court allowed him,” Chase retorted. “If I never saw him again, it

would be altogether too soon.”

“Calm yourself, young man,” the senior partner advised. “It is a wise taskmaster that knows where his slaves are and how to use them. Get a hold on that young parvenu. Let him occupy the old dentist office on the corner until it is torn down. You’ll know where he is then, and what he is doing, and who his friends are. Some of us will see him every day. Cultivate his friendship and even though you can’t do it, some one of us can pass a little advice his way that will not come amiss.”

“Yes,” agreed the second member of the firm, “it’s only just across the corner. Get him over there. Tell him that he can live there. There must be enough old furniture around to set him up in housekeeping comfortably. Make a public show of your effort to help him. Then one fine day something will work around to lawfully and respectfully eliminate your unwanted foster brother.”

“Lawfully?” questioned Chase doubtfully.

“*Necessitas non habet legem*,” the cunning old barrister advised.

“Necessity knows no law,” Chase mused, translating the Latin phrase.

“Yes, but we can afford to wait. All we need is the element of time,” came the ironical reply.

“What worries me is how to hold Justin and Basil in tow. Aamon is simply poison to them,” Chase remarked, thinking out loud.

“Let me handle them,” Mr. Soules volunteered. “I think they will see the light after I explain the situation. Send them around to the office this evening. Tell them that I want to see them.”

Following this arrangement, Chase casually dropped the remark to Jeanne, after her two brothers had left for their interview with Mr. Soules, that inasmuch as Aamon now owned the old dental quarters, he wondered if he would not like to live there.”

“Live there!” Jeanne exclaimed in surprise.

“Why not? There’s a nice room at the back, if some of the junk that has accumulated in storage was moved out,” he reminded her.

“Do you suppose he could? It really would be nice and handy for him with his newspaper route and everything. Then he could have a little office in front and maybe sell candy and magazines. I think it would be ideal,” Jeanne said thoughtfully. “Would you really let him do that? Maybe I — I could help out some times,” she added hopefully.

“Well, now, little sister, that’s quite a big order for one package. But I’ll think it over — about your helping out, I mean,” Chase replied, debating the question. “But, as for Aamon’s living there, that’s going to be his business. I shall not interfere.”

“I’m going to tell Aamon tomorrow. I just bet he will want to move nearer town. But—” her brow clouded in thought, “the place must be awfully dirty!”

“Dirt can be moved—”

“Could I help? I would just love to do it,” she added wishfully.

“Yes, you can be foreman — or forewoman, I suppose. How would one say that, I wonder?” smiled Chase, pleased with the progress of his scheme. “Anyway, if Aamon happens to want to move over there you can supervise the job and draft the janitor over at our building to help, if you need him.”

“Thanks, Chase,” she said in her enthusiasm. “You’re the biggest, best brother that any sister ever had. And now I love you all the more because you have not turned against Aamon like — like the others.”

“I know, Jeanne, how you feel. I wish Justin and Basil were — well, not quite so unreasonable. It gives us — the family, a bad appearance in the public eye,” he confessed. “Mr. Soules was talking about it today. That’s what he wanted to talk to the boys about tonight.”

Jeanne paused to offer a prayer of thanksgiving.

““He that trusteth the Lord, mercy shall compass him about,”” she quoted fervently. “We shall all be happier if they will only turn from the error of their ways!”

That night Jeanne lingered for no some time of her knees in prayer, bringing each of her brothers to God in her petitions. It was the first time in months that she had been encouraged to pray believingly. It had all looked so hopeless, but now it seemed that the cold, heartless attitude of her brothers toward Aamon was on the surface, and not the deep-rooted hatred which they openly professed.

She had tried to pray, believing that the Lord would cause everything to work together for good, but it had seemed so impossible, until Chase brought this word of encouragement. It was the first token that her prayers were being answered.

It had been a severe test for Jeanne. There was no evidence of the love of God in the heart of her brothers, such as they had once shown toward Aamon. But all she could do was to grieve secretly and pray that something

would bring about a change in their lives. She was often tempted to give up in despair when she substituted human efforts in trying to win them, and failed to cling to God in faith. But now she cast all her troubles on the Lord, and upon retiring for the night, she experienced that perfect trust in Jesus Christ which brings peaceful sleep.

The next morning she arose with a song in her heart and a prayer of her lips. Life had so many bright prospects. She wanted to share her joy with Aamon and be the first to tell him of the possibilities of converting the old landmark on the corner into livable quarters again. She could hardly wait until breakfast was over, the dishes washed, and the home put in order.

When Chase closed the front door at 8:30 that morning, leaving for his office, Jeanne was ready to depart through the back door. Justin and Basil had left in a car with a neighbor a half-hour before and were not to be back until evening. This left the whole day to her disposal. Chase always ate his noon lunch downtown. What could be better, she thought, as she closed and locked the door!

Aamon had just left his rooming house and was coming down the steps when she approached.

“Why, good morning, Jeanne. What brings you around here so early?” exclaimed Aamon. “I supposed that after what happened in court last week you thought I would be dying of a broken heart.”

“Please, Aamon, don’t! I know it was terrible, the judge’s decision, I mean, taking away everything from you like that,” she said sympathetically. “And to think it is all contrary to what father wished. I was so sorry for you that I went away to my room and cried until Justin and Basil came home. I couldn’t let them see me. But — but I want you to know it nearly broke my heart. I — I don’t want any of your share.”

“I know you don’t, sister. You have a heart of pure gold — well, as big as a house. Bigger than my house, anyway,” he smiled.

“Someday it will be different,” she said with determination. “They can’t make me keep a of my share when I become of age. If I want to give it away, I will. They are not going to beat you out of everything like that, unless they beat me, too.”

“Never mind, sister.”

“Well, I mean it, every word!”

“Let’s forget it. I don’t suppose that in reality I am entitled to it, anyway. I can understand how your brothers feel. But there is some satisfaction in

knowing that you, at least, would share your last crust of bread with me.”

“I will never fail you, Aamon.”

“Never fail,” he repeated; “I am unworthy of such confidence. Why, I can’t even repeat that verse in the Bible about, ‘I will be glad and rejoice —’”

“That’s in the Psalms: ‘I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities.’”

“That’s it. You put me to shame in my ignorance of His Word. And it fits you so perfectly, too.”

“No, Aamon. It is sacrilegious to imply that I might be capable of appropriating God’s position in this verse. I am not worthy—”

“Then I may well say:”Thou hast put gladness in my heart.”

Aamon stood in meditation for some time.

Deeply touched, Jeanne remained a his side, ill at ease. Finally she broke the silence.

“You never could guess the purpose I have in mind for coming to meet you this morning.”

“No?”

“Not in a month of Sundays.”

“Suppose you tell me, then. I don’t want to be guessing that long,” he smiled inquisitively.

“I want you to move—”

“Move?”

“Yes, now that you own grandfather’s old dental office on the corner, I think it would be fine for you to move there. You could fix up the back to live in—”

“But—”

“Wait until I get through. There is so much to tell that I don’t know where to begin. The first thing, of course, of is to get the place cleaned up. I can help do that. Then you could fix up a office in the front. Chase said that there were lots of odd pieces of furniture around that you could have, both for the office and the living quarters at the back.”

“He did?”

“Yes, he told me that he had no objections if you wanted to do it; that it was a matter that he was not going to interfere with one way of another. I really think it would be a good thing for you. Then I could help you keep the store sometimes.”

“Keep store? I don’t understand,” Aamon interrupted.

“Yes, I thought that you could have a newsstand with candies and gum and notions.”

“Wait a minute! You are away ahead of me. But it doesn’t sound like a bad idea. It’s the best corner in town for that very thing. I could make a living that way.”

“That’s the reason I came over this morning. I prayed about it and believe it is the thing for you to do,” she replied earnestly. “And I’ll help in any way that I possibly can.”

“Then, I’m moving again. Why, you know, Jeanne,” he said, becoming more and more enthusiastic about the idea, “I never thought of it that way. How in the world did it ever occur to you, anyway?”

“Because I love you,” she whispered shyly.

6. Where the Treasure Is, There Shall the Heart be Also

UNTIL I COME and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards."

What strange interpretations the Scriptures suffer when given literal application apart from the context. Seeking a word of comfort and guilty of this error, Aamon stood at the corner before the door of the old Barton dental office the next morning at daylight with the key in his hand, while he repeated these words which he had discovered in Isaiah 36:17. Jeanne had secured the key from Chase the evening before and brought it over to him. When they parted, it had been with the solemn promise that each before retiring that night would read from the Bible until God placed some message upon their hearts. The next morning they were to inspect, clean, and rearrange the old dental office.

"“Until I come and take you away,”” he repeated audibly, looking down the street for Jeanne and hoping she would come soon. “I wonder why this should be my verse, yet it is, and I can’t make it seem otherwise.”

Impatiently, he tapped the key against the corner of the building.

“To a land like your own land.” Was it a omen of bad or good fortune?

Unable to sleep, he had fought with himself until after midnight, first reading the Testament given to him by Mrs. Barton until he grew tired, and then, being unable to find a verse that suited him, he had lain down and tried to sleep. But sleep failed to come. Impatiently he tried again, only to meet with failure, as he skipped about from book to book and from chapter to chapter, catching a verse here and there as he went along. He had promised Jeanne that he would find a verse of Scripture that inspired him. Coming to the last verse in The Revelation, he read aloud: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.”

That verse was all right, it was comforting, but for some reason or other it did not quite satisfy him. He was out of harmony with its message, not

being able to appropriate it to himself. Again he arose, dressed, and went down the long rooming house hall to the library where the Bible belonging to his landlady was kept. Opening it, he ran through its pages until he came to a particular verse in Isaiah.

“Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land,” caught his eye. That part of the verse stood out all by itself. Its literal application seemed to be meant for him.

“Your own land’!” he repeated. Certainly America was not his land; only a tiny, wee speck of it. And — and they did not want him to have even that. Where was his own land? What was it like? The land across the sea where he was born? He wished he knew.

Whirling the large, old-fashioned key on his finger, he stood in meditation, looking down the street.

“I wonder what Jeanne’s verse is? I’ll bet it won’t be anything about land. Her land is right here. She won’t have to worry about bread or corn or wine if she wants it!” he said half aloud.

“Who wants any wine?” said Jeanne, coming up behind him from the opposite direction. “I certainly don’t.”

“I am glad, too, that you don’t want it any more than I do, but it’s a part of my verse. What did you find?”

“I have it here in my Testament, but let’s unlock the door and get busy. We can discuss our Scripture verses as we work. We have a lot to do to get grandfather’s old office cleaned up and fit to be used again. I have made arrangements to stay and work all day, if necessary.”

“It certainly will be necessary, don’t you think?” Aamon inquired, as he pushed the door open. “Look at the dust! A quarter of a inch thick everywhere. Just look at the mess we have got ourselves into, cleaning up this place!”

“All we need is the determination to go ahead. First, we’ll move everything out that we can. Then with brooms, soap, water, mop and plenty of elbow grease you’ll find that we can work wonders in a short time. Here comes Benson and his assistant janitor to help us.”

“Hurrah for our side!” Aamon greeted the two men as they approached, carrying a bucket of each arm and the necessary implements.

A broad grin spread across the features of each man.

“Wahl, y’all know, boss, Mr. Chase done chased us over heah to help y’all an’ Miss Jeanne out with this dirty mess,” Benson beamed, flashing a

smile from ear to ear.

“Yas, suh, dat’s all they am to it. When we gets chased out to do something, we stays chased ’till we get it done,” the second man replied, matching Benson’s grin.

“You’re more welcome than the flowers in May, if I am any judge,” Aamon said happily. “This is going to be a job for the mop and bucket brigade all right. But first we’ll get busy and carry things out of the place and give everything a real cleaning.”

Soon a cloud of dust was rolling out the open door. Every one was busy. Old chairs, cabinets, pieces of office furniture and antique dental appliances found their way outside to be sorted over, cleaned up, and ready to be salvaged. Pieces having no value other than for firewood were broken up and kept in a neat pile for the fireplace. An old desk and swivel chair, usable if repaired, were washed with soap and water, and carried back into the office.

Jeanne found a antique, hair-covered, calfskin trimmed trunk, dusted it off and had it carried back into the office for future inspection, because of their inability to open it. The name “A. Barton” across the side in large brass tacks identified the trunk as one formerly belonging to Jeanne’s father. Other markings revealed that it had passed through the customs in various foreign ports. Undoubtedly, it was an old family heirloom, now filled with books, or heavy articles of some kind.

“Don’t suppose it is Captain Kidd’s lost treasure, do you?” Aamon asked jokingly, as he struggled to lift one end.

“It’s all yours, if that should prove to be the case,” Jeanne declared. “Chase told me about the trunk last night. He said there was nothing in it of any value. Just a lot of old books and obsolete office records and equipment. He said we could throw it out, unless I wanted to keep the trunk as a family heirloom. It is one that father and mother used when they traveled in Europe.”

“The one they brought me in I suppose!” Aamon satirically exclaimed.

“Don’t say any more!” she interrupted, robbing him of the opportunity to unburden his soul concerning his past.

“Too bad they did not leave me over there—”

“Please, Aamon! You have no right to say that. There are so many, many things to be thankful for. God always knows best. Look at the misery, suffering, and want in Europe today. Millions of people have been robbed

of everything dear to them, forced to bow the knee to a dictator, who has taken away their liberties, their right to worship according to the dictates of their own consciences, their right of free speech, and in many instances their right to labor. Yes, and in the case of the Jewish born, the right even to live. You — you,” she continued, catching for breath in the fear that he would try to stop her, “you have so much to be thankful for!”

“Well, I would like to know—”

“Perhaps you are better off if you don’t know. That is one thing that God has seen fit to deprive you of— knowledge of your past, I mean. If — if you are not my real brother, just forget it all and believe that you are.”

“Jeanne, let’s be reasonable. I am reconciled to the fact that I cannot be your real brother, but it hurts when I have to think that I’m just a nobody,” he lamented.

"You are somebody! You have that God-given individuality that He gives to everyone of us. And now, because mother and father adopted you and brought you to this country, you have been provided with a chance for improvement that could not possibly have been experienced had you remained one of the multitudes in Europe. We cannot live over the past.

The future is before us. Why not enjoy and make the most of the present? And above all, why not praise God for His blessings and for this opportunity?"

“How can I have individuality? Doesn’t the Bible say something about there being neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, Barbarian nor American?” Aamon asked, aware that he had been unable to quote the verse correctly. “Well, that fits me to a T. I am nothing, if anyone should ask you for the truth.”

“But we can all be the children of God be faith in Christ Jesus,” she replied sweetly, ignoring his sarcastic reference to that particular portion of the Scriptures.

Once again the Word of the Lord had prevailed. Try as he would, Aamon could say no more, but deep down in his heart he was not convinced that he did not have a grievance against the Lord for the position in which he had been placed. God could have prevented this whole trouble by not permitting it to come to pass, he thought. Now he looked upon himself as no a object of pity. God had imposed upon him. Better if he had never been born.

Fortunately, being a normal being, Aamon was soon himself again, busily planning how he could arrange things to the best advantage. There

was so much to be done even after the place had been washed and scrubbed, and such articles that could be used were carried back and set in order.

When this was done and the new shades which Jeanne had purchased at the ten-cent store had been hung at the windows, both of them stepped back with a sigh of relief to survey the result of their labors.

“Now if I had a bed for the back room,” Aamon remarked.

“And if the cracks in the plaster did not show up so plainly,” Jeanne added.

“And another ‘if’—if the bad spot here in the floor where the bed should stand were repaired,” he continued, poking the broom handle through a decayed spot in the floor adjacent to a trap door which had been nailed down.

“And if the place didn’t have pink woodwork it would make a real cozy, downtown bachelor’s quarters —after drapes and lace curtains are put up at the windows and a rug on the floor and a rocking chair, and some other odd pieces of furniture added,” Jeanne laughed all in one breath.

“There’s another ‘if’—we are forgetting a about this one.”

“What is that?”

“New electric fixtures, a floor lamp, a foot stool, and a lounging robe. If I had all of these it would be real cozy.”

“And a picture over the fireplace. And, O yes, a clock, too, and a few pieces of bric-a-brac for the mantle,” Jeanne interrupted. “Really, there is no end to what is needed to fix up this place real nice, the way I would like to see it.”

“Well, let’s forget it and call it s a day. I am a dirty as a pig, and I know that I am going to have to take a bath with ‘Sapolio’¹ in three tubs of water to ever feel right again,” he replied, laughing.

Jeanne commenced to laugh, too.

“You do look as funny as a clown,” she told him. “Half black, half white, with those queer little rivulets of perspiration down your face.”

“I doubt if you would take the prize at a beauty contest,” he teased in reply. “I never saw you so downright dirty in my life. Why, Jeanne, really, you’re a fright. What will your big brothers say when they see you?”

“They’re not going to see me. I am leaving right now. Just got time to beat them home and get myself cleaned up before they arrive.”

“But you have not told me what your verse is — the one you found last night. That was part of our bargain in the job for today, was it not?”

“My verse will have to wait until tomorrow,” she said, as she dashed out the side door and on down the street toward home.

Aamon slumped into a rickety old chair. He was dead tired. What a day! What would they have done without Benson and Mose to carry the water, washing the walls, windows and ceiling? Without them they could never have done all of the heavy work. It was real kind of Chase to send them over. He must not forget to thank him and return the kindness in some way as soon as he had a opportunity.

The cry of a newsboy echoed through the door.

“There’s no s rest for the wicked,” he moaned a he struggled to his feet. “That’s the evening *News*. I forgot all about it. I suppose I will have to cover my route.”

While Aamon was peddling his papers, Jeanne was getting supper and thinking over the events of the day. She, too, was tired; and like Aamon, not exactly happy. There were too many things that prevented her from surrendering completely to happiness. What Aamon considered to be his problem was also her problem! Then, too, she was not happy because she felt that she had failed to serve her Lord faithfully. By allowing herself to become engrossed in material things, she had failed to acknowledge Him, especially in testifying to Aamon as she should. When Aamon had asked her what verse she had found that brought encouragement and consolation, she had failed to give it. That verse was what she and Aamon both needed. They could not afford to let their minds become engrossed with material things.

“Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt.” That was her verse and one that was so appropriate for Aamon, too. It was appropriate for Chase, Justin and Basil, more so for them, perhaps, than for herself. The element of selfishness was so prominent in their lives and stood out so noticeably in probating the estate, that it made her hang her head in shame.

She was still young and lacking in the experiences of life, but it seemed to her increasingly true that the only treasures that last are those we lay up in that place “where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt.” She could see the truth of that statement in the legacy which her father left. In contesting their father’s will, her brothers had traded their honor for the material things of life, and proved that where the treasure is, there the heart is also. Oh, if she could make Aamon see how much richer he would be in the joy and

satisfaction of laying up “treasures in heaven,” instead of becoming dejected and bitter over the loss of material things — make him see that every unselfish deed in partnership with God puts something into the building of character — make him see that there is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel, apart from the Lord. What a glorious world this would be if every one believed and practiced this! Oh, if it were only true concerning the members of her family. What a difference it would make if all of them really knew Christ! How happy she would be if Aamon knew Christ!

In humility she went about the daily tasks of the home, exalting Christ at every opportunity and patiently enduring the trials that came to her. When the tempter pointed an accusing finger at her and invited her to join those who seek the pleasures of the world she held fast her confession of Christ, and found joy and peace in believing on Him. Thus she found happiness and continued to lay up for herself “treasures in heaven.” She knew that there was no peace in the heart of the unbeliever, but rather a turmoil of dissatisfaction.

As time went on, her brothers became determined that their only sister should adopt the tenets of scientific Christianity, falsely so called: the idea that mind rules over matter, even to the extent of exterminating sin. Chase put on the outward garments of a Pharisee in order to hold, as he hoped, his prestige in the community. Inwardly, he nurtured the latest modernistic views that he was the great “I am” in whom there could be found no guilt. Nevertheless, as he grew older and gleaned the experience of his profession, Jeanne discovered that there was veiled in his personality the characteristics of a Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. He was kindness personified, in fact, he endeavored to be kind to her so as to court her favor in case it became necessary to cover up his deceitfulness.

Regardless of all of Chase’s bad qualities, there were still many good things that she was forced to acknowledge, and she could not forget that he was her brother. His good qualities, she felt sure, outnumbered those that were bad. For one thing, he did not smoke or drink, and as far as gambling was concerned, he did very little of that. An occasional side bet of a golf game, or of a bridge game, or of his favorite ball team, was about the limit. All of this was merely to be a good sport — the same excuse that justified the purchase of an Irish Sweepstakes ticket once a year. One has to keep up appearances before friends was his thought. They all did it, and if he

refused to be a good fellow with the crowd his popularity would soon wane. Conforming to world ideas was the popular way to advertise among friends. Likewise, he made a show of his generosity with Aamon whenever it would attract attention in a philanthropical way. Primarily, this was done to offset the stigma that remained after probating the Barton will. When Aamon moved into the old office on the corner, Chase made himself conspicuous in providing a new bed and enough odd pieces of furniture to make the place comfortable as living quarters at the back, and to equip a small store in what had originally been the reception room at the front.

Finding that his acts of kindness brought favorable public comment, Chase went so far as to have the interior decorated to suit Jeanne, covering up the pink woodwork with a coat of white enamel and providing a number of pictures to adorn the newly painted walls. Back of it all, he was courting his own vanity. It pleased him to hear the remarks of some citizens that he was not such a bad fellow after all and should not be judged too severely.

Consequently, Aamon moved into his new quarters in some style. Chase, from outward appearances, he thought, had changed his mind, but it was because he no longer worked openly. His material advantage lay in secrecy. This was what the firm of Styles, Soules and Barton, in their hardhearted, secret complicity advised. Their policy was to give a little something to appease the public for the present in order to take greater dividends in the future.

Justin and Basil, who failed to see the logic of the move, disapproved not only of rendering aid to Aamon while he was moving, but also of permitting Jeanne to continue amicable, sisterly relations with him. When she was allowed to help him in his News Stand by clerking on occasions when it was necessary for him to be away, they openly rebelled. It was only through a skillful maneuvering on the part of the firm of attorneys that an open break between the three brothers was prevented. What happened was a secret between themselves which the public never understood.

Nevertheless, Jeanne continued to assist the young business man. She was a great asset and they both profited by the experience gained through contacts with the public.

By the time summer vacation was over and had reached the climax of another Labor Day weekend, Jeanne's cheery smile became more or less a permanent fixture in the corner News Stand. A great number of customers looked forward to meeting her, and therefore went out of their way to

patronize the place. Her assistance was the very thing necessary to the growing business which now commenced to provide sufficient revenue to meet the needs of the young proprietor.

School, however, suddenly dimmed the prospect of fully capitalizing upon this business venture. The events of the summer had eclipsed all thoughts of school. He had another semester before he would graduate from high school in January. But now the return to the halls of learning became the important issue. He wanted to enroll at junior college after his graduation and in two years enter the university for the remaining junior and senior years to complete a course in automobile engineering.

To remain in business and complete his education was a problem. He would have to sell out or engage someone to carry on in his absence. Because of a delay in the widening of Grand avenue, the latter seemed to be the wisest course. The condemnation proceedings on other pieces of property were not as easily settled as had been the case in the Barton estate. In trying to secure clear title to a piece of residential frontage on Grand avenue, a number of law suits and injunction proceedings had developed which prevented immediate action in the street widening. Consequently, Aamon remained in business much longer than he thought was possible,

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1. “Sapolio was a brand of soap noted for its advertising, led by Artemas Ward from 1883–1908” – Wikipedia↩

7. A Venture in Crime

THE NEXT STEP! Human progress demands another step. Spiritual progress also demands it. One of the strange things about life is that the individual cannot remain dormant. Reason requires that there must be advancement or deterioration. Whether it pertains to an objective of the mere routine of production, success depends upon the next step. Therefore, Aamon made arrangements to return to high school, graduate and prepare for college. That was the next step for him. His education was the paramount thing — the one thing that he could be assured of providing he lived up to the terms of the Barton will. With the opportunities that a education promises, he could not afford to procrastinate.

In order to meet this situation, it became necessary to secure the services of someone to take care of the News Stand while he was in school, as it would be unwise to sell. Mr. Styles casually volunteered this advice, and suggested that *The Evening News* could probably tell him of a reliable young man with experience in the newspaper business, who might be glad to help him out on a partnership basis.

Suddenly, before Aamon realized that anyone knew he needed help, Ted Sharp appeared. The editor of the city desk had sent him over. Ted had handled the distribution for the whole north end of town, and the *News* recommended him very highly.

Without revealing the fact that he had been for years the newsboy for both attorney Soules and attorney Styles, and that Mr. Styles particularly was responsible for his applying for a partnership in the business, he became associated with “Aamon’s and Ted’s News Stand.” That was the name they agreed upon for their partnership. Aamon had met Ted many times through his business dealings with *The Evening News*, but, of course, had no way of knowing the relationship that existed between him and Mr. Styles, nor the uncanny influence that the attorney would have over him.

At first there was no written contract, but only a verbal agreement. Mr. Soules even advised Aamon against the former, when he dropped in one morning before school to buy the morning paper. He had made it a point to patronize the News Stand from the first day it opened, therefore neither his presence nor his advice was considered out of place. He had won Aamon's confidence and on this occasion his advice was more than welcome. His seeming sincerity had such an appeal that Aamon did not suspect that he had any ulterior motive.

Under this rather loose sort of arrangement, in which it was understood that Ted was to maintain the status of an employee until such time as they could agree on a partnership, "Aamon's and Ted's News Stand" opened for business. Later, if everything proved satisfactory, Aamon was to furnish the building, and Ted enough difference in time to compensate for his share of the rent. As a partnership it was to be a fifty-fifty proposition on everything.

Succeeding steps followed one after another under this mutual arrangement, and Aamon graduated from Lincoln High School with highest honors as valedictorian of his class. Following his graduation he continued to live in the rooms at the back of the News Stand. There were two or three reasons for this. First, because it was the only home he had. Second, because it was wise to be on hand as much as possible to oversee the business. Third, it was necessary to be as economical as possible and thus avoid drawing too heavily on his endowment fund before he entered the university.

While Aamon attended the junior college, which gave him two years credit at the university, Ted took care of the business the greater part of the time. On week-ends and during vacation, Aamon managed the business and in this way tried to equalize the total working hours. Following his sophomore year, when Aamon entered the university, this arrangement became more and more complicated. It meant an hour's ride on the street car from their suburb into the large metropolitan center. Consequently, he secured a room downtown and gave full time to his studies during the week. As a junior he became more and more obligated, depending almost entirely on Ted to keep the News Stand running. He expected that when he graduated as an automobile engineer he would be able to repay Ted soon for his extra services in the business. Therefore, when Ted suddenly appeared with a partnership agreement drawn by Styles, Soules and Barton, shortly

after he began his senior year, Aamon signed it, after it was approved by the legal staff of *The Evening News*.

Fully convinced that everything would be satisfactory, Aamon extended greater liberties to his partner, while he prepared to complete his studies at the university. There was a possibility that both he and Jeanne might graduate with highest honors in their respective classes, if they were able to continue their studies for the last semester with the same degree of success as before. He had not seen much of her of late, because his engineering course was conducted in a building outside of the university campus; but on the first day of the vacation preceding their last semester, she met him on the street with a troubled look. She had been told that Ted was seen at the race track several times, and that he was taking bets at the News Stand on the horses. Consequently, Aamon not only faced the task of devoting full time to his business during the summer, but also the necessity of checking on a questionable business partner.

When he returned to the News Stand, he found conditions quite different from what he had expected. The business was in the red. Ted had taken all the money out of the drawing account and charged it to extra services. The money that Ted assured him had been deposited to their joint account in the bank was not there. Leaving the bookkeeping and financial end of the business entirely to Ted was costing him dearly. He had been deceived. There were many bills unpaid that he supposed had been settled. He would not be able to complete his university course.

It was a sad awakening for Aamon. He had left some of his own personal bills accumulate, thinking that it would be an easy matter to take care of them during the summer months, but now this was impossible, as he was so badly in debt with both personal and business obligations. Why had he been so careless?

A conference with Mr. Soules soon convinced him that there was little he could do about it, except to put forth extra effort and try to recuperate. Possibly, he could force Ted to take care of these obligations, but if he had lost the money in gambling it was doubtful. The best thing for them to do, if they could not agree, was to dissolve partnership. Morally, Ted had committed a crime, to be sure, yet under the law he was not subject to criminal prosecution. He was guilty of a breach of contract and nothing more, because partners have rather broad liberties, financially, in conducting their business.

Within a week's time, Aamon discovered that there were a lot of things that meant more trouble for him. Ted was dissatisfied, that was very evident, and one reason was because the foreman who had charge of the WPA project for the widening of Grand avenue had served notice that operations would start within sixty days. This meant that the injunction which had held the matter up had been settled, and now their News Stand would have to be moved or the building torn down. Ted had accepted the notice two weeks before, but placed it in his desk and said nothing to Aamon about it — a very dishonorable act.

Greatly dejected, Aamon returned to the News Stand from the attorneys offices one Monday afternoon when Ted was not expecting him. Although the place was open for business, Ted was nowhere in sight. Looking about, Aamon discovered that the door leading from the News Stand to his room in the rear was ajar. That was strange! He had always been careful to keep this door locked. No one but himself was supposed to have access there.

Stepping over to the door, he could scarcely refrain from uttering the exclamation of surprise that came to his lips. There before him was Ted down on his knees, busily engaged in trying to manipulate a key that he was making for the old, calfskin covered trunk. In one hand he held a file which he was using to make the key fit the lock.

“It almost works,” he muttered, as he withdrew the key to be filed again.

Aamon stepped back cautiously when he saw Ted was about to look his way.

“Let him work,” Aamon reasoned with himself. “Jeanne has been waiting all this time to find out what is in that old trunk. If he can turn the lock, it may save me the trouble of eventually having to break it open.”

In a few moments he heard Ted trying the key in the lock again. Glancing back, he found him engrossed in examining the impression that the lock had made on a coating of soap on the key, which indicated where it was binding.

“Think I've almost got it now!” he said under his breath.

Aamon watched him, careful that his presence should not be discovered.

“Some young burglar I have in business with me; no wonder we're in the red!”

He looked around, wondering what to do next. Should he surprise him and let him know that his every move had been watched? No, it might be better to wait! Ted had not completed the crime of opening the trunk. Let

him work awhile, some voice seemed to whisper. If he should rush in and accuse Ted now, of he would deny it, and as there were no witnesses, Ted's story would be as good as his, unless he could get hold of the key he was making. He would need something more tangible than just his own word. His word — what did it amount to? No one would believe him! Certainly not Chase, nor Justin, nor Basil. He was already no a impostor in their sight. No, it would be better, far better, to wait!

“I wish Jeanne was here with me!” his heart registered the earnest desire; “she would know what to do; they would believe her.”

Suddenly he heard a muffled tone within the inner room.

“I've got it! I've got it!” Ted's scarcely audible exclamation came in bated breath as he arose to pull the trunk away from the wall, so he could lift the lid.

Aamon hesitated, trying to decide what to do. Looking down the street through the window, he saw a magazine distributor approaching in his truck. He was going to stop, no doubt; he always did, especially on Mondays. Cautiously, he slipped out of the door and down to the corner of the building, only to reappear as the magazine distributor drove up a the curb and stopped.

“Hey, Ted!” Aamon called through the open door, catching the bundle of magazines and tossing them on the floor before the counter. “Here's the *Post*! Got any change to pay the driver?”

Ted jumped to his feet, gave the trunk a shove back where he had found it, and came out, closing the door behind him. He did not have time to lock it before Aamon appeared with another bundle of magazines.

“We had better pay for these, hadn't we?” he asked, without glancing at Ted's flushed face; “the driver is waiting to collect.”

Ted stepped up to the cash register, took several bills out and shoved them across the counter. “Yes, go out and pay him,” he urged, hoping to get an opportunity to lock the door in Aamon's absence.

“How of much do we owe you this week?” Aamon called to the driver, determined that he should come inside for his money.

“Go on out and settle with him,” Ted urged impatiently, “no doubt he's in a hurry.”

“Aw, let him come in! We'll have to make change for him, anyway,” Aamon drawled indifferently, enjoying Ted's predicament.

After the driver appeared in the doorway for his money, gave a receipt and left, Aamon stalled around in front of the counter, untying the bundles of magazines and rearranging them in their racks. Out of the corner of his eye he watched Ted nervously fumble with his keys, while he made several attempts to edge around to the rear door.

Mischievously, Aamon played with him by turning his back just long enough for Ted to come to the point where he thought he would be able to lock the door. When he failed, he would walk over to the counter for more magazines. In the course of twenty minutes, the perspiration stood out on Ted's hands and forehead. He was in misery. He walked back and forth behind the counter. Finally, he conceived the idea of tipping over the coat rack, so it would fall against the doorcasing and conceal the doorknob.

"I am certainly clumsy today," he muttered, picking up the rack in such a manner as to hold a raincoat between himself and Aamon, while he hurriedly locked the door.

"What's the matter, Ted? Having nervous prostration?" Aamon exclaimed innocently. "Why don't you throw that rack out into the street, if it wants to fight with you like that? The first thing you know it will have you down."

"I'll chop it up for kindling if it happens again," Ted answered, as he hurried back to the counter in triumph.

It now became a battle of wits between the two young men, Ted endeavoring to persuade Aamon to leave the News Stand, so he could reenter the room and inspect the contents of the trunk, or at least to lock it and regain the key which he had dropped on the floor. That experience had been a near tragedy, far too close for comfort. But there was another problem that now troubled him: How was he going to get rid of Aamon?

But Ted was not going to get rid of him; Aamon was certain of that. What he wanted was for Ted to leave long enough for him to inspect his own room. When he saw that Ted was determined to stick around, he began to tantalize him. Taking his keys in his hand, he walked over toward the rear door, only to be stopped by Ted. Once it was to balance the cash. The second excuse was to check some unpaid bills. At another time he called him back to help take an inventory of the stock.

Finally, with no intent of going any farther, Aamon walked over to the door and stood with one hand on the knob, swinging his string of keys.

Ted was in a panic.

Without revealing the fact that he sensed anything wrong, Aamon casually talked about the business, as though that was the only thing in the world that his mind was set upon, yet quietly selecting the key that would fit his door.

“What are you going to do? Come on back here!” Ted demanded in a panic-stricken voice. “There’s a lot of things that you should do. Here’s some magazines to deliver at the Central Drug Store. I promised to have them over there two hours ago.”

“That’s the delivery I made, the one I just came back from,” Aamon smiled, shoving his key towards the keyhole.

The amateur burglar was obviously nonplussed.

“Aamon, I nearly forgot! Chase wants to see you. He — he told me to tell you to come over as soon as you got back. You run on over there now and then hurry back to relieve me for supper. I want to get away early tonight if I can. Run on now; I’ll wait,” Ted rattled on breathlessly. “I—I, well, there is so much to do. I would like to have you go over and see Chase now.”

“That certainly is funny! Chase is at the Capitol before the Supreme Court. He won’t be back until tomorrow. I was just over to see Mr. Soules. He told me that Mr. Styles and Chase had an important case there,” Aamon replied, holding his composure as best he could.

Sheepishly, Ted’s eyes roved about the room in a state of bewilderment. He was getting into deep water. The more he said, the more ridiculous he appeared. An impulse to flee came over him. That he must not do. He had to stay. It would be a dead give away for him to leave now. If somebody would only come — something happen to get Aamon away!

Cognizant of Ted’s state of mind, Aamon ventured the proposition that they both leave, feeling certain that Ted would grasp the opportunity, as he would think that he could return unobserved and remove any clues that he had left. Jeanne would be glad to come over and take care of the News Stand while they were out. Each of them could take care of a paper route, leave early and have the evening to themselves.

Stepping into the open telephone booth, Aamon dropped a nickel in the slot, dialed, and soon made the necessary arrangements with her.

Within ten minutes Jeanne appeared, smiling.

“Take the place over, will you? Both Ted and I will run a route. We want to get away early. He’ll be back in time to close up, if you can stay that

long.”

With the assurance that she would be glad to remain until one of them returned, they went out together, walked two blocks to the viaduct, and then parted.

Aamon went around the corner to the first drug store and called Jeanne, telling her what had happened during the afternoon.

“Ted will be back there within an hour or so. He will try in some way to inveigle you to go on an errand for him, long enough for him to get into the back room and straighten it up,” he whispered. “Don’t leave under any circumstances until I return to my room. I am coming back, but not to the store. My flashlight is under the right end of the counter. Leave it at the side door, so I can find it. I want to get into the back room and wait. After that, you can say to Ted that as long as he has returned you may as well go home. But don’t go any place, except to the side door, when he is not looking. I’ll be there to let you in.”

“O-oh!” Jeanne’s little exclamation of surprise reached Aamon through the receiver. “But suppose he does not come; people might talk if we were in the room together in the dark!”

“I’ll take care of that, Jeanne,” he assured her. “I’ll stop at the precinct station and arrange for detective Olson to wait across the street and watch. He is on duty now. He will know just what to do after Ted arrives. Knock on my door; I’ll be waiting on the inside.”

“All right, if detective Olson agrees, I will meet you. How am I to know, though?” she added as an afterthought.

“You will hear me enter. Watch for a note under the door. That will be safer than to run the risk of having Ted or some customer see me come to the store. I will flash the light three times on the floor just before I shove it through. If the coast is clear, you can answer by tapping the showcase with a coin.” He gave the instructions carefully and hung up.

Impatiently, Jeanne watched the clock for the next half-hour after she had placed the flashlight, as instructed, at the side door where no one but Aamon would find it.

“All right, Miss, give me the *Sports Final*,” detective Olson said, stepping up to the counter and throwing down a dime, and at the same time helping himself to the paper he wanted.

His entrance was so sudden that Jeanne was startled.

“Here’s — here’s your change,” she managed to say as he was leaving.

“Everything’s all right, Miss,” he smiled as he hurried across the street into a doorway where he could observe all that happened.

The detective had not been gone five minutes when Ted rushed in.

“Well, I guess it will be all right for you to go now. I was turned down flat on a date tonight after all the trouble to deliver my papers early, so I guess I may as well work,” he advised casually, going over and hanging up his hat.

It was her turn now to be uneasy. She had not heard Aamon come back, and she did not dare to go out to meet him, for fear Ted would go into the back room before the proper time. What should she do? What if Aamon was discovered coming in? How could she pick up the note that was to be shoved under the door without being detected?

“I think that I had better balance the cash before I go,” she suggested.

“All right, we will check it together,” he said, pressing the key that opened the register.

Presently, she detected a faint sound at the side door that suggested Aamon’s presence. Grabbing a handful of silver from the open cash register, she threw the coins on the showcase.

“You’re rather careless, throwing money around like that, aren’t you?” Ted suggested.

“Sure! You told me to get out, didn’t you?” she answered, rattling the coins on top of the glass to make sure that Aamon was not heard in the next room.

Standing between Ted and the door, she kept him busy counting the several piles of change which she had sorted for him, and at the same time watching from the side of her eye for the flashlight signal she was to receive.

“One, two, three,” she counted, as the flashes of light shone on the floor beneath the door, followed by a small, folded white note.

Ted turned to watch her, sensing that her mind was on something besides balancing the cash.

“What’s the matter? Think the rats are after you, or something?” he taunted.

Jeanne purposely dropped a couple of coins on the floor, so she could place herself between Ted and the note, and pick it up.

“You’d better hurry on home now,” he advised, encouraging her to leave.

“I am going just as soon as you’ll let me,” she announced, loud enough for Aamon to hear.

“Go ahead, then! The register checks O.K. You don’t have to wait another minute.”

Walking over to the mirror, she arranged her hair and with a casual “good night” she walked through the front door, clutching Aamon’s note in her hand.

Going to the intersection, she stood beneath the street light and read the short message which advised her that the stage was a set for the next act. Glancing down the street as though debating whether she should ride the bus, she turned and hurriedly walked away. As soon as she was sure that she could enter the side door unobserved, she returned, hugging the inside of the walk next to the building until she reached the door where Aamon awaited her.

“Not a soul on the street,” he whispered, as he opened the door cautiously to let her squeeze through.

Jeanne put her finger to her lips, nodding her head toward the front office.

“He is alone, he may hear,” she breathed, taking Aamon’s arm and pulling him toward her.

“Look here,” he said, shielding his flashlight with his hand and leading her over to where the trunk sat, “it’s unlocked; the key that Ted made is right there on the floor where he dropped it. I did not disturb anything. Those tools are just as he left them.”

“What are we to do now?” she whispered nervously.

“Wait.”

“Wait here?”

“Yes, right here. Detective Olson is across the street.”

“I saw him.”

“We’ll all wait, until—”

“Ted comes in,” she finished the sentence for him.

“Yes, or locks up the place and leaves.”

Sitting behind a curtain that shielded Aamon’s bed, they now waited. The clock of the dresser was keeping time with their heart beats. Neither of them spoke. There was something uncanny about the sudden stillness that was only interrupted occasionally by Ted’s shuffling about in the front office. Presently it began to rain. A soft, gentle drizzle that might last for

hours. A few late customers came in, bought a paper, waited a few moments and then went out. Chase was one of them.

“His train must have been late tonight,” Aamon whispered.

“S-S-sh! he’ll hear us,” she cautioned.

Nervously, they watched the light that shone beneath the door. The clock ticked on. The rain still played against the windowpane a steady patter. Jeanne found Aamon’s hand, waiting for something to happen. The suspense was nerve racking. Both were anxious, thinking the same thoughts, harboring the same fears. What if Ted had told Chase about the trunk? What if they should come in to inspect it together? Idle thoughts, perhaps, but when the mind is keyed up to the height of anticipation, sane judgment is lacking.

Why not slip out of the door and forget it all? What could they hope to accomplish if they stayed? The thought of detective Olson across the street encouraged them. He knew what to do. It was just another day’s work with him. A trifling police matter that had been assigned him. He was dependable.

The rain ceased for a moment and they could hear Chase’s “good night” as he went out the front door.

“It must be closing time. Why doesn’t Ted lock up or do something, if he is going to?” Aamon complained.

“I must go soon,” she replied anxiously.

Finally the front door was closed and locked. One of the lights went out, then another. It was dark beneath the door. Ted did not go out. He must be standing in the dark watching — listening — debating — wondering what he should do. The clock ticked louder and louder. Jeanne wanted to scream.

Ted’s tiptoe across the floor broke the suspense. There was a slight rattle of keys, followed by the tiny ray of a pencil flashlight through the keyhole. The creaking of steel against steel told them that the lock was being turned. Another flicker of light and the door opened slowly. Ted paused in the doorway, outlined in silhouette by the street light that shone through the window. He stepped into the room, partly closed the door, and stood listening.

They were no longer alone. All three were tense with bated breath.

Satisfied that the room was just as he left it, Ted went immediately to the trunk, pulled it away from the wall and opened the lid. A number of books were neatly packed in three differently shaped boxes. Books did not interest

him. With the aid of his small flash light, he picked out the most attractive box he could find and proceeded to untie the strings that bound its gold-embossed cover. What the box contained was uncertain, as there was no writing on it of any kind. The pattern on the cover, somewhat oriental in design, revealed nothing except mystery. Nervously, Ted tugged to untie the golden cords that bound it.

Suddenly, the door commenced to swing into the room noiselessly. A stately form occupied the door way and stood motionless.

Jeanne grabbed Aamon's arm in a nervous grip. It might be Chase! Maybe he had returned by agreement to meet Ted!

"It's detective Olson," Aamon breathed in her ear.

The room was flooded with light, as the detective pushed the button of his flashlight.

Ted, dumb with surprise and blinded by the sudden change of environment, gaped in wonder.

Detective Olson looked like a giant, towering above Ted, who was still on his knees before the open trunk.

"What's the meaning of this?" the detective demanded, taking his hand from his coat pocket where his revolver was concealed. "What are you doing in here like a thief in the night?"

Ted was unable to frame a reply and cowered at the taunt. With involuntary gesture, he groped for the lid of the open trunk, still holding the gaze of the detective as though mesmerized. It stunned him to think that he was so engrossed in a malignant act as to be taken unawares. His mind tried to fathom the mystery of the detective's arrival. He couldn't think. He couldn't talk. His mind was blank for want of an alibi.

"Well, this sure is a surprise all right. The first time in my twenty years of experience that I ever saw a burglar working in the presence of spectators," detective Olson remarked, motioning to Aamon and Jeanne to make their presence known.

When they shoved the screen aside and walked out into the room, Ted rose to his feet, his face flushed with anger.

"It's a trap!" he hissed.

"No doubt about that," said detective Olson; "and it's a trap that you set and sprung yourself. This severs your connection with the News Stand. Come along with me! We'll go over to the office and talk things over. That's the most expedient move that I can suggest."

8. Whose Gold Is It?

"EVIL MEN understand not judgment: but they that seek the LORD understand all things. . . He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy," Jeanne repeated as detective Olson led Ted away.

"Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD PONDERETH THE HEARTS." HOW OFTEN HE HAD BEEN REMINDED OF THAT! "THERE IS NO WISDOM NOR UNDERSTANDING NOR COUNSEL AGAINST THE LORD."

Aamon reflected upon the number of times that Mr. and Mrs. Barton had admonished him with these Proverbs, and how timely Jeanne had repeated them for Ted's benefit. But his own conscience smote him! They were applicable to him as well as to Ted. They pierced his heart like a fiery dart. Jeanne was so much like her mother, more so than ever, it seemed to him.

With thoughts of remorse, he was tempted to choose Ted's trouble rather than his own spiritual chastisement. It was easier to sympathize with Ted and with his faults. He did not want to see him prosecuted. Perhaps it would not be necessary. Detective Olson would have to advise him on that score.

Turning to Jeanne, he asked permission to see her home. In some ways she seemed almost like a stranger; he had seen so little of her during the past three years. As eager as they were to take advantage of the opportunity to inspect her father's trunk, they could not do it that night. That would involve hours of time, and it was unwise for her to stay longer. She had waited all this time, rather than have it destroyed by forcing it open. Although the imposing customs labels spoke of its wide circuit of travel and invited more than a passing inspection, she could wait another day to find out what it contained.

Aamon picked up the key off the floor, locked the trunk and handed the key to Jeanne. The trunk had been her father's and she was more entitled to inspect its contents than he. There might be something of value in it that she would want to preserve as a keepsake, although Chase insisted that there was nothing of value in it.

“No, Aamon, I feel that you are trustworthy, you keep it,” she advised, placing the key in his hand.

Impatiently, he tossed the key back. It struck her purse and bounded on the floor under the bed. They spent a full half-hour hunting for it, but no key could be found. They were faced with one conclusion: the key must have fallen through the hole which Aamon had made with the broom handle nearly five years before when they were cleaning the place. For some unexplained reason he had neglected to repair this hole in the floor. Evidently the key was under there.

“Of all the stupidity possessed by one person!” was Aamon’s final assertion in ill-humor. “I am having more than my share!”

Facing her disappointment bravely, Jeanne, true to custom, turned to the Word of God for consolation. There an eternal and inexhaustible supply was awaiting her command. She was comforted by the assurance of Romans 8:28—“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.”

With Aamon it was different. The little faith in God that was apparent when Mrs. Barton was living had weakened considerably since her death. So-called scientific facts perplexed him, material facts continually opposed him — facts that were impossible for him to overcome, he thought. In this respect, the university had not helped him, but rather left his mind in a state of chaos. Everything, everybody seemed against him in every way — everybody except Jeanne, and she was dependent upon others for material things. But for Jeanne there was hope; for him there was none. Why shouldn’t his faith in God be weakened? he reflected. He had nothing to look forward to but trouble: new trouble that Ted had heaped upon him; trouble which might even prevent his graduating.

Like many who are not grounded in the faith, Aamon was inclined to blame God. In a way, he had leaned on God for his material needs, supported by a vague belief that He would not let the well of supply run dry. Now Ted had failed him, robbed him, and even turned burglar. For what? Something material. Something of little or no value. A burglar just to satisfy his curiosity. How many there are in the world today motivated by curiosity, seeking they know not what, and Aamon blamed God because Ted had proven to be one of them.

Jeanne tried to console him by pointing out that life depended upon more than material things. Life, power, ability, reason, will and action depend

upon a material body as a vehicle of conveyance. Apart from life, material has no value. Spiritual life makes for real character. But Aamon did not see it; he could not understand. He saw only the material and the opposition that surrounded him. He was motivated by a state of subconscious revolt which seemed to cry out, "How are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me." hose Gold Is It?

In his philosophy of life it all looked unreal. If God was what Jeanne thought Him to be, what he in his moral application thought Him to be, they that troubled him were increased — increased in material gain as well as in numbers. Why shouldn't he question life? Why shouldn't he be discouraged? He had nothing to look forward to! Again the desire to run away possessed him. He could take the coward's way out and run away from trouble, if he was not big enough to take it. But he was not a coward, he would fight!

Thus they parted for the night before Jeanne's front door, each facing the responsibilities of life. Jeanne looked to the Word of God for comfort and hope, while Aamon fought for self-sufficiency.

The next day he went to the News Stand in ill humor. He was sitting behind the counter in a morbid state of mind, still mulling over recent events, when the foreman of the WPA project dropped in to read his paper. He had a few minutes to spare while waiting for a gang of men who were being transferred from another job. Three blocks farther down the street they were cutting through Grand avenue. There had always been a block offset in the street at this point due to a change in subdivisions. Condemnation proceedings instituted to secure this right of way had been fought through the courts and now they were ready to proceed, not only with several blocks of new street, but also the widening of Grand avenue. Aamon had forgotten all about it. While in college he had been busy, and assumed that the project had been dropped. Now, to have the WPA foreman appear, stating that he was proceeding with the work at once, was a matter of real concern.

"Where are you moving the building?" the foreman casually inquired.

"Building? Do you mean this building?" asked Aamon.

"Yes, this building! You know the notice we sent you?"

"Notice? Building? What do you mean?" Aamon demanded, aghast.

"Certainly Ted gave you the notice ordering the removal of this building?"

“He certainly did not,” Aamon interrupted, grasping at a straw of hope.

“Well, that’s rather peculiar. Here we are on the job ready to cut Grand avenue through, and you claim that you have not been notified?”

“Absolutely! This is the very first I have heard of it for four years,” he emphasized.

“I can’t understand how that happened, but within two weeks we will be at this point widening the street. The building will have to be moved or torn down,” the foreman kindly informed him, producing an original copy of the notice. “I am sorry that such is the case, but these government projects — well, you know how they are! We’ll have to proceed according to schedule.”

“Two weeks!” the scarcely audible reply was uttered through parched lips.

Faint at heart, despondent, and drifting in a mental sea of hopelessness, Aamon watched the days pass. An opening appeared at the opposite end of the street, extending Grand avenue farther west. Workmen by the truckload rode to and fro through the new opening. Aamon watched them going to the several jobs to which they were assigned. A mammoth caterpillar steam shovel was working its way nearer and nearer of the street widening, its huge jaws devouring everything within reach to a certain specified depth.

“Two weeks! Move in two weeks? No trick at all to move this building and everything. No need to worry about a place to put it, either. Me, little me! Just watch!” Aamon laughed ironically. “Certainly easy! Just leave it to me.”

Aamon’s jaws set in defiance. His heart was cold as stone. Something happened internally that he could not explain. Nothing mattered any more. Henceforth, the law governing his moral code of life was that of the survival of the fittest. No one cared for him. The resolution moved him to acknowledge responsibility to no one.

Stepping to the telephone, he dialed Chase’s office number. The br-r-ro a busy signal echoed in his ear. He tried another number and succeeded in getting Jeanne on the line. As briefly as possible he explained the pending trouble with which he was soon to be confronted.

“Does Chase know about it?” she asked with concern.

“Line was busy; I don’t know,” was the hopeless response.

“I’ll call him; he will know what to do—”

“No use! It’s a government project. He’s the executor and received the condemnation check; he must know about it,” Aamon interrupted bitterly.

“I’m coming right over,” she said, hoping to console him.

“May as well! I’ll rip up the floor and get the key to the trunk. We can at least find out what there is in it before it is hauled away.”

“Don’t!” It was her turn to interrupt. “You sound so hopeless. There is some way out. There must be! Wait until I get there, please,” she pleaded as she hung up.

When she arrived, Aamon was leaning with his elbows on the counter and his chin in his hands. She saw him through the side window as she approached. Her heart bled with pity, realizing that his mind was burdened with cares too weighty for one of his years. She flashed a smile as she passed the window in an effort to encourage him. She might as well have been in Europe; he did not see her, nor even sense her presence as she entered the door.

Abruptly, he turned to stare at her. He did not smile, he did not speak, but like an automaton he walked over and unlocked the door to his quarters. Preceding her into the room, he moved the bed around so the hole in the floor was exposed. Raising his foot, he drove it through the rotten flooring, enlarging the hole several times its original size. In a fit of anger, he took hold of the trapdoor alongside the hole, tore it completely loose and tossed it to one side.

Jeanne gasped in astonishment; she had never seen him so violent.

“Please, Aamon,” no she pleaded with her hand on his arm. “Please, be reasonable! Let’s talk things over.”

“There’s nothing to talk about. I am all done talking,” he retorted. “Here, hold the light and I’ll see if I can find the key.”

She took the flashlight, feeling that there was nothing to do but obey his command.

“We will look in the trunk to see if there’s anything you want there, if we can find the key,” Aamon remarked, as he dropped on his knees on the floor, looking for it in the debris below.

“There’s something bright and shiny at the edge of that square tin box over there in the corner,” Jeanne told him, as she pointed to it.

“That looks like it,” he replied.

Finding that he could not reach the key, but rather pushed it farther away until it lodged between two old cans, Aamon swung his feet around and dropped down into the cellar-like opening. By carefully removing the smaller of the two cans he regained possession of the key and handed it to Jeanne.

“Look, there’s something else, too,” she urged; “there in the box you just moved. See, it looks like gold!”

“It is gold, sure enough — a tooth, a part of a bridge, and other pieces — a whole box full of old scrap gold!” he exclaimed in excitement, poking about in the dust covered box with a stick. “Here’s an old display case with some more of it, too. And look, another one — a bigger box — must be sweepings of gold dust from the old dental laboratory that used to be here. See these cases and boxes! Whew! We’ve discovered a regular little gold mine. What will we ever do with it?”

“Do with it?” Jeanne exclaimed; “claim it, of course! It’s yours.”

“But —,” Aamon replied, doubtfully.

“Don’t be silly. This is your property, it’s your gold. You found it. Come on, let’s take a sample box of it over to the old gold buyer and see if it really is worth anything,” she exclaimed gleefully.

Aamon selected two small tin boxes and set them out on the floor at Jeanne’s feet.

“We will leave this case and the other three boxes until we learn what Mr. Kirsch has to say about it,” he smiled up at her. “We can each carry a box over for his inspection. Then, if we find that it’s no good, we’ll forget about it and come back to inspect the trunk.”

“Gold is gold, no matter where you find it,” she laughed.

“We have just one hour to find out,” he advised, climbing out on the floor beside her. “I’ll have to be back for the afternoon edition of the *News*.”

They left the News Stand together, each carrying a box of the hidden treasure.

Aamon sometimes slipped away during the dull hours, leaving the place locked. A self-service magazine and newspaper rack, which set before the door, answered the needs of the few straggling customers who might pass before the *Red Line* edition came off the press.

Mr. Kirsch was alone when they entered the store and placed the two boxes on the counter.

“What have you got here?” he inquired, glancing over the top of his glasses. “What, if it isn’t Aamon and, and his sister yet, what her name is I can’t remember,” he continued, good-naturedly smiling a welcome to the fair young lady.

“Jeanne,” said Aamon, refreshing his memory.

“When she comes in some more I will remember—Jeanne. What can I do for you? You have gold I can buy?”

“That’s what we came for, Mr. Kirsch. Aamon found this under his News Stand-grandfather’s old dental office — the one they are going to make him move. We found an old display case and three more boxes like this under the floor. We came over to see if you would buy the gold. Aamon will need all the money he can get.”

“What, will I buy it? Pure gold? Sure, as one business man to another, I will buy it from Aamon. Every penny it is worth he will get it,” he elaborated, extending his hands.

“Leave it once with ol’ Jake. What the market says, Aamon will get twelve ounces to the pound, with pay for every pennyweight.”

“Then, as one Hebrew with another,” said Aamon with a good natured laugh, referring to the inference that Basil and Justin had cast upon his lineage through birth, “we are going to do business.”

Spreading a newspaper on the counter, Mr. Kirsch dumped the contents of each box in a pile by itself on the counter, and proceeded to sort and weigh the various parts. When this was done, he added each row of figures and multiplied it with the price per ounce. Totaling these, he handed the slip to Aamon.

“Eighty-seven dollars and ninety-three cents,” he gasped in astonishment. “You mean that little pile of gold is worth that much?”

“Ol’ Jake would not cheat you. There are seven ounces. Should it be worth more, more will you get.”

He became enthusiastic. “See all this sand?” he said, “that is not all dirt. It is worth money with specks of gold in it. Gold filings, sweepings from the work bench.”

“There are bushels of dirt over there under grandfather’s old laboratory that may have gold in it,” Jeanne enthusiastically informed him; “and three more boxes of gold, too!”

“What a find! What a find! One little gold mine for Aamon,” Jake beamed, waving his hands. “Once you bring it to ’ol Jake, you will know

what you got.”

Aamon and Jeanne hurried back to the News Stand for the rest of the boxes. They were too busy and excited to do anything else that afternoon. Aamon made arrangements for another boy to distribute the papers on his route. The News Stand was left closed, except for the time Jeanne took care of customers while Aamon was getting the boxes ready to take over to the Old Gold Shop. A boy was secured to attend to the front office while they sorted the treasure over and carried it out.

By nightfall, the report of Aamon’s good fortune had spread around, and the late edition of *The Evening News* carried an item describing his find. A picture of him was inserted in the corner of a three-column cut of the old Barton dental office. This news article told of the antiquity of the building which was about to be torn down and mentioned an interview in which Basil Barton protested Aamon’s title to the hidden treasure. Mr. Kirsch was quoted as having estimated the value of the gold between three hundred and five hundred dollars, depending upon the amount of gold filings to be reclaimed from the soil under neath the old dental laboratory. There was no question about the gold belonging to the Barton estate, but Basil contended that the title had not changed, and the gold found under the building did not belong to Aamon by virtue of the will. It was a human-interest story which made good reading.

In analyzing Aamon’s position in the story, he was pictured as a martyr to the cause of justice in receiving only the widow’s mite of the Barton estate. This particular phase of the story cast a sinister reflection upon the court and the Barton heirs for having maliciously shorn Aamon of his rights. Throughout the story, Aamon appeared as having been fleeced, and yet the heirs were not satisfied. Now they wanted the gold that he had found. He was an outcast, without a place of refuge. Yet, according to the news article, his civic pride and generosity had prompted him to offer the old Barton landmark, his home, to the city rather than have it torn down. Its architecture and history would make it a valuable adjunct to the public square. Since Aamon had modestly made such an offer, the city had a right to feel proud of him.

Aamon was in a precarious position; the building, which had been willed to him, was going to be lost; he had no location upon which to move it; the condemnation check, which he right belonged to him, had been cashed by Chase, and placed to the credit of the Barton estate. It appeared like a case

of strategy on the part of the attorneys to defraud him, yet he was bound by the decision of the judge. He could not use his college endowment for any other purpose, therefore he had no funds which would enable him to move the structure. But if the city approved, the community would be be enriched by a building which could be utilized as museum or branch library.

As a suburban daily pointed out in a editorial, their neighbor city could not afford to pass up the opportunity. The city's growth since incorporating under a new name had been phenomenal. A new subdivision had been added, increasing the territorial area which invited industry and gave promise of a new business center of which the erstwhile citizens of Whitehall had a right to feel proud. The old Barton landmark should be preserved.

But publicity, however sympathetic and favorable, did not help Aamon. And though he was willing to relinquish any claim to the gold that he had found, should the other Barton heirs insist upon claiming it, that did not help. He was only turning the other cheek, as it were, to be smitten again be those desiring to persecute him.

9. Premonition of Trouble

“DID YOU READ THAT?” Basil yelled, as he burst into Chase’s office unannounced. “Well, read it and weep! Then worry about your reputation.”

Chase rose to apologize to his thunderstruck client and at the same time to lead Basil from the room.

“The martyr finds a pot of gold! A philanthropist! Our hero!” he raved, shaking himself loose from the hold that Chase had on his arm and pointing to the headlines. “Our little angel brother! Too bad he isn’t in heaven — the chiseling, conniving Hebrew ‘sheeny.’ I wish he was in —”

“That’s enough out of you,” Chase shouted, losing his temper and none too gently shoving his brother out into the hall. “What’s the matter with you, bursting into my office like this? Disgracing yourself before my client and ruining my business? You ought to have a thrashing!”

“Ruining your business? Look at this paper! Your business is already ruined! You better go thrash yourself for being so dumb. Look at the mug of the smiling ‘kike.’ I suppose you’re going to sit here and wait until he runs you out of town!” Basil raved. “I told you he was a Jew. Found gold! why, the mongrel o Israel could smell gold in purgatory!”

Attorneys Styles and Soules came out into the hall. “Perhaps it would be better to get our ear to the ground and find out what this is a about,” Mr. Styles said, approaching Basil with an inquiring look.

Basil did not wait to hear more.

“I have been telling Chase it’s about time someone got busy and chased this impostor out of town. But, no, he wants to mollycoddle around with him like a puttering old fool, until they make Aamon mayor or something.”

“We make and break the mayors of this town,” attorney Soules laughed with considerable ego.

“Well, if this keeps up you’ll have another one to break someday. That will be something else for you to laugh about,” was Basil’s sarcastic rejoinder. “Or let him break you, might be more appropriate, judging from his popularity just now and the way the people are signing a petition to

move his building for him, and set him up in business on the lot across from the city hall. A fine state of affairs that will be with Old Jake Kirsch behind him, giving him a lot and every thing.”

“Giving him the lot?—a petition?” Mr. Styles interjected.

“Well, read it! It’s all there. Not exactly giving him the lot, but the use of it for his building. Another way to get the Jew’s ten percent. Have the public sign a petition out of sympathy, donate money, and no move the building of to his lot, so he can eventually own it; and then I suppose sell it back to the city.”

Both of the older attorneys chuckled.

“You can laugh it off, all right,” Basil replied with irony, “but once Old Jake gives Aamon a course in political jurisprudence, you know what will happen. You think he is your friend now, your political ally, but when the voice of the people speaks and the worm turns, Old Jake will follow the worm and leave you to squirm, a victim of public sentiment. But, no, you think it’s something to laugh about! I suppose you are like Chase, so blind that you can’t see that the division made in the Barton estate is the cocoon covering the worm right now. You had better wake up. You think you’re going to see a butterfly. But just wait until this lepidopterous insect comes forth and you will begin to realize just what the trouble really is. If I had my way I would no declare a open season right now and kill him as a public parasite.”

The situation was embarrassing. It would never do to have Basil running around making threats to kill people. He would have to be taken in hand. It was a known fact that his animosity towards Aamon amounted to that of a deadly enemy. In the heat of passion of he might d something drastic for which they would be sorry. Then, too, it was embarrassing to have a vainglorious youth like Basil telling a firm of the three best-known attorneys in town what they should or should not do. Yet, without admitting it, they a knew that there was a lot of logic to what Basil had been telling them.

Taking the matter in hand, Mr. Soules gravely agreed that something would have to be done. In order that the three attorneys might discuss the question in private, he asked Basil if he would mind running down to the newspaper office for a copy of the latest edition of the *News* which would come off the press shortly.

Calling his partners together in his office after Basil had left, he said, "There's a lot more truth than poetry to what we've just been hearing. In the eyes of the people, Aamon is a martyr to an injustice done him at our hands. In their opinion he has been robbed, mistreated and persecuted. Some means must be taken to get rid of him. Basil is right in that, but not to the point of killing him. He must be gotten out of town, out of the country, in fact, someplace where newspaper correspondents can't reach him. He must leave here honorably. Moreover, he must leave here as our friend. Now the question is, how are we going to accomplish it?"

Attorney Styles meditated.

"If it were not for the war in Europe, I would suggest sending Chase over there with him at our expense on a mission to locate his relatives," he finally ventured. "There's always information to be verified. Suppose we learn that he has royal blood in his veins and a coat-of-arms is found linking him with the estate of the Duke of Somebody or other? Or a lost heir? It would be necessary to go to the old country to find out. Aamon must go along in order to be identified. It's all logical, and the firm of Styles, Soules and Barton is willing to underwrite the expenses of such a trip in order that justice may be served."

"Just a hypothetical case, of course," Mr. Soules winked at his partner, giving the assurance that he was in accord theoretically.

When Basil returned, he entered the offices with a no broad grin of his face and laid three copies of the *News* on the desk. With an attitude of "I told you so," he watched the three attorneys devour the contents of the published articles concerning Aamon and his discovery of gold, his forced removal from his place of business, the loss it meant to him, the injustice that had been meted out to him as one of the Barton heirs, and lastly, the swing of public sentiment toward him as evidenced by the signatures of the petitions and the contributions subscribed.

"That settles it," the hard, defiant tone of Attorney Styles emphasized clearly, "we've all got some thinking to do. Three heads are better than one. We are facing an obstacle in our path that has got to be removed."

Basil smiled his approval when he saw understanding glances pass between the three attorneys. At last they were becoming concerned. Some one of them surely would devise a plan that would work to their advantage. At least he could afford to wait a few days and see.

When they separated it was with the understanding that they were all to court Aamon's favor. As far as the newspaper articles were concerned, they were to be ignored. While it was hard for Basil to do it, he finally agreed to the proposition. He was to lay no more stones in Aamon's way. He was not to browbeat nor belittle him in talking with others. His open animosity toward him was to cease. And should the opportunity arise, if he must go out of his way to do Aamon a favor.

In order to deceive the public, a diabolical conspiracy to kill Aamon with kindness, so to speak, was entered into, hoping that something would happen to discredit him in the eyes of the public. Circumstances alter cases, and therefore every effort was put forth to create circumstances favorable to their cause.

Chase and Basil left the office resolved that they would drop around at Aamon's News Stand and congratulate him on his good fortune in finding the gold, and, particularly, to assure him that the question of his right to it would not be contested. He could have it all, along with a substantial contribution toward the moving of his building, if that legally could be done.

Chase was very particular in his use of the word "legally." What could "legally" be done had a great bearing on the case. In the minds of the firm of attorneys of which he was a member, a "front" would appear to represent them. An obscure citizen, having no apparent connection with them, would be asked to file a bill, seeking an injunction to stop the removal of the old Barton dental office to a place of prominence in front of the city hall. In other words, the matter was to be tied up in court until the wave of popularity had passed.

Attorney Soules had a particular reason for wanting to go to the immigration office for a private interview with the inspector. His partner, Mr. Styles also had a good reason for wanting to see the Circuit Judge. It was that political maneuvering that goes on behind the scenes in altogether too many communities. They were weaving the web to ensnare another unsuspecting victim.

When Chase and Basil walked into the office of the News Stand, Aamon did not suspect that soon he would no longer be the fly entangled in an unseen web. Their manner was so kind and sympathetic, that his troubled heart was laid bare to their wiles. He and Jeanne had just opened her father's old trunk and were looking at a number of the books that it contained, when suddenly

they realized that Chase and Basil were in their presence. Not that they particularly cared; they had nothing to conceal. In fact, the books were spread on the counter for anyone to inspect if they cared to do so.

Jeanne expected trouble when she first saw them, so that no one was more surprised than she to see their change of conduct, particularly that of her brother Basil. This was not his normal attitude toward Aamon, and the only way she could account for it was that he was sorry. He should be ashamed of himself, especially in view of the newspaper article, quoting him as laying claim to the gold that she and Aamon had found. She did not want a pennyworth of it and why should Basil? Certainly her claim was far superior to his.

Like Aamon, she was agreeably surprised, when Chase, in good humor, discussed the contents of his father's trunk and again assured them that if it contained anything of intrinsic value, they were welcome to it, as far as he was concerned.

"They are welcome to my share, too," Basil advised congenially; "and I don't want to be misunderstood or misquoted, as I was in the newspaper article."

Jeanne and Aamon continued to occupy themselves with the inventory in order to keep from showing their embarrassment.

"I don't mean that I am blaming anybody but myself for not being clearly understood," he added magnanimously. "I don't want any of the gold or the contents of that old trunk, regardless of what the paper says to the contrary. I want you to believe that!"

"They're not doubting you," Chase suavely answered, picking up one of the oddly-bound volumes and looking it over with some interest.

"Well, I mean every word I say," Basil harped, defending a guilty conscience.

"Yes, yes," Chase interrupted impatiently, still handling the book he held; "forget it! This is more interesting than making foolish explanations."

Basil colored in anger.

Ignoring him, Chase continued eagerly:

"Look at this," he said, little realizing that the magnetic power of control which he sought to exercise in Aamon's future was contained in the odd little black book that he held. "I think that we should hold a special ceremony and dedicate this to Aamon."

"The magic black book," Basil unwittingly prophesied.

“Every bit of it, providing the mysterious messages that it contains can be deciphered.”

“Tell us, Chase, why the suspense? What is it all about?” asked Jeanne.

But Chase continued to tantalize them by talking in riddles about the merits of the little volume.

“Three guesses be everyone, except Basil; he’s seen this so many times that it would not be fair to let him guess,” he added with a chuckle.

“Oh, I know! Father’s diary in Hebrew,” Basil replied, thinking out loud. For a moment Chase was crestfallen. The suspense was broken and the little joke that he had been making about the mysterious black book had seemingly lost its appeal.

“Yes, that’s what it is — father’s record of his studies in Archaeology and the history of the Hebrew language,” he emphasized, handing the book over to Aamon.

“Thanks, Chase, for passing this heirloom along to the prodigal,” Aamon laughed; “maybe I’ll find out if ‘Yehudah’ was my grandfather or great-uncle.”

“Please, Aamon don’t joke that way,” Jeanne pleaded seriously; “it makes me homesick and miserable. Really, I can’t tell you how it makes me feel.”

“Probably a premonition of more trouble,” Aamon reasoned prophetically.

Following a few minutes more of banter concerning the diary and its daily entries in Hebrew, Chase and Basil departed, leaving the others to ponder over the possibilities of what Mr. Barton had written in the strange little black book. The fact that it was in a foreign language made it all the more interesting and mysterious. Naturally, they wanted to know what it was all about. Why was it necessary to keep a record in a foreign tongue, particularly one that was all but obsolete?

“What do you make of it? Did you know about it before? Hasn’t Chase ever wondered about what was in his father’s diary? He seems to know something about it. Has anyone ever had it translated?” Aamon asked, all in one breath. “It seems to me that it might be very important, about — well, about me, for instance. Maybe there’s something there that tells where I came from.”

“I never thought of that and I don’t believe that Chase ever did either. Do you suppose that possibly there is something recorded in it concerning —

your past?” Jeanne said in a scarcely audible whisper.

The possibilities touched a sentimental vein in their deportment. It was something too sacred to talk about. What if it were so? What if it uncovered facts that might better remain a secret? Whether to know or not to know, the suspense either way was coupled with fear. Both of them felt it. Uncertain what to say or do, a new fear was creeping in upon them — a hypnotic influence appalling in its very nature.

“Let’s take it over to Mr. Kirsch,” Jeanne whispered in a strange voice.

“I wish I knew what was in it,” came the equally strange reply.

“Mr. Kirsch can tell us.”

“Maybe.”

“Shall we take it over and find out?”

“Yes — if we only knew what to expect.”

“But this is the only way to find out. We’ll take it over and hope for the best — that it brings good news,” Jeanne declared encouragingly.

To take the book over to the Old Gold Shop was a matter of enough importance to close the News Stand for an hour or so. But when they arrived and laid the diary on the counter before Mr. Kirsch and explained their mission, they were doomed to meet with disappointment. Mr. Kirsch was not well enough versed in Hebrew to decipher the characters. There was no one in the city who could translate it into English. They had meant to have him go over the entries in the diary with them and let them pick out the things which were important. Then, if none were found, it would be a simple matter to forget all about it. Mr. Kirsch suggested sending it to New York to a rabbi whom he knew. This would complicate things and involve expense, particularly if all of the entries were translated. If this were not done, how could they tell the rabbi what the parts were that they wanted? It was a conundrum. How were they going to solve it?

“What would I do with the book? Well, I would send it at once to the rabbi, and when it came with all the writing about Aamon when he was a baby, I would know what I wanted,” the old gold buyer elaborated, extending his hands, palms upward, over the counter.

“That’s just what we want to know — what the diary contains about Aamon’s adoption, his birthplace, his father and mother, and where his home was when he was a child,” Jeanne enthusiastically exclaimed. “If there isn’t anything about a child or about Aamon, we don’t care to know about the rest.”

“I will write now the rabbi what I want.”

“That’s very kind of you, Mr. Kirsch. I am sure the rabbi will learn who accompanied father of his Archaeology tour in the Orient. Then, perhaps, he can tell us a whole lot about what we want to know,” Jeanne suggested.

“Just let Ol’ Jake write. When comes the answer, he will tell you what you want to know.”

“All right, Mr. Kirsch; you are the only friend I can trust. You can send the diary to the rabbi and see if you can find out who I am,” said Aamon solemnly. “We may as well know what country I came from and what my future prospects are.”

“You will be a prince already once again, wether you find it out or not, or Ol’ Jake won’t be a prophet,” he replied with a twinkle in his eye.

“All right, but we won’t build our hopes too high until we know the truth,” said Jeanne, as she turned with Aamon to accompany him back to the News Stand.

Old Jake picked up the little black diary and leafed the pages. He frowned and wagged his head with a set jaw.

“Ashkenaz!” he mumbled vehemently. “Only one word I know. That is Germany!”

10. Once a Jew, Always a Jew

THE LITTLE BLACK DIARY was of enough importance to cause at least five people to spend a restless night. What was its magnetic power? Why should the minds of five different people be centered upon this one point of interest? Obviously there was a reason!

Should anyone have asked Aamon, he would have hesitated to admit that it was worry, but whether he recognized it or not this was the seat of his trouble. He was worried, troubled, perplexed over who he was and where he came from. He was worried for fear the little black book would reveal a picture not to his liking — worried for fear that new troubles might even surpass those of the present; and all of it centered around the fact that he was trying to think himself across unseen bridges.

While Jeanne came the nearest to sharing Aamon's thoughts, her trouble in some respects was different. She knew that it was a sin to worry — a sin of which all who lack faith in God are guilty. That she was no exception burdened her. Every little doubt that insisted upon creeping into her mind was a burden. She tried to pray in faith, but still her heart was burdened — burdened because she knew that her prayers were not motivated wholly for the glory of God. They were all centered around what she wanted for herself and Aamon. Over and over again, she told herself that she did not care if Aamon was of Jewish parentage. She tried to convince herself that she did not care who he was, or where he came from. But she did care! Her selfishness, her own desires rather than God's plan had given Satan a footing. He was trying her faith, desiring to leave it shipwrecked on the reefs of dissatisfaction and doubt.

Basil's sleeplessness, while very unusual, was not occasioned by worry that something serious might happen to Aamon. He was worried for fear that the little black book would not prove the means of heaping more trouble upon his shoulders, which would help to drive him out of his sight and out of the country forever. He wanted to get rid of him. How, it did not

matter, as long as it did not involve him openly. It was undue anticipation rather than worry that caused Basil to lose his sleep.

“Ashkenaz! That is Germany.”

How could the old gold buyer be expected to sleep after he discovered that? He did not even go to bed. Sleep was an unknown quantity, as far as he was concerned. “Ashkenaz,” the first-born of Gomer, the son of Japheth, according to the tenth chapter of Genesis. He studied the Talmud to make sure that he was not mistaken. Why was it that the little black book contained this one word that he knew, written in Hebrew? —“Ashkenaz!” Could that be Aamon’s name? Was his home in Germany? According to Jewish tradition, the bands of Gomer migrated to that land now known as Germany, and his sons were with him. There the Ashkenazi Jews were working out their own salvation according to Elias Levita, the Jewish grammarian.

“Working out their salvation, one by another, on Hitler’s bayonet, that’s what they get in Germany. Ashkenaz! Does that mean good for Aamon? Better were he dead!” the old merchant raved furiously, talking to himself.

With Chase his father’s diary was likewise responsible for the loss of sleep and his rambling thoughts. He could not think consistently of anything. Neither could he sleep. The supposed magnetic power of this little black book created a nightmare for him. There was something about it which he could not understand. Something that seemed to tell him that they had found the key that would give Aamon a place of advantage. He must get hold of that book in some way. Why didn’t he think of it last night? In his hands it would have power. It could be made to reveal anything that he desired. A sort of “*ignis fatuus*” concerning facts which he might want to present. It did not matter if they were misleading. Nothing greater than a corpse-candle to illuminate the Barton will settlement was sufficient, and the shadier that was, the better. Altogether too many questions were being asked for his comfort. This little black book could be made to answer a lot of them, if Styles, Soules and Barton handled the translation. Consequently, with this chain of thoughts racing through his brain, Chase could not sleep.

All of the five, excepting Jeanne, chose to fight their own battle and resort to their own ingenuity and strength to work out their own solution. Her choice was to ask God for divine wisdom and let Him undertake for her, for has He not said: “Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great things, and difficult, which thou knowest not?” The things that

confronted her were difficult. Human wisdom had no solution for them. But when she turned to God, He gave her assurance, wisdom, comfort and peace. His invitation has ever been, “Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.” She was in trouble-trouble contracted by sympathy for Aamon. She wanted to help him carry his load — a load she considered unfair and unwarranted — yet she knew not how to help him in the face of conditions. Everything seemed to be beyond her control. Prayer was her only recourse, but how to pray according to the will of God was a matter of real concern. She recalled the words of Jesus to His disciples, reminding them of the withered fig tree: “Have faith in God,” and His assurance: “What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.”

When she ceased to struggle with Aamon’s problem, and asked God to forgive her for the malice she secretly nurtured in her heart for those whom she considered his enemies, she was able to sleep. When she left it all with the Lord in true faith, His barrier, “As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be enquired of by you,” enabled her to withstand the willfulness of men.

The magic of of the little black book no longer concerned her as it did the others. Chase and Basil in particular, who had been taught by their mother to pray, would certainly ask in vain, for as St. James says: “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.” They heeded not His exhortation: “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.” To be humble, never!—not those two vainglorious and high minded brothers, who lived in the desires of an unregenerated heart, and sought the pleasures of sin for a season, and catered to the lusts of the flesh.

When they arose the following morning, there were still five minds centered on the diary that covered the three years spent in Europe by Andrew Barton and his wife. Those dates were easily determined and told of their return to the United States when Aamon was three or four years old. Naturally, all of them expected the diary to reveal something about his genealogy.

Having questioned Jeanne the night before, Chase of lost no time in taking advantage of the information that he had learned concerning the whereabouts of his father’s diary. He was the first customer at the Old Gold

Shop the next morning when Mr. Kirsch no arrived over half a hour early, carrying the mysterious little black book with him.

“What! Already you come by!” the old merchant exclaimed in surprise.

“That’s right, Jake! I was talking with Jeanne last night and she mentioned that you were sending father’s diary to a rabbi in New York City for translation. That’s a very fine gesture of your part, Mr. Kirsch. You are to be commended for your thoughtfulness and generous spirit in wanting to do that much for Aamon. Frankly, I want you to know that I appreciate it. It’s very clever of you to foresee the value of the contents of this diary,” Chase deceitfully elaborated in glowing terms. “Really, Jake, you put all of us to shame for our not thinking of it before. You certainly have a keen mind for appreciating values.”

The old merchant’s face glowed with pleasure a the flattery.

“I mean every word of it, Jake,” Chase continued craftily; “that’s why I came around so early to ask your advice.”

“Why should a attorney ask advice of Jake?” he queried, rubbing his hands together happily.

“You’re a wise old fox, that’s the reason. You’re always on the safe side, and knowing this, I know that you are not going to let anything happen to father’s diary. If I were sending it, I probably would not have thought of the possibility of its being lost, but knowing your carefulness, I came over to find out how I could help with the expense of having its pages Photostatted,” Chase cleverly supplied the idea which he assumed had originated in Mr. Kirsch’s own mind.

Nor was he doomed to disappointment. The old gold buyer caught the significance of the remark.

“Well, pictures we should take and be safe — .”

“Wise old Jake, always one jump ahead of me,” Chase interrupted, injecting the thought for which he wanted him to take the credit. “I like your idea of the picture instead of sending the book. Photostats, they call them, but it a means the same after you have the picture of each page. Very clever! It may cost more, to be sure, but I am going to insist on taking care of the expense.”

The old merchant attempted to reply.

“Now, now, Jake, I know what you were going to say. It’s your idea and you think you should pay for it, but not a penny! You have done enough for Aamon already and it’s only fair that the expense should come out of

father's estate without costing either you or Aamon anything," Chase advised dramatically. "You can send the diary over to the commercial photographer who does work for the legal profession. He has served us satisfactorily and does the work for less than you could do it yourself. They will send me the bill and you can have the photostats mailed any place you want. All I will have to do is to give him the address."

Jake did not really know what it was all about, but since Chase had given him credit for his great wisdom, he hesitated to ask any questions. Still, in loyalty to Aamon he hesitated to deliver the diary to another. It was in his custody and he did not want even Chase to take it without Aamon's consent.

Chase, guessing his misgivings, stepped to the telephone and called the News Stand. When Aamon answered, he explained the idea of having photostats of the pages in the diary taken and sending them to the rabbi in New York City. Of course, as he explained deceitfully, it was Mr. Kirsch's idea and one that he, personally, thought was very clever.

Turning to Mr. Kirsch, he informed him that Aamon would meet them in half an hour at the commercial photographer's office. Satisfied that everything was a right, Mr. Kirsch went with Chase to the office where they were to meet Aamon. Arrangements were then made for photostatic copies of the complete diary. The address of the rabbi in New York City was left with the photographer. Although Aamon protested at first, he finally gave his consent when Mr. Kirsch agreed to the plan. The diary was to be returned to Chase's office and kept with other legal papers in the vault.

They parted at the corner in front of Chase's office, satisfied that they had followed the wisest course possible.

Behind closed doors, with his feet on top of his mahogany desk, Chase reviewed his morning's work. He was delighted, regardless of the fact that it was nearly noon and he had had no breakfast. It was his best day's work in months. He telephoned the photographer and gave him final instructions. On the day following, or whenever the diary was returned with the photostats, it would remain in his custody for safe keeping. That little black book was going to talk. When the pages were translated there were going to be some startling facts revealed. How he would be able to get photostatic copies of such Hebrew characters as he wanted Mr. Kirsch to see, he did not know! They would have to correspond with the information that he wanted to present. Finally, the frown he had been wearing changed to a broad grin.

“Ah, I have it,” he muttered; “I will call Jake and Aamon over to the office, show them the original photostats, compare them with some of the pages in the diary, and then place them in envelopes to be mailed.”

He smiled in satisfaction as the idea circulated through his perverted brain. “I can have a dummy package of something else in Hebrew to be translated. What that will be I don’t know yet,” he soliloquized, “but I do know that neither those photostats, nor any of the pages of father’s diary are going to be made public until I know what is in them. I will have to find my own rabbi or some other Hebrew interpreter whom I can trust.”

When his senior partners arrived, Chase was quite facetious, ready to go into a huddle with them. They had a lot to talk over as to how they could best stop the adverse publicity they were receiving on account of Aamon and the settlement of the Barton estate. It was going to be a real pleasure to tell them what he proposed to do. The three of them could then outline those plans that would protect their standing in the community — he was confident of that.

How to enforce the law, as well as how the law could be forced to work in their favor, or in the interest of a client financially able to demand it — a client whom they chose to represent — was the basic principle of Styles, Soules and Barton. Their plan was to get rid of Aamon. If photostats of the Barton diary were necessary to serve their purpose, that would be an easy way out. They had been ordered, but their development depended upon what Chase would say. If the firm needed more time to work on their plan, more time would be taken. The sign over the door reading: “*We Aim To Please Our Customers*” meant pleasing our “best customer.” Chase represented a firm of attorneys with whom they did a lot of business — legitimate business. Jake Kirsch had never placed an order with them before and probably never would again; therefore his good will meant nothing.

Whenever Mr. Kirsch or Aamon dropped in at the photographer’s office to check up on the work and register a complaint on account of the delay, the photographer was always ready with an excuse, according to his instructions from Chase. The order was so large that he had run out of films; a shipment that he was expecting had been delayed; when it finally came, it was the wrong size. One excuse followed another up to the very day that the old dental office was to be moved to Mr. Kirsch’s lot in front of the city hall.

Nothing had been said nor any objections made about moving the building until that morning, but as soon as an attempt was made to place it on the lot, an injunction was served on the moving company, the City Building Inspector, Chase Barton, as executor of the Barton will, Jake Kirsch, as owner of the lot, and on Aamon, as owner of the building, to show cause why permission should be granted to allow the placing of such a building on that lot in that locality. Set up in the petition for an injunction were several clauses pointing out that such a building was a public disgrace to the city square; that it did not comply with the present building code; and that it was a type of construction prohibited by the fire-zone ordinance and therefore a fire hazard.

Consequently, Aamon, who still occupied the building, found that his home was on the public highway facing the city hall, while his fate was being decided by the court in a battle between the Civic Pride Association and the firm of Styles, Soules and Barton, who represented his interests —“legally speaking.”

As the days rolled by, Aamon’s heart became heavier and heavier. The public attention he was receiving was nauseating. The continual commotion on the street was unbearable. A full night’s rest was out of the question. During the day he was pestered with those who sought to sympathize with him, as well as his critics who openly rebuked him, until he thought he would go mad. The matter of his being an ordinance violator was brought up before the common council. An old, eccentric spellbinder, representing the taxpayers’ group on the question of law and order, scored the chief of police and his department for permitting him to violate the law by conducting business on a public thoroughfare without a license. Nor was such a license permissible. They claimed that in that locality, regardless of the circumstances, Aamon was a law violator every day he kept his News Stand open for business. He was between two fires. If he stayed in business, he violated the law; if he left the building, he would have no place to go. The matter hung fire in court as to whether the old dental office was to be torn down or be permitted to occupy a prominent place facing the city square.

While attorneys wrangled over the merits of the matter, public sentiment was divided and made it a topic of debate on every street corner. This was what Chase and his partners wanted and had secretly engineered, until Aamon was no longer the main object of the controversy. His interests were

a minor part, as far as the pride of the city was concerned. His cause, however worthy, did not compare with the future welfare of the community. Many contended that the place for the dental office was on some recreation field, where it could be utilized to advantage.

Propaganda is a vicious thing. It is a web of entanglement that frequently is not discovered until too late. Such was the case with Aamon, who became a pawn in the hands of a public none too venerable — a public swayed by the versatility of many moods — a public with a mind susceptible to the venomous poison of anti-Semitic hate.

This was the weapon that Basil used in his subtle way to circumvent public sympathy on Aamon's behalf. As a clandestine gossip-wielder he had no equal. As he grew older, he spent hours planting the seed that bred hate toward the Jew. No one escaped who depended upon his word in forming an opinion. Stories sprang up everywhere, particularly in the foreign sections. In a colony predominately German, the story was circulated that Aamon was a German Jew; in the Syrian section that he was a Syrian Jew. In Little Italy, he was an Italian Jew. Where the Finns lived, he was a Finnish Jew. In every section represented by a foreign nationality, Aamon was ignominiously branded as a Jew who was imposing upon them. Consequently, public sentiment that would have claimed him as an American grew cold and indifferent. The fact that Aamon had cast his lot with the old gold buyer, Jake Kirsch, was sufficient evidence. He had been stamped with that one peculiar characteristic: — "Once a Jew, always a Jew."

11. Languishing in Jail

FOLLOWING in the wake of the court's decision that the old Barton dental building was a historic landmark worthy of being preserved, providing it was placed on city property, Jake Kirsch volunteered to deed twenty-five feet of the lot he owned across from the public square to the city. In the agreement, the city authorities undertook to move the building on the lot and permit Aamon to occupy it as a News Stand until after he graduated from college and had secured a position. This occasioned another controversy in the city council. Debating the issue and trying to decide upon a time limit meant further delay.

Very early in the morning of the day following the action by the council permitting the removal of the building, Aamon was awakened by the ringing of the telephone. When he answered, he was told that Mr. Kirsch wanted him to come immediately to the Old Gold Shop. Unable to get further information, he dressed hurriedly and left to meet the mysterious appointment. Arriving at the store, he was surprised to find that there was no light in the building. He thought this was strange, and wondered if Mr. Kirsch was on his way to meet him. Stepping into a doorway, he waited where he could look up and down the street. Finally, when it became apparent that no one was coming, he walked along the sidewalk in front of the windows to make a final inspection of the place before returning home. He discovered that there was no light over the safe at the rear of the building, which was the usual custom. Unconsciously, he tried the door and found that it was unlocked. This was stranger still. Certainly, Mr. Kirsch would not be waiting for him there in the dark. Where was he? Could he be ill, waiting in the back room for someone to come to his aid? Aamon stepped back to the sidewalk and surveyed the full length of the street in both directions. No one was in sight. Taking a small flashlight that he often carried when making deliveries of magazines and papers at night, he stepped through the door to go to Mr. Kirsch's workshop.

Suddenly, a light flashed in his face which blinded his eyes. "You are under arrest," came the stern command. Two policemen, who had been detailed to watch the store, grabbed him and gave him a hurried search for firearms. He tried to explain, but to no avail. The Old Gold Shop had been broken into during the night, and now these officers felt sure that they had captured the burglar, who had returned for another armful of loot. Already considerable merchandise had been carried away, and they were taking no chances of letting the thief slip through their fingers. Aamon tried to tell them of the mysterious telephone call he had received, but they considered such a story an alibi which he made up when caught red-handed.

Consequently, Aamon found himself handcuffed to one of the officers and escorted to the police station. He was in an embarrassing position, but one which he felt sure could be readily explained. If detective Olson was there he would understand and after making the necessary investigation would release him. But detective Olson was not there. Instead, two other detectives were assigned to handle the case. While the two policemen went back to the store to wait for Mr. Kirsch, the two detectives took Aamon into a consultation room where they could talk to him alone. In the meantime, a radio broadcast notified all cruisers of his capture and gave instructions that each officer be on the alert for an accomplice who likely had the stolen property in his possession. Every possible clue was checked. The north-end cruiser stopped around by Mr. Kirsch's residence to check on the mysterious telephone call, and to bring him to the store to meet the two policemen, and to take an inventory of his stock. Mr. Kirsch had been asleep for hours, therefore he had no knowledge of the telephone call. Consequently, Aamon's story was dismissed by the two detectives as a cooked-up alibi. Nobody would believe it anyway, and unless he was able to provide more substantial facts, he would have to stand trial.

While every available policeman searched for additional clues in the vicinity of the Old Gold Shop, the two detectives bombarded Aamon with questions, trying to break down his story. Where had he been during the early part of the previous evening? Whom had he met and talked to? Where had he eaten supper? Who were his companions? They were satisfied that there was more than one person concerned in the burglary. Who was he? Where was the stolen merchandise? They declared that if Aamon would identify his accomplice and return the stolen property, the chances were favorable for a light sentence.

In desperation, after failing to secure a confession from their suspect, they insisted that he accompany them in searching his own premises before they locked him up.

“All right,” said Aamon, “you are more than welcome to search the News Stand and the living quarters at the rear, for you will find nothing there that has been taken in any burglary.”

“That’s undoubtedly true; nevertheless, we will search the premises,” replied the sergeant in charge of the investigation. “I suppose that your accomplice has securely hidden the loot in some other place.”

Taking Aamon with them, they went to the News Stand and searched it throughout. Nothing was found to incriminate Aamon, either in the front office or in the living quarters in the rear. Satisfied in this respect, the two officers were about to leave when one of them discovered the trap door and the place in the floor which had been repaired by the moving crew.

“It’s not necessary to tear up the floor,” Aamon protested; “it’s just as the carpenter left it. There couldn’t be anything under there.”

“If you’re so sure, why not let us find out,” the detective replied.

“I know,” said Aamon, “but why tear up the floor for nothing. The building is just sitting here, waiting to be moved from off the street to the lot that Mr. Kirsch deeded to the city. Certainly, you don’t expect to find a hole in the pavement with stolen property in it!”

“Looking for the unexpected is the detective’s greatest asset,” came the sergeant’s curt reply.

While they were arguing, the younger officer who had been scouting around the outside of the building came back in the side door and reported that there was a box under the building that might bear investigation. To support his theory, he produced a gold chain and several small articles of jewelry that evidently had been dropped by someone in his haste to secrete the box.

“Ho!” exclaimed the detective, addressing Aamon, “what have you got to say about this?”

“All I can say is that I know nothing about it,” he replied, alarmed that circumstantial evidence was weaving a net of suspicion about him.

“Still not guilty, eh?”

“I am still not guilty of breaking and entering, robbing or having any of the stolen property from Mr. Kirsch’s store,” Aamon emphasized.

“But you were arrested in the place, and now we find that some of the jewelry which very likely came from the Old Gold Shop is here at your building,” said the detective. “I think we had better look in the box that’s under the floor.”

While the sergeant and Aamon looked on, the second officer secured a long board, and by using a nail in one end for a hook he withdrew the box from underneath the building. Without any question, the box contained the proceeds of the burglary. Watches, jewelry, odd pieces of scrap gold, as well as some of the newer merchandise that was kept on display, gave mute evidence of belonging to Jake Kirsch.

“We will not trouble you any more for a confession, unless you want to help yourself by telling us who was with you on this job,” the sergeant ventured.

“I — I am not guilty,” protested Aamon feebly, realizing that it was useless to try to defend himself.

It was just breaking day when the two detectives returned to the station with their prisoner and the stolen property taken from the Old Gold Shop.

“Book this man for breaking in a store and entering in the night time,” said the sergeant, leading Aamon to the lieutenant at the desk to be registered. “We’re going out for a cup of coffee and a snack before talking to him again.”

“What is your name?” the usual first question was asked. “Your real name, I mean? I have never been quite sure about it. I know they call you Aamon, but Aamon what? I know it isn’t Barton. What is your real name?”

“Aamon — Aamon — always. Always was Aamon,” the reply trailed *sotto voce*.

“Aamon Always?”

“Aamon — I never had any other except —,” he attempted to explain.

“Aamon Always,” the lieutenant repeated, confused and vaguely associating the name “Always” with the saying that he had often heard Basil repeat: “Once a Jew, always a Jew.”

Aamon did not reply.

“So that’s it! Aamon Always! I knew it wasn’t Barton, and this is the first time I ever really knew what it was,” continued the lieutenant, as he proceeded to book the young prisoner under the name of “Aamon Always,” fully satisfied that “Always” was the surname of his parents.

The shock of the arrest had left Aamon stunned. What of he was called made no difference to him! They had taken everything else away from him, and if they wanted to take away the name of “Barton,” too, it was perfectly all right. It did not really belong to him, anyway. To carry the name of his foster brothers was a curse — or would be if it wasn’t for Jeanne. She still bore the name as honorably as her father and mother and the other ancestors before her, but it wasn’t his name; he had none. The only rightful name that he could claim was and always had been Aamon. Always might be a better name — a name that would bring better fortune. It made no difference now, therefore why should he even bother to interrupt.

Thus he found himself behind the bars as “Aamon Always,” charged with a crime that he knew nothing about. By a fake telephone call, he had walked into a trap. There was no question but that someone had broken into the Old Gold Shop. An entrance had been forced through the back door by the use of a wrecking bar that he had kept at the News Stand. He meditated upon the circumstances that involved him, as he was led to his cell. Who among his acquaintances could be guilty of placing this crime at his door? No one but Ted or Basil! No, he could not accuse them! He would accuse no one until he was sure.

Aamon knew he was not guilty, but how was he going to prove it? Public sentiment, turned as it had against him, was a vicious foe to combat. With a heavy heart, no he threw himself on the cold steel bunk in his cell. He allowed his mind to wander. Who had been there before him?—the last one?—the first one?— how many?—what for?—why?—where were they now? Were they found guilty? What would happen to him? Disconnected thoughts interfered with his effort to reason. Constructive thinking was out of the question. It of was a hit-and-miss proposition. There was no possibility of reaching a reasonable conclusion. His brain was tired — mentally exhausted — hope was dying in his soul, yet sleep finally came.

“Someone to see you, sir,” a gruff voice called a his cell door one hour later.

Startled and confused, Aamon arose. Every bone in his body ached. Where was he?

Detective Olson was behind the officer that called him.

“Come, Aamon,” he said kindly, “I want to see you a minute.”

“Doesn’t seem to have a very guilty conscience — anyone who can sleep like he does,” the turnkey announced, as Aamon tried to get his

bearings.

Waiting until he had found his shoes and put them on, detective Olson led him out, blinking in the strong light, as he emerged from the dark hall to the lobby where Jeanne was waiting.

“Aamon,” she sobbed, running over and throwing her arms around his neck and kissing him, “what made you do it?”

“Do What?”

“Why, Aamon, breaking into the Old Gold Shop.”

A cloud of horror spread over his face.

“You!” he said, “do you really believe it, too? Do you think I burglarized the Old Gold Shop!”

“It’s in *The Morning News*; they say you did it. You were arrested there.”

“And you believe them?”

“No!”

He drew her closer and returned the kiss.

“God bless you, Jeanne,” he said, “you’re the only friend that I have — the only one to say ‘No’ to that story. I didn’t break in! I walked in looking for Mr. Kirsch shortly after receiving a telephone call. I know nothing of about it, but that makes no difference; no one will believe me.”

“I believe you,” she whispered through her tears. “I’ll always believe in you. You — you couldn’t do a thing like that!”

“They can send me to jail, but they can’t make me guilty; I didn’t do it!” he emphasized.

Detective Olson had walked away a little distance and stood watching a scene which is continually reenacted in every police department throughout the country. He watched it unmoved by the pathos presented — watched it psychologically, trying to determine the motive behind it. Every act, every word, every look of understanding that passed between them told him something. Mentally, he was sifting the wheat from the chaff, searching for a clue.

“So you don’t think he is guilty?” he casually asked Jeanne, stepping back to her side, but still studying Aamon’s features.

“No! He is not a thief. He’s not guilty, no matter who says so!” she replied defiantly.

“The evidence looks bad,” he replied, eyeing Aamon.

“But he isn’t guilty!”

“Still it looks bad for him — this incriminating evidence — .”

“No matter who says so, he’s not guilty.”

“Supposing I said so — proved him guilty — would you believe it, then?” The detective framed the question effectively.

“Yes,” she reluctantly replied, clinging to Aamon. “But you wouldn’t! You couldn’t! He isn’t guilty!”

“I don’t believe he is either,” detective Olson replied seriously; “but that’s going to be hard to prove. I understand that there are a least three eyewitnesses. He was arrested of the premises. At present I can’t see how we can prevent a conviction.”

“But how?” they both echoed.

“That’s something I can’t explain now, but I assure you that I shall do everything in my power to get a the bottom of this. Then, if the evidence still points to you as the guilty one, you will be taken to court to let the judge and the jury decide. Somehow things don’t seem to click, but as it now stands you will be convicted; you haven’t a chance.”

“But they can’t do that!”

“Yes, they can — and will, unless we secure more favorable information or prove someone is lying,” he answered in deep thought, walking over to the window.

Confronting him were certain facts which were not to be contradicted. The Old Gold Shop had been broken into and burglarized. The wrecking bar that was used came from the News Stand. Aamon could not deny being on the premises. Three eyewitnesses, Chase and Justin Barton, and a taxicab driver, had seen him loitering in the vicinity just prior to his arrest. All the facts were logical and reasonable. There was nothing fictitious in the fact that Justin had taken Chase to the depot, and that they had witnessed Aamon leave the old dental building as they were passing. Aamon did not deny that he was running, and that he entered the alley on a short cut to Mr. Kirsch’s store. Nor did he deny that Justin might have seen him in front of the Old Gold Shop when he returned from the depot, twenty minutes later, and that, as Justin said, it did look suspicious at that early hour in the morning. “Naturally, knowing Aamon, I did not think much about it at the time,” said Justin; “but after I heard about the burglary, there appeared to be a connection. Evidently, Aamon was watching to be sure that the coast was clear before entering the building, and apparently he was returning to get the second box of loot that the policemen had found packed, ready to be carried out.”

There were none of these details in which Aamon's story did not particularly agree, except that he knew nothing about the burglary, or the stolen merchandise found under his building. The outlook was dark! The tendency was to involve him deeper and deeper, as the investigation continued. True, the evidence was mostly circumstantial, yet of such a grave nature as to definitely insure his conviction. The testimony of the cab driver which was presented at the hearing, along with the other witnesses to find probable cause, certainly would hold Aamon for trial. He had seen someone answering Aamon's description, whom he now believed to be the suspect, carrying a box in his arms. He had crossed directly in front of him as he went from one alley to another. He had immediately notified the police, and it was upon this information that they discovered that the Old Gold Shop had been broken into. Later, this same cab driver had observed Aamon on the street in front of the burglarized store just prior to his arrest.

When the matter came up for a hearing before the justice of the peace the following Tuesday, Mr. Kirsch took the stand and identified the stolen property that was put in evidence as having been taken from his store after he had left it securely locked for the night. The two policemen testified to Aamon's arrest on the premises. The two detectives related how they had recovered the stolen goods under Aamon's building. Chase, Justin and the taxicab driver gave their testimony, placing Aamon in close proximity to the burglary. Consequently, in face of sufficient evidence to show probable cause, it became the justice's duty to bind Aamon over to the next term of the Circuit court on a charge of breaking and entering a store in the night time.

The motive was sufficient, it was decided, but this would be elaborated upon in the Circuit court trial. Aamon needed funds in order to square himself with his debtors. There were still outstanding bills that Ted had contracted and left for him to pay. He could not use his college endowment for this purpose, therefore it was only logical to assume that he had attempted the burglary in order to get ready cash. The police theory was that he had an accomplice, who had taken about forty dollars that Mr. Kirsch had hidden in his workshop, intending to divide with Aamon later. It could be shown that Aamon had known for some time the secret place where such sums were kept by Mr. Kirsch, so he would not need to open the safe. Who this second party was, they could not discover. He had evidently worn gloves to guard against any telltale evidence of fingerprints. Every suspect,

including Ted and Basil, had a perfect alibi in so far as the officers were able to determine.

Though not directly assigned to the case, detective Olson was not satisfied as to Aamon's guilt, yet he could not interfere until he had more evidence to present. He believed that it was a deliberate plot to place the blame on innocent shoulders, but he could not prove it. In the meantime, Aamon, unable to furnish bail, languished in the county jail, branded as a criminal, to await the next term of court.

12. The Shadows Fall

THREE MONTHS PASSED, bringing a number of important events that were to live long in the memory of a few people. Most of the citizens of the community had lost their interest in Aamon or the Barton affairs, because these things did not directly concern them. The thrill and glamor of the arrest had worn off and left only the dim recollection of a news item.

To the few, however, these events were more than a passing fancy, for it was during these three months that Aamon lay in the county jail awaiting trial that the WPA project on Grand avenue was completed. The old Barton landmark had been placed on a lot opposite the public square. Aamon's and Ted's News Stand became a matter of local history, and Aamon, the Jew, was left to the mechanical process of law enforcement, which forever feeds the maw of justice.

On the day of Aamon's trial, a listless, gray-eyed, friendless youth sat in the prisoner's dock, motionless and without hope, while the attorneys wrangled before the judge. Hour after hour the interrogation of witnesses went on, weaving the net tighter and tighter about the unfortunate victim. When the State rested, and Aamon was called upon to testify in his own defense, he told a straightforward, simple story of having been summoned by telephone to the store of Mr. Kirsch and the circumstances that followed, culminating in his arrest. He knew nothing about the stolen merchandise found under his building, nor how the wrecking bar left his possession at the News Stand. He had not seen Chase and Justin that morning. He did not remember seeing any taxicab on his way to the Old Gold Shop, though one might have passed him as the driver had testified. There had been no occasion for him to be on the lookout for anyone. He had been in a hurry, it was true, because of the nature of the telephone call; but he did not run into any alley to escape detection.

Mercilessly, the young assistant prosecutor tried to discredit him and break down his testimony, but over and over again he told the few simple facts that he knew. He told them to his own disadvantage, without a show of

emotion, when the prosecutor tried to make him angry in order to confuse him. He told them hopelessly, having lost faith that it would make any difference. He told them in the attitude of a defeated animal at bay, with but one concern, peace of soul for speaking the truth.

A whisper, a titter, a wave of emotion swept across the courtroom, as the prosecutor intimated in his questioning that Aamon was rehearsing a story learned by heart. Indifferently, Aamon transferred his gaze from the dramatic face of the prosecutor to the spectators in the crowded courtroom. People of a types were there — anxious, emotional, indifferent. People were present who might have been transferred to the no arena of a prize fight and displayed a equal amount of interest. Cold and heartless, they were witnessing a Jew getting his just deserts, as they imagined. He did not have a friend among them, except Jeanne. How her heart bled for him! How distressed he was for her! Her faith in him was all he had for encouragement. It did not matter what happened to him, but he was concerned for her.

The courtroom door opened, admitting detective Olson. He was another in whom Aamon had confidence — a genuine friend. He came in and spoke to the State's attorney. The prosecutor shook his head and muttered irritably:

“Too late! We can't delay the trial by waiting for unendorsed witnesses from Chicago.”

“I am only concerned that justice shall be administered,” the detective advised.

“Too late! The State can't risk a mistrial,” and the prosecutor waved him aside.

The defense rested. Both attorneys made their pleas to the jury. The judge delivered his charge, and the jury filed out with the deputy into the jury room, where they began their deliberations.

While the spectators were filing out of the court room, the deputy permitted Jeanne to spend a few moments with the defendant before he was ordered back to his cell in the county building to await the verdict of the jury.

“They must not find you guilty,” she consoled.

“Judge Cole was very liberal in pointing out to the jury the value of circumstantial evidence, far more than I expected. I cannot say that I have not had a fair trial. The trouble is in the evidence against me. I cannot deny

that I was arrested in the Old Gold Shop, that it was burglarized, that my own wrecking bar was used, that the property was recovered under my building — well, what is the use of repeating all the evidence against me, there is no one else under suspicion,” he lamented. “I can’t see any hope! I shall be convicted for a crime committed by another.”

“Please don’t! Have faith in God. He will see you through.”

The whole train of circumstances involving his past came to him in vivid memories.

“Guilty of another man’s crime,” he sighed.

“Who?”

“Only God knows! I’m not accusing anyone.”

“Tell me whom you suspect. Detective Olson will help you,” she assured him.

“There are no direct clues for suspecting anyone. I would not accuse my worst enemy unjustly, if I knew which one it was,” and he smiled at the thought of trying to name his enemies — there were too many of them.

Aamon was led back to the cell block to await the verdict of the jury. Hours passed and nothing happened. The evening meal was brought in. He looked at the aluminum dishes containing some lukewarm stew and shook his head. An orange and a candy bar that Jeanne had given him constituted his supper. He shuddered at the thought of the days ahead and the prison fare that he must endure, if the jury failed to acquit him. He faced the inevitable; the jury had been out for a long time — too long to expect a verdict of “not guilty.” If they disagreed, it meant another trial, and he could not stand the torture of going through the court procedure again. “Why don’t they agree on a verdict of — of guilty, as I expect?” he sighed.

To alleviate the suspense of waiting, he took the Bible that Jeanne had left with him and turned to the first chapter of Joshua. While the light was off for the supper hour, he would take advantage of it and keep the promise he had made her to read the verses she had underlined.

“Have I not commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whither soever thou goest,” he read in a low monotone.

“‘Whithersoever’?” a prisoner in an adjoining cell called out in ridicule. “That must be a new prison.”

“All he needs is a ‘good courage,’” piped up another.

“Who is the sentimental Miss who says, ‘Be not afraid of going to jail?’” the first mimic inquired.

“Neither be dismayed,” the second rejoined with a hilarious laugh.

“Whether I am sent to prison or not, God is going with me. He went with Peter and Paul, with John and James. Who am I to complain?” Aamon declared indignantly, concerned more about defending Jeanne than the Word of God. “I shall not be afraid, neither dismayed. She is the only real friend that I have. Her God is my God, in prison or out.”

“Expecting the angel of the Lord to release you as he did Peter, I suppose?” they mocked with burning sarcasm.

“No! but ‘I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day,’” he read from another underscored verse in his Bible.

“So you have turned preacher, have you?” one of them taunted.

“No! I have come far short of the good, honorable and decent things of life that mother Barton taught me,” he lamented, laboring under the theory that Christianity involved only moral perfection. “I deserve to be in jail; there are so many things that I should have done for God, but which I neglected. Whether I am guilty of this crime or not, it makes no difference.”

One of the prisoners attempted to interrupt.

“I shall not deny God, though I am a poor servant of His,” Aamon affirmed with courage.

He was glad when the turnkey switched off the light, and their attention was directed to other matters. There was nothing to be gained in a religious argument, anyway.

His thoughts turned to Jeanne. She was like her mother, kind and sympathetic, and true to God and His Word, the Bible. How often they had read it together! He wondered why he did not have the same conception of God that they had! God was real to them, while his own experience was so vague, erratic and incomprehensible. To him God was so far distant, like his own father and mother whom he did not know. How could he know Him and experience His power?

He was almost asleep when he heard the key turn in the cell-block door. “More company, some drunk perhaps, who will keep all of us awake for the rest of the night!” he thought. The interruption irritated him. He drew up his coat over his head to shield his eyes from the light that was about to flood his cell.

“Wake up! The judge is waiting for you in the courtroom. The jury has reached a verdict,” the turnkey informed him, unlocking the cell door.

Aamon slipped on his shoes without saying a word, and stood waiting to follow the deputy to the outer door.

“Be not afraid,” came a voice from the next cell.

“Nor be dismayed,” called out another.

As he entered the courtroom, he glanced at the jury box and surveyed the twelve jurors. A stony stare and shifting of eyes told him of his fate. No look of sympathy was evidenced, save in the downcast gaze of the one lone woman whom the prosecutor had tried to excuse before the jury was sworn.

“Have you reached a decision in this case?” Judge Cole demanded of the foreman.

“We have!”

“So say ye all?”

The jurors nodded and murmured their agreement.

“Your verdict is—?”

“Guilty as charged, your Honor!”

“Your verdict is guilty?” the judge demanded of each juror in taking the poll.

“Guilty, your Honor,” the eleven male members affirmed.

“And your verdict, madam?”

“I — guilty, with — with leniency, your Honor.”

“Your verdict is guilty as charged, with a plea that the court exercise clemency in passing sentence?” Judge Cole framed his explanatory question in such a way that there could be no misunderstanding.

“Yes, your Honor.”

“Very well, the court will take judicial notice of your request, and in dismissing you as jurors in this case you have the assurance of the State’s appreciation of the services you have rendered.”

Summoning Aamon to the bar, he demanded:

“You have heard the verdict of the jury?”

“I have, your Honor.”

“Have you any statement to make before sentence is passed?”

“No, it is needless for me to voice my innocence, even though I am not guilty. But I hold no malice, neither toward you nor the jury. You have followed the course prescribed by law. It is the verdict that was expected.

Other than this, I have nothing to say,” Aamon declared bravely, looking the judge squarely in the eye.

“You are not asking for leniency?”

“I am leaving that to you, your Honor.”

The judge squirmed uncomfortably in his chair and stroked his shaggy eyebrows, as he looked over the top of his glasses.

“Very well, you will be remanded to the custody of the sheriff, without bail, until the probation department has investigated your case and made their recommendations to the court in writing,” he decreed authoritatively.

Turning, Aamon surveyed the dimly-lit courtroom with its empty seats. A lone newsboy stood by the door with the latest edition of *The Evening News*. Two reporters were busy writing down the last few words of the judge’s speech. The flashlight of a photographer flooded the room, as he snapped the picture of another condemned man.

The shadows fell about them, and Aamon was led away.

13. Choice of Two Evils

LOOKING OUT between prison bars is a monotonous pastime. Whether innocent or guilty, the endless procedure of whiling away the hours in prison becomes almost unbearable to any individual. In this respect Aamon was normal. His reaction to confinement was no different than that of thousands of other cases in the penal institutions of our country. Naturally, he wanted to get out — to go away. He had learned that anything would be better than the dismal routine of prison life.

When he was brought before the court and sentenced to serve from one and a half to three years, it had not appeared to be such a long period of time. Allowing for good behavior, his attorney had assured him that at least one year would be the minimum sentence he must serve before becoming eligible for parole. The probation department had recommended leniency, and this would be taken advantage of in a petition to the parole board at the first available opportunity.

Regardless of whether he actually owed a debt to society, Aamon broadened his shoulders like a man to take the punishment prescribed. He would show them that he could endure it without complaining of his unfortunate lot. In the vernacular of the underworld he got a “bum rap,” but that is what they all say. Seldom is one guilty when telling his own story; some one else is always to blame. Aamon had learned this much in the county jail during the months he was waiting trial. Everyone there was innocent and had a reasonable alibi to prove it. If it was not the law, it was the police officer, the prosecutor, the court, or some given set of circumstances that was responsible for the trouble. It was a case, always, of the person’s being right and the world wrong.

Aamon could not understand the philosophy of the average inmate with whom he associated in the jail. Their reasoning was not consistent. At one time they would confess their guilt openly in a braggadocio manner, that others might laud their exploits and adventures outside the law; but at the next moment they would as staunchly affirm their innocence and take pains

to explain at great length how they had been “framed.” Nevertheless, they considered the others to be guilty of the charges of which they had been convicted. Because Aamon insisted upon his innocence, and refused to tell them how and why he had accomplished his crime, they assumed that he was guilty and treated him as a outcast. If he was not a professional criminal, he was not eligible to the inner social circle of routine prison life.

The environment in jail was such that he could not sleep until completely exhausted. In order that he might do this, he spent hours walking up and down his narrow cell. Back and forth he paced like a caged animal, occupied with his thoughts. Soulless animals are more fortunate than men, for they are not burdened with the nerve-racking task of trying to reason themselves out of their confinement. Often he wished that he did not have to endure the mental torture of worry. Oh, for the temporary comfort of not being able to think.

He set his jaws and tried to forget the day when he was to face the world as a ex-convict; he tried not to plan to meet the hopeless future that confronted him. All of it was a nightmare; life was an enigma that he couldn't understand. The only thing that consoled him was a letter from Jeanne which he carried next to his heart. He could read that any time and find comfort. Her faith in him gave him courage. The thought that she still believed in his innocence and had assured him that she would visit him at her first opportunity, brought a spark of hope. At her suggestion he read his Bible daily. This was the only consolation that he had during the first thirty days which he spent in quarantine in compliance with prison regulations.

The third day following this period of isolation his first visitors were announced. He was filled with joy, expecting to meet Jeanne, but when he was led to ward and was confronted by attorney Styles and a stranger whom he had never met, his heart sank. He could not keep back the tears of disappointment, but wiping them away on the sleeve of his gray prison garb, he met these two men with a forced smile.

“I want you to meet Mr. Felman, Ray Felman,” said Attorney Styles, coming straight to the point. “Mr. Felman has interesting news for you; in fact, we both have interesting news, which I know you will be glad to hear.”

Aamon acknowledged the introduction.

“Mr. Felman consented to come along with me because of the interest he has in your case,” the attorney continued profusely. “We are all interested, having found out more about who you are and where you come from. We

find that we are able to get you out of prison. Chase and Mr. Soules were at the capital yesterday and saw the governor. They have been assured of his cooperation, providing we get your consent to work with us.”

The young prisoner waited skeptically.

“This is the story — it is almost too good to be true — we have succeeded in getting the Barton diary translated from Hebrew to English,” he continued to explain. “Your correct name is Amma Alavus. You were born in Mekkeli, Finland, of Jewish parentage. It seems that the name Alavus was taken by your father from a town in the western part of Finland, where he lived with his bride of four months, after he fled from the anti-Semitic persecution in Russia, following the World War.”

“Yes,” continued Mr. Felman with a distinct Jewish accent, “you were their first child. You have a brother and a sister in an orphanage now in Viipuri, Finland, if they haven’t been transferred on account of the Russian invasion.”

Aamon sighed visibly, waiting to hear more.

“It reads like a fairy tale, I know,” said attorney Styles, spreading the net that had been woven in their law office with the help of Felman, a communist organizer from Moscow, who, having studied to become a rabbi, was well enough versed in the Hebrew language to read and speak it with some facility.

“Here are the photostats of some of the pages of the Barton diary,” the organizer replied with his usual communistic respect for the truth, at the same time producing the sheets of propaganda that he had prepared as authentically referring to the little black book in question.

“Very interesting,” continued Mr. Styles, pointing to the translation into English that covered the family history relative to the lost heir which they had just described.

Aamon took the typewritten sheets and compared them with the photostats in Hebrew which they were supposed to shed light upon.

“It’s all Greek to me. Amma Alavus does sound something like my name, all right, but I don’t understand where you get the connection.” He hesitated, recalling how he came to have the name “Always.”

“Here on the next page,” said the attorney, anxious to assist, “you can see the entry under May first, where Mr. and Mrs. Barton were touring Petrograd and a child was placed in Mrs. Barton’s arms by a distracted

Jewish mother. You were that child. See the name ‘Amma’ there near the bottom of the page?”

“What about my mother?” Aamon inquired eagerly.

“That’s not very clear — what became of her, you mean?” The attorney hedged, avoiding a direct answer to the question. “We expect to have more information about her and your father when the rest of the diary is translated.”

“That’s where I come in,” the organizer interrupted, deceitfully. “I met a family by the name of Alavus last summer in Helsinki, Finland. They’re no doubt related to you. I am going to check that when I go back.”

“Yes, we are very fortunate in having Mr. Felman consent to give his time and effort to try to locate your people. It is quite a coincidence that he should be able to read Hebrew,” attorney Styles commented. “He really knows his way around in Europe, too. I brought him along with me today because of his interest and desire to take you back with him when he leaves next month.”

“Take me?”

“Yes, you!”

“Me? Next month? You mean to take me to Europe?” Aamon gasped.

“That’s exactly what we came up here to see you about.”

“But — but — it will be months before I can get out of here!”

“We have arranged to take care of that. All you have to do is to sign your passport and assure the governor that you want to go. He is ready to issue a pardon any time under those conditions,” said attorney Styles, producing a folder from his brief case which contained a number of official-looking documents.

Aamon was too dumbfounded to comprehend the significance of the statement. It couldn’t be possible that he had heard aright. To get out of prison now was too good to be true. He must be dreaming.

“You mean that I can get out of here, if I will go to — to . . .”

“Finland,” Mr. Felman interjected. “I am sailing in a fortnight, and you can go along, if your papers are ready.”

“Finland or prison,” Aamon mused. “What do I have to sign to go to Finland? Let me have it. I’ll sign anything—gladly!”

Hiding a crafty smile, attorney Styles spread the necessary documents before the anxious prisoner and waited for him to affix his signature.

“Your passport is made out in the name of Aamon Always. This in reality is an alias to your Finnish name Amma Alavus. It is necessary that all names appear, you know.”

“What about the name Barton?” Aamon asked seriously.

“Well,” the attorney reddened, “that’s not necessary. Your name never was Barton.”

“Never was ‘Always’ either,” Aamon interjected *sotto voce*.

“There’s really no connection, and being convicted under the name ‘Always’, all you need to do is to forget the Barton end of it.”

Forget it? I’m only too glad to forget! I wish I had never heard it," Aamon emphasized with a shudder, reflecting upon the narrow cell to which he would soon be compelled to return. “I would forget anything and everything to get out of this place. You would, too, if you knew—”

“Well, let’s forget it together, then,” Felman smiled. “We’ll go to Finland and get as far away from it as possible.”

Mr. Styles rose, gathered up his papers, and the interview was over. The guard appeared and led Aamon away before he had an opportunity to ask the many questions that came to his mind. Why hadn’t Jeanne come? What would she say about his going to Finland? Did she know about it? Would they be likely to tell her? What was it all about, anyway?

“Out of prison,” he muttered, talking to himself, a force of habit that was growing upon him of late. “Out of prison! Free! The past left behind! Away where no one will know me! Where I can forget!”

The guard walked down the corridor past his cell, trying to discover who was responsible for the infringement of the prison rules.

Aamon retired to his bunk and opened his Bible.

“But my God shall supply all your need,” he read at random from the first verse that caught his eye. That seemed to be God’s message to him. He was being saved from prison in a way that he did not understand. Certainly his need here had been unexpectedly supplied.

He meditated upon the thought, closed his Bible, and opened it again:

“Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not,” were the words that confronted him.

He felt rebuked. He had not been faithful to the Lord, to Jeanne, or to himself. He had failed to keep his promise to read the Bible daily. He was

going away. Would he ever return? What plan did God have for him in shifting him around the world as He was doing?

His thoughts turned to a taunting remark that Basil frequently used to tantalize him:—"One of God's chosen people, whom He has scattered among the nations." How it used to aggravate him; but how true it might turn out to be, if — if he really were a Jew. He searched through his Bible, wishing that he had a concordance that would enable him to find the passages of scripture which referred to this subject. He desired to know more of the scattered Jews.

All that night Aamon rolled and tossed on his bunk, unable to sleep. Hour after hour he listened to the heavy snoring of the other inmates in the cell block.

"What a serenade they are giving me tonight," he mumbled in amusement, thinking of the new opportunities that he had been promised that day, "a tragicomic threnody in recognition of my departure." He smiled at the thought of his anticipated pardon.

He knew he faced difficulties whether in prison or out. Finland was a long way off. The folks there were having their troubles, too, for the country was at war with an aggressor nation many times its own size. They were being harassed by a superior force hard to compete with, the same as he was. But rather than remain in prison, he would cast his lot with them. He had the premonition that God would see him through. The most he had to lose was his life.

"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it," he reflected, repeating a verse of scripture that Mrs. Barton had taught him as a child, and he wondered how this might apply to himself, strange that his subconscious memory should bring this to mind.

What was its significance to his particular problem? he wondered. Strange that he did not feel sleepy. He did not want to sleep. He was happy with a new feeling of hope that he had not experienced in months. He wanted to shout for joy.

"Whosoever shall save his life shall lose it," he meditated. Was he jumping out of the frying pan into the fire to lose his life in the war in Finland?

No, that was not all of the verse.

“Whosoever will lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it,” which means, he interpreted, “Whosoever — inclusive — that means me— will lose his life for — for the sake of — of Christ — shall — shall save his own life.”

Though he failed to fully appreciate it, the need of Christ was everywhere — room for more recruits in the good fight of faith which he did not comprehend. Peace came to his soul. The snoring of the other inmates faded into the distance. The morning twilight crept into his cell to reveal the living reality of such dismal quarters, but Aamon was too engrossed in unconscious “wood-cutting” to take any notice. He was asleep!

14. The Die is Cast

THE FOURTH-FLOOR OFFICE of Styles, Soules and Barton was a blaze of light. The three members of the firm occupied chairs at a table in the reception room. Seated directly opposite them, Ray Felman held the spotlight of attention. He and attorney Styles had just returned on the late train from their visit to the State prison.

“Gentlemen,” the shifting eyes of Felman surveyed the group as he addressed them, “our success is assured. We have nothing to fear. A month hence and the parasite which has been sharing with the heirs of the Barton estate and living on the sympathy of the gullible public will be leaving the shores of America never to return.”

Chase Barton, worried, emitted a dry, hacking cough, but did not speak.

Attorney Soules looked suavely about the luxuriously furnished room and drew nearer the table to rest his elbows on the edge of the polished mahogany top desk.

The senior member of the firm smiled in self-satisfaction, watching the speaker.

“Felman is right. The die is cast. We have the necessary papers signed and in order,” he said, opening his brief case and removing a folder.

The others crowded closer, watching eagerly as attorney Styles spread a number of documents on the table.

“Do you recognize this signature?” he asked in his professional manner.

A mumble of voices arose, while they passed compliments upon the documents exhibited for inspection. It was Aamon’s signature. Everything was in order to their utmost satisfaction. Still, they handled, read, gloated over, and scrutinized each exhibit. They couldn’t afford to take any chances of having any one of them questioned. Any kind of an investigation would mean delay. It would involve expense. It might mean trouble. And then, too, Aamon might change his mind. That would be bad. More than likely it would start someone asking questions. That was the last thing they could

afford, for the government had the habit of uncovering facts from statements usually regarded as idle gossip.

“How soon can you leave?” Chase inquired of Felman, trying to conceal the nervous tension he labored under.

“Just as soon as the papers are cleared and the governor signs the pardon. In fact, I could be ready by tomorrow, if I could book passage,” he replied casually.

“From which port are you clearing?” attorney Soules asked.

“New York.”

“Rather conspicuous, isn’t it?” Chase ventured cautiously.

“There’s safety in numbers. Get the idea? Needle in-the-haystack proposition. I know New York like a book and have a lot of connections there,” Felman rambled aimlessly in reply. “What we want now is to spring the young upstart — get the governor to pardon him. I’ll take him to New York and lay low until some clandestine boat arrives. If necessary, I’ll arrange his ticket along with mine, and try to book passage on a tramp steamer with a convoy of soldiers. There are great numbers who have been mustered into the Canadian army — adventurers who have cast their lot in the defense of Finland.”

“Sounds like a swell idea,” attorney Soules commented. “I rather like it. If I were young and foot free, I believe I would be inclined to do the same thing myself.”

“It’s a very popular movement right now. There are hundreds of such enlistments — young men who are secretly joining the ranks of this army every week. It’s a great opportunity for our cause to bore from within — sort of fifth-column idea, get me? Then, if Finland loses, which of course she will, we will be there on the ground floor to take over and manage the new government under the Soviet International regime. If by chance the Allies come to Finland’s assistance and succeed in prolonging the conflict, we aim to be there in sufficient numbers to seize the reins of government when peace is declared. Finland is part of the Soviet Republic. Fate is against her! She must and will join forces with the great army of the North, and stand ready to defend the world against God and the Christian forces which would rob us of our liberty,” the communist boldly declared with the usual spellbinding gusto. “It’s all in the cards, preparing for the Battle of Armageddon, you know!”

“That’s a long way off,” Chase interjected nervously; “what we are concerned with is the present.”

“Yes,” agreed attorney Styles, speaking for the firm; “we’re not concerned in fighting any of the world’s battles in the distant future. What’s going on now over in Finland is our present concern and how to get Aamon lined up in her battles.”

“That’s easy! Just show me the governor’s pardon and the twenty-five hundred dollars we agreed upon, and I’ll show you how easy it is to add figures to the list of undesirable emigrants,” Felman assured them.

The senior attorney rose and looked at his watch.

“We will take care of our part of the bargain,” he said irritably. “You have half an hour to catch the midnight special. Chase or one of us will deliver your passenger to you, as agreed, in New York, Canada, or wherever you want him. The monetary consideration, advanced from the Barton estate, will accompany him. The receipt which was signed today takes care of the stipulated amount you are to receive for your trouble, together with a thousand dollars additional to cover boat passages and incidentals for the two of you.”

Chase was left to gather up the papers and place them in the safe, while the other two members of the firm made ready to see Felman off at the depot.

Secure in the feeling that everything had been taken care of to the last detail, including the locking of the massive office safe which now contained Aamon’s fate, Chase turned out the light, unconscious of the fact that the whole evening’s performance had been watched through a pair of field glasses from a fifth floor office window across the street. Nor did he think it unusual that detective Olson should bid him “good evening” as he passed him on the opposite corner. Detective Olson was a familiar figure on the streets of the city at all hours of the day and night. One was apt to run into him anywhere. That he was on his way to the depot never entered Chase’s mind, and even if the thought had occurred to him, there was nothing to indicate that it had any connection with the meeting just held in his office.

Chase was in a hurry to get home. It was detective Olson’s duty to wander around like a night hawk, protecting the rights of the citizens. That was what he was paid to do. He was a very thorough and capable officer, well qualified, dependable, and one that never went around prying into

other people's private affairs without a good reason. Detective Olson did not know what his private plans were for the future.

Chase hurried on, smiling to himself as the thought of his crafty scheme flashed through his mind. He was secretly pleased with himself and satisfied that the detective had no occasion for suspicion. Of course, what Olson did not know would not hurt him. Nevertheless, he would rest easier when he knew that Aamon was beyond the shores of this country, bound for Finland.

During the weeks that followed, the activity around the office of Styles, Soules and Barton was very apparent. Some member of the firm was absent on business continually. Trips were made to Washington, New York, and to the State capital, all of which culminated in the eventful day that Aamon was pardoned. The announcement in the morning papers was the first inkling that the outside world had of the young convict's good fortune.

In anticipation of the occasion, the three attorneys were very careful that the stage should be set for their material advantage. Jeanne and her two brothers, Justin and Basil, were in New York attending the "World of Tomorrow" exposition. Chase and attorney Soules were en route with Aamon to this great metropolis, where the whole family supposedly was to see him embark and wish him "Godspeed" of his voyage. Attorney Styles alone remained to interview reporters and explain the philanthropic act of the Barton heirs in obtaining Aamon's release from prison in order that he might sail to foreign shores to join his own people.

The newspaper articles were highly complimentary. Detective Olson, who read between the lines and kept his own counsel, was the only one, other than old Jake Kirsch, to view the articles with some degree of skepticism. However, detective Olson had nothing to work upon. It would take him weeks to weave together the threads of evidence, if any could be found. He had an inkling that Aamon was to be pardoned. This met with his approval, because he had never believed him to be guilty. Why he should be released at midnight and immediately taken to New York or some other place was a complete surprise. It came unexpectedly, but some day he meant to find out the reason.

Likewise, Jeanne was dumbfounded when she read in *The Morning Times* that Aamon had been pardoned, and was soon to sail for Finland to be united with his people. She hardly believed it possible. For some reason Aamon had not written in nearly two months. Why, she couldn't

understand, particularly when she had pleaded so in her last letter for him to be sure to write before she went to New York. Now to think that he was to sail away to Europe without even saying “goodbye” was almost too much for her to bear.

Sensing that there was something wrong, she inquired at the hotel lobby for a steamship schedule and ordered a cab to take her to the waterfront. It was a blind chance, but if Chase and Aamon were arriving on the morning train they might go directly to the pier. She could think of no other reason for this hurried, unexpected trip. Scrutinizing the schedule, she selected the dock listing the earliest sailings. That was her one and only hope, unless they were to lay over for some later boat. In that event, Chase would surely contact her at the hotel.

She spent the greater part of the forenoon checking the passenger lists at the office of two steamship companies without result. Aamon’s name did not appear anywhere. She walked out to the curb and stood waiting, discouraged, and trying to decide what course to take, when the same taxi that she had ridden in that morning drew up at the curb. From his years of experience, the driver seemed to sense that she needed a friend. She recognized him as he stepped out and swung the door open, and in a moment she was relating the result of her discouraging mission that morning.

With an eye for business, the driver suggested that she try a small pier on the East River, where an occasional tramp steamer docked. As they neared the waterfront the driver pointed to a boat about to put to sea. Racing up to the crowd of people watching the boat pull anchor, Jeanne discovered Justin standing head and shoulders above the others around him. She knew nothing of the preconceived plan that her three brothers had arranged in her absence to witness Aamon’s departure.

“Where is Aamon?” she panted, frantically forcing her way to Justin’s side.

Basil appeared with a quizzical grin, and pointed to the forecastle head of the departing ship.

“Well, hello there, little sister! Where were you this morning when we called your room?” Chase deceitfully asked, as she approached.

Almost rudely she snatched the binoculars from his hand and started to play them along the upper rail of the steamer.

“Aamon!” she shrieked. “Aamon!” Throwing the binoculars from her, she crowded against the rail, waving her handkerchief and purse frantically, until the personal effects which it contained flew in several directions.

The boat pulled away, hiding Aamon and the other members of its human cargo in a dense cloud of black smoke. Seemingly responding to the depressing atmosphere, the smoke settled lower and lower until it engulfed the waiting throng.

With a moan of heartbreaking disappointment, Jeanne slumped into Justin’s arms unconscious, while Aamon, steeled with indifference, watched the passing views as the boat made its way toward Governor’s Island. He had seen the woman crowd her way to the rail at the dock and saw the commotion around her that followed, but he was too far away to distinguish who she was. Tall, manly, with his head erect, he stood like Napoleon, resigned to his fate and indifferent to all about him. An ironic expression spread across his handsome features and hid the fact that possibly he might be a Jew.

There was nothing to excite him. During the whole arrangement for the trip following his pardon, he had received less attention than a steer being shipped to some foreign port as a prize exhibit. En route from the prison to New York, Chase and Mr. Soules had done most of the talking, while he looked out of the train window. Upon their arrival, Mr. Felman had met them at the depot. He had made all the arrangements, and secured a taxi to take them to the pier. Here they met the captain of the Armada, and Felman paid their clandestine passage to Europe. Felman then left the boat, leaving Aamon in the captain’s care. It was understood that Felman was to board the ship with other passengers at another point along the harbor.

When the boat made its way past the Statue of Liberty, Aamon was still leaning on the rail near the forecastle, watching the gulls as they circled around. The Statue of Liberty did not mean anything to him. He had no liberty to cherish. He was sailing to Europe where the survival of the fittest was the order of the day; where despots rule in a passion of hate. He was going to a land where the sovereign power of God was not tolerated. There Christ was crucified afresh by those dictators who seek to serve themselves. Finland still no was an exception. How long that country could stand in the fear of God was a question, but his hope lay in reaching there. He was willing to make the attempt. Because of the war, the ship might not be able to sail directly into the Bay of Finland, but he was not much concerned. He

was out of prison — he was free! His heart was in sympathy with little downtrodden Finland, a more or less insignificant entity, like himself, facing great odds. Whether he would be able to locate his people he could not tell, but that was the place where he wanted to go; he wanted to help them and fight for them as a soldier of fortune.

He wandered past the bridge to the stern of the ship, and watched New York City fade from view. The gulls followed long after they were out of sight of land. He wondered if they would continue all the way. Tired of watching the gulls, and the vast expanse of water, he began to think of Felman. Where was he? Did he get on at one of the stops they made before leaving the harbor? It was strange that he had not seen him. He asked a deck hand if there were other passengers who came aboard. The sailor shook his head; he did not know. Aamon ventured another question as to the cargo they were carrying. He met with a stony stare. If the sailor knew, he evidently did not choose to tell. Whether it was a contraband of war, Aamon was left to conjecture. One guess was as good as another.

Before the gong announced supper, Aamon was nearly famished. He wondered if they were ever going to get anything to eat, but hesitated to ask any more questions. Evidently he was going to get along better by not being too inquisitive. The first mate kindly dropped a hint to this effect when he inquired concerning their port of entry. Finally, the gong sounded and he sat down to the evening meal. How good the food tasted, even though there was a sense of loneliness! After he had taken a stroll on deck, he was ready for bed. The first mate, who took a liking to him, sensed the situation and showed him to the quarters he was to occupy.

The bunk he occupied was a small one in the crew's quarters. Upon retiring, he listened for a while to the jargon of the foreign-speaking sailors, and wondered how he was going to make himself understood in a strange land. The thought struck him forcibly for the first time that he could not talk with his own people, even though he should be fortunate enough to locate them. They could not understand him, nor he them. They would have nothing in common, except the tie of relationship. Was it wise that he try to locate them? Perhaps it would be better if he should locate in some strange place and forget the past entirely. Oh, if it were only possible to become a new creation!

“A new creation in Christ Jesus.” That was some place in the Bible, he recalled, talking to himself and wishing that he understood more of the plan

of salvation from the Sacred Word. There must be an answer. The complications of life throughout the world, as he saw them, in this day and age, could not be normal.

The routine of sleeping, eating, hoping, thinking and wondering, followed for several days, until Aamon became so uneasy and restless that he begged the first mate to intercede with the captain to permit him to perform some kind of manual labor. After this, he was given little odd jobs which kept his mind occupied. The first little siege of seasickness came and went. Ten days passed and Aamon bid fair to become a good sailor. The fresh salt air was invigorating. The captain had half promised to take him on as a regular member of the crew when they cleared at the next port and he had fulfilled his obligation to deliver him in Europe, providing, of course, he desired to follow the sea for a living.

Such was his life at sea. But on the eleventh morning out, he overheard the first mate tell the captain that they were nearing troubled waters. A mine-sweeper had been sighted in the distant leeward just at sunrise. It was a clear, calm, beautiful morning, one of the best since leaving port. Aamon scanned the horizon, hoping to catch a view of land, but a lone boat and a few scattered clouds were all he could see.

Suddenly, on the windward side, so near that the lookout did not see it, a periscope rose out of the Water.

Aamon pointed to it with an exclamation of surprise, wondering what it was.

“A submarine!” several voices shouted in unison.

The rattle of machine-gun fire came from the bridge and the object suddenly disappeared. The crew was alive with excitement. Numerous commands were heard. The boat put on speed and changed her course.

“Well, I guess we got out of that one all right, sonny,” the first mate exclaimed to Aamon. “She was just as surprised as we were, too close to risk a torpedo!”

“But the thing that’s apt to happen later is what worries me,” one of the crew replied.

“The captain’s crazy to double back directly over her, don’t you think?” another remarked.

“If we ride above her, she won’t be able to get the range to torpedo us,” someone suggested.

“Why keep close to her, though?” was asked.

“The captain knows what he is doing. The ‘sub’ won’t be looking for us here. Naturally, she’ll expect us to go the other way. She’s probably over there now trying to locate our position again,” the first mate explained, pointing to the open sea and lowering his binoculars.

The boat continued in a wide circle, again found her position and proceeded on her course. Reluctantly, Aamon and the crew left the deck in answer to the noon call for mess, because the opportunity to satisfy a ravenous appetite was more desirable than spending endless hours watching for the dreaded moment of being torpedoed. Thus the hours wore on. The nervous tension of the crew subsided. Night came, and with it a blackout was ordered on board, so that no light could be seen from the outside. The boat crept along in the darkness. Day followed night, disclosing the sun in a heavy fog which hovered over the sea like a great blanket. By noon the fog had lifted and in the far distant horizon a semblance of land appeared.

Suddenly the boat shook from stem to stern, shivering as though struck with a sudden chill. Simultaneously, a terrific explosion occurred amidship on the port side. There was a cry to man the lifeboats. Life preservers were donned and a hurried inspection of the condition of the steamer was made to determine the extent of the damage caused by the torpedo.

Aamon followed the order of the first mate to precede him into the lifeboat which hung at the side of the sinking ship. The captain waited calmly until all were in the lifeboats, which was his duty as the commanding officer of the ship.

Action of such occasions is the vital thing needed. No one knew this better than the captain, who eyed the waterline of his sinking ship. He realized that the only hope of saving the lives of those of board was for all to take off in the lifeboats. There was a fighting chance of drifting ashore, of being picked up by another ship. He made the final entry in the ship’s log, recording the latitude and longitude that marked his vessel’s grave; then, placing the log underneath his heavy oilskin coat, he jumped into the last lifeboat, gave a command to lower it and clear the danger zone, lest it be sucked under when the vessel took her fatal plunge.

Aamon watched the spectacular scene. His only hope now, he knew, was in praying that God would rescue him. He then turned his attention to the men at the oars and admired their skill in rowing to a point of safety. For a moment the wrecked hull of their deserted ship poised, and the bow rose to

a vertical position before the ship plunged to her watery grave of the ocean floor.

The sea closed in, drawing their lifeboat into the backwash. The oarsmen, their faces taut with determination, fought with the heavy sea, while Aamon watched the muscles on their forearms stand out under the severe strain.

Then the troubled waters subsided, leaving three lifeboats to drift about aimlessly, filled with men who were praying that God would deliver them from their distress.

15. The Law of Compensation

CHASE BARTON soon discovered that getting rid of Aamon did not alleviate his troubled mind or his responsibilities. The law of compensation, which he neither recognized nor considered, suddenly was forced upon him with unanticipated demands. Human plans confronted him, and called for counteraction to surmount new obstacles. Jeanne's sudden appearance at the New York waterfront caused one of them. This was one of the last things he desired or expected. It would have been much easier for him to have explained the circumstances, than to have her witness Aamon's departure. His explanation would not have been so cold and heartless as the actual scene she had beheld.

The anti-climax that complicated things for Chase came in the form of a night telegram which he received from Felman the week following his return home from New York City. After placing Aamon on the boat and pacifying him with false promises that he was to meet him at another dock and sail with him to Europe, Felman had returned to his communistic headquarters in the metropolis. His obligation in getting rid of Aamon had been fulfilled, and any information which he considered of vital importance to Chase was passed on in telegrams. Chase received such a telegram late one afternoon as he was making preparations for a dinner engagement. He placed it in a pocket of the coat he was wearing at the time and did not think of it again. The next day the coat was sent to the cleaners, at his request, but he failed to examine its pockets. When the driver picked up the garment, he discovered the telegram and handed it to Jeanne. Her first impulse was to throw it in the wastebasket, but noticing the red star she realized that it must contain a serious communication, and so she could not keep from reading it. The information stunned her. She was horrified to think that Chase had received such a message, and yet had not mentioned it to her. Trembling with fear, she studied each word carefully:

“ARMADA SUNK BY U-BOAT YESTERDAY. A MAN NAMED ALWAYS PERISHED WITH CARGO AND CREW, NO ONE SURVIVED TO TELL TALE. REPORT VERIFIED BY CODE

FROM U-BOAT CAPTAIN TO FOREIGN HEADQUARTERS. YOU ARE TO BE CONGRATULATED FOR ORIGINATING PLAN WHICH NOW COMPLETELY ELIMINATES OBSTACLES JEOPARDIZING BARTON HEIR INTEREST. INFORMATION AUTHENTIC. RAY.”

“Armada sunk — a man — Always — perished,” she deciphered the meaning. That unquestionably referred to Aamon. She remembered the name of the boat was “Armada.” Yes, that was it! The meaning was clear. Aamon was dead! Heartbroken, she sank into the nearest chair and struggled to survive the shock.

When Justin and Basil arrived home that evening they found of their sister in tears and no supper prepared. The night telegram lay on the table. Basil snatched it up and read it eagerly.

“Umph! I hope you are not going to let that get you down,” he snarled contemptuously.

“Chase told me about it this morning. We agreed it would be better if you did not know about it yet. I don’t see why he wanted to bring that telegram home in the first place,” Justin interjected.

“He — he didn’t,” Jeanne sobbed; “I found it when the cleaner came.”

“There’s nothing you can do about it now but forget,” Basil stormed, out of sorts because of his sister’s tears. “That’s the only thing you can do.”

“I’ll never forget! How can you be so cruel and heartless? I am ashamed to own you as my brothers. It’s nothing less than murder to — to send Aamon away like that. And now,” she sobbed, “he — he is dead!”

The two boys crept away, leaving their sister to suffer alone. They went to the restaurant for their evening meal, making it a point not to return until after she had retired. Why should she take it so hard? Aamon was nothing to her. He was better off dead, anyway. Certainly they were all better off, if Jeanne did not do too much talking. This was a new worry that they had not anticipated. Why were there always new threads cropping out in the tangled web of fate? Just when they had everything smoothed over, this thing had to happen. Aamon was dead! Up to that point everything was all right. With Aamon out of the way, their worries were over — until Jeanne had discovered the fact. Why did fate have to turn up now to haunt them with this untimely exposure of their secret? Chase was a fool for not destroying that message. It was now up to him to see that Jeanne did not talk too much and arouse unnecessary suspicion.

Fear is the master of emotion and is responsible for a good many crimes — crimes committed through fear of discovery. Thus far Chase had not

reached that point, but when he returned home and was confronted with the new situation that Felman's night telegram had caused, he was speechless with fear. His imagination carried him to the point of a nervous breakdown. He saw himself charged with Aamon's murder. Were he the attorney chosen to prosecute another man charged with a similar crime, he felt certain that he could present the matter to the court and jury in such a way that it would result in his conviction. As an accessory before the fact he was guilty. His conscience pricked him with the full realization of the crime and caused him to realize that his reputation and character as an attorney were in a precarious position. He cursed Felman for sending such a telegram. He cursed himself for being such a fool as to leave it where Jeanne could discover it. He trembled with fear at the thought of her telling others what she knew.

What if it should become necessary to dispose of her — get her out of the way like he had Aamon. The tormenting thought pursued him and brought the beads of perspiration to his brow.

“Be sure your sin will find you out.” “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” His conscience harassed him with the memory of these portions of scripture that he had learned as a boy. Oh, the truth that lay hidden in these statements!

Why had Justin and Basil waited up that night to tell him what had occurred? They could have told him in the morning, which would have permitted him to get a good night's rest. He was in mental torture, of dreading to go down to breakfast to meet Jeanne; yet he dare not do otherwise.

He slipped out of his room a half-hour early, hoping to get to the kitchen and prepare his own break fast, but there was a voice which came from Jeanne's room as he passed that checked him. She must have invited some friend in to spend the night. There were several girls with whom she was very intimate. His heart fell at the thought of the telegram and the possibility of its contents being repeated to others outside the home circle. Gossip of the lips of the public would ruin him.

Then e he realized that he was hearing his sister's petitions in prayer, and that was a comfort. He lingered to make sure.

“O Lord be merciful! Lay not this charge to the lost souls of Chase, Justin and Basil. Cause them to realize that they need Christ as a personal Saviour. And — and, Lord, if Aamon had to die, grant that his life was not

lived in vain. Grant that his death shall ever be a constant testimony to each of my brothers of the sin they have committed. Give them no peace of heart or soul or mind, until they shall seek Thee for mercy, pleading for salvation and relief from their burden of sin.”

Chase coughed huskily in an attempt to divert his sister’s attention from her prayer. He was moved deeply conscience-stricken and chagrined to find himself the object of such a prayer. He did not know how to challenge her petition. How could he protest and still face the facts?

Jeanne earnestly continued in prayer, mindful of the need of the hour:

“Guide me, O Lord, in every thought and deed. Take from us the greed of gold that is responsible for all this trouble — and — for — Aamon’s death. Forgive Chase and Justin and Basil. Convict Mr. Felman and everyone who had a part in robbing Aamon and sending him to his — his death. Be merciful to each of us, and — and,” she sobbed brokenheartedly, “if possible, show us that the message isn’t true, that there is some mistake — that — that Aamon is still alive. We know that all things are possible with thee, O Lord. Make it possible for Aamon to return to us, or for us to go to him. In the precious name of Jesus Christ, the Giver of every good and perfect gift, I humbly ask these petitions in subjection to Thy perfect will. Hear, O Lord, hear and comfort my soul.”

Chase, broken in spirit, turned away at her heartbreaking cry. A great lump rose in his throat. The memory of his mother’s pleading face rose before him. The recollection of her prayers rebuked him. The consciousness of sin condemned him. For the first time in his life he saw himself as others saw him, a God saw him — cold, heartless, selfish, rebellious; he began to realize his need of a Saviour — Jeanne’s Saviour, his mother’s Saviour, the Saviour of the world! His Saviour from the curse of being a thief, a murderer, a hypocrite, a hopeless sinner.

“Yes,” reasoned Chase, as he emerged at the head of the stairs, “why couldn’t I have seen this whole matter as Jeanne does? O Lord, I am guilty of everything she has accused me of in her prayer. Why did I do it? Why was I so blind? Why did the hatred that Justin and Basil have for Aamon influence me against my better judgment? I knew it was wrong to covet Aamon’s share of father’s estate. O Lord, have mercy on my sinful soul. Lord, grant Jeanne’s prayer that Aamon may yet live and that I can make amends for all that I have done to wrong him. O Lord, give me peace of

mind, forgive me, and show me how to live — how to be decent and honorable and respectable! Teach me how to pray and to serve Thee.”

“I can’t pray,” he moaned, groping his way down stairs, “not with a this hatred, meanness and sin in my heart. The Lord won’t hear me. I don’t deserve to be heard.”

Jeanne heard him moving around in the kitchen and hurried down to prepare his breakfast.

“Forgive me, sister, for causing you all this heartache and grief,” he said with feeling, coming over and throwing his arm around her shoulders. “I am the one that should have been sent to prison instead of Aamon. Too bad I wasn’t; then this wouldn’t have happened.”

She turned and sobbed anew on his shoulder, unable to speak.

“Forgive me, little sister; you never were so precious to me as this morning, when I passed your door and heard you pray. How could you pray for me and Justin and Basil, knowing how mean we have been?”

“I can’t help but love you. The thing that hurt me so,” she sobbed, “is to think that you are my brothers! I don’t want to believe you treated Aamon that way. I want—”

“Yes, sweetheart,” he found comfort in confessing, “I know what you want. It is what God wants — what I want! That’s what I am going to be — a better brother! Jeanne, say that you will forgive me, that you will give me a chance to prove that I am not all bad.”

“Oh, Chase,” she smiled through her tears, “I have already forgiven you.”

“Do you suppose God can ever forgive me for all that I have done?” he moaned, studying the lines of agony in her face.

“Chase, are you ready to take Him as your Saviour? If so, He is waiting to forgive all, for He died for all our sins on Calvary’s cross, and now He is able to save all to the uttermost who come unto God by Him. Will you take Jesus Christ today and make Him the Lord of your life?”

“Yes,” he agonized, torn with emotion.

“Will you confess to the world that He is your Lord, and that you are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth?”

“Yes, Jeanne, I am done with my old life of deceitfulness, hypocrisy and sin. God is my judge, I am done with my wicked ways. My past life has been a failure — a failure because of my self-sufficiency, doing that which

was right in my own eyes, but not right in God's sight. But now that I have received Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour, I have peace — the only peace I have had since mother died," he continued. "You remind me more and more of our God-fearing mother and I am proud of you. I am now keeping the promise I made to her to seek and serve the Lord."

"Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God," she quoted happily, still clinging to him in sisterly affection.

"I have found happiness in confessing Him and taking Him as my Saviour," he replied meekly.

"Then through faith in Christ you have been born again into the kingdom of God and may know that you have eternal life; for he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation," she assured him, quoting from God's Word.

"Jeanne," he said with tears in his eyes, "how like mother you are! Where do you find all these words of comfort?"

"In your mother's Bible, Chase. His Word is full of promises for our sinful souls, when we accept Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour. Just notice these words in the fifth chapter of John's First Epistle:—'He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life'; again, 'And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ.'"

"Jeanne," he repeated, "it doesn't seem possible that His salvation could bring such comfort in so short a time. It's so simple. I can understand now why so many miss it."

She thrilled with admiration, studying his face as he searched for words to express himself.

"They fail to exercise faith — fail to realize the possibility of the peace that God supplies," he emphasized; "fail to understand the change that takes place in the heart of the individual who accepts Him as their personal Saviour, as I have this morning; fail to understand the relief and happiness that occurs in giving up the fight of self-sufficiency."

"It is so simple and we discover that we love Him because He first loved us. We can't love God and hate our brother," she replied, touched with emotion at the thought of Aamon.

“Don’t,” he pleaded. “Oh, my God, if it were only possible to make amends.”

She saw the look of distress in his eyes and was sorry for having spoken as she had. She was grieved to think that Aamon had been forced to sacrifice his life, and yet she was not vindictive. She accepted it as coming within God’s purpose to bring Chase to the knowledge of his own sin and his need of salvation. Such sacrifices were being made continually. Christ’s sacrificial death for the sin of the world enables sinners to be saved, and the sacrifice of Christians is often the means in God’s hands of bringing other sin-cursed souls to a knowledge of their need of a Saviour. Chase was no exception, and she hoped that Justin and Basil likewise might soon be brought to repentance.

Jeanne prepared the simple breakfast, and at Chase’s suggestion they read a few verses from their mother’s Bible and prayed together for the first time since their mother’s death. Justin and Basil did not come down for the morning meal, which under the circumstances made their fellowship more pleasant. Neither Chase nor Jeanne wanted to experience the scene that they secretly felt would follow if their two brothers were advised of the stand that Chase had taken. They rejoiced in their newfound happiness and fellowship in the Lord, and felt the need of prayer for the Lord’s guidance and grace.

When Chase was obliged to leave for the office, he came over and kissed his sister goodbye for the first time in months.

“Pray for me today, Jeanne,” he pleaded; “I shall need strength to stand firm in confessing Christ at the office.”

““God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it,”” was her parting word of consolation.

At the office, Chase felt that his first duty was to inform his law partners of the stand he had taken that morning. Besides, they had not been advised of the telegram he had received. Therefore, this news and his conversion came as a double shock to them. But the criticism that he naturally expected was not manifested. They realized the danger they would face if too much publicity was given to Aamon’s release from prison and his sudden death — a victim of the relentless German U-boat warfare.

They were well aware that Jeanne held the key to the situation, as far as publicity was concerned, and silently accepted Chase’s change of heart as a

clever game of strategy in courting her favor. Deceitfulness, as far as they were concerned, mattered little. Whether or not Chase was guilty of it in this instance, they did not care. But they did care about their own reputations. If he was sincere, and it should prove an opportunity to save their faces by hiding behind his cloak of Christianity, they would approve. They were wise enough to realize that the matter must not become public. The difficult task was to convince Basil of the importance of his brother's step from a business standpoint. Anything that would stay the avalanche of new trouble was welcome.

Consequently, following a series of carefully-planned conferences between the firm of Styles, Soules and Barton and the remaining Barton heirs who had knowledge of the night telegram, it was arranged to keep secret the casualty which involved Aamon. They had no way of verifying the report, but were obliged to rely upon the message sent by Felman. Fortunately, because of its communistic source, it was not made public.

Detective Olson, who had a way of discovering things, was the only other one to become interested. His relentless efforts to learn why Aamon was sent to Europe so suddenly might yet lead to complications which no one could foresee.

16. Facing Finland and Death

LIFE ON a German U-boat as a prisoner of war was far from desirable. Aamon certainly did not relish any phase of it. Unknown to the rest of the world, he had been picked up at sea in the only lifeboat to survive, following the sinking of the Armada. He had witnessed the other two boats capsize in the rough sea, while his boat struggled on to cross the path of the U-boat which had destroyed their ship. Here he was picked up and taken aboard. The ten days' experiences that followed were sufficient for a lifetime. He wanted no more of them. The crowded quarters, the lack of drinking water, and the inferior quality and scarcity of rations were deplorable. Only on one occasion did he have enough to eat, and then through the misfortune of others. Another ship had been torpedoed and the unfortunate crew, like themselves, were forced to take to their boats. But because the damaged vessel remained afloat, a number of German officers went aboard, loaded the remaining lifeboats with provisions, scuttled the ship, and returned to their own craft with their booty.

Upon their return, the raiding party discovered that the prison quarters were overcrowded. There was no place to incarcerate the victims rescued from the scuttled ship. Consequently, there was nothing to do but exchange those who were last captured for some of those in confinement. A check of prisoners was made to determine those most trustworthy. Those found dependable were released and given the run of the ship under certain restrictions. Aamon was one of them. As a trusty, he was permitted his freedom as an assistant to an English-speaking German steward.

That same afternoon Aamon witnessed the sinking of an English freighter. He was standing alongside his German companion, a young man scarcely two years his senior, when the ill-fated vessel was sighted. Without any warning to the enemy, a torpedo was released. A direct hit occurred, carrying all on board to their destruction, excepting those fortunate enough to leave in the first lifeboat. Other boats being loaded at her side, capsized, throwing all occupants into the sea when the ship sank.

The U-boat rose to the surface and stood by, permitting those on board to gloat over the human destruction. It was a game of conquest that most of the Germans seemed to enjoy. Aamon, on the contrary, was sick at heart. To him there was no glory in seeing men drowned under any condition. War did not provide sufficient excuse for this. True, their own ship was overcrowded, but that did not compensate for taking human life.

He looked upon the scene in horror. Suppose the same conditions had existed ten days before when the Armada was sunk; with no room on the U-boat, he, too, would have perished. A prayer of thanksgiving passed his lips — remorseful thanksgiving that he should be saved while others were forced to drown. He had been saved to witness the horrors of submarine warfare, both from the angle of a victim and that of a belligerent. Such scenes recorded in his memory could never be forgotten.

That night Aamon had his first real meal since he was taken a prisoner. He was assigned in the kitchen to help prepare the meager allowances for the rest of the prisoners. He was also obliged to serve a cupful of gumbo-like stew and a piece of dried fish to the prisoners. This was very irksome to him, as he was nearly famished himself. He held a piece of smoked fish in his mouth and sucked its salty substance, while he carried the stew to the hungry prisoners. Because there was a scarcity of cups, it was necessary for him not to wait on the prisoners while they ate, and many trips had to be made. Out of gratitude for what the captain and first mate of the Armada had done for him, Aamon managed to serve them with larger portions than the regular rations. He was not permitted to carry on a conversation with them to any extent, but a smile spoke volumes.

After the prisoners were all served, Aamon remained with the kitchen help and enjoyed a real feast especially prepared for them and the crew from the plunder seized when the last ship was sunk. Steak was a unusual delicacy, because there was a lack of refrigeration on the submarine, therefore the German crew gorged themselves while the supply lasted. Canned goods and other staple articles of food were stored for future use.

During the night the U-boat came to rest in some harbor, Aamon did not know where; but when he awoke in the night the engines had stopped throbbing and the ship lay at anchor. When day broke, revealing a city hidden during the night by blackout, they proceeded into port in order to transfer their prisoners to a prison ship.

Aamon soon learned that they were at the delta of the Elbe River. The swastika was seen on the German flags which floated over the city. The U-boat drew up alongside a huge passenger liner which had been converted into a temporary concentration camp for prisoners of war. Soon a procession of men were filing across the gangplank like sheep into the prison vessel, where they were divided into groups according to their ages. A special group of young men about Aamon's age, who were not affiliated with any of the belligerent nations, were marshalled to separate quarters by the master-at-arms. Here they were interviewed, one at a time, by a distinguished-looking German officer, decorated with medals and gold braid, who was gifted with the ability to speak a dozen or more foreign languages, and clever enough to analyze, psychologically, each man brought before him. He made his own selections. Those not acceptable for service on some ship were classified as soldiers of fortune who, rather than face confinement as prisoners of war, could enlist in some army — which army mattered little; any army would do. Aamon found that he had been rated with a number of young sailors seeking adventure and excitement.

Consequently, that same afternoon they were transferred to another ship, and conveyed later through the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal into the Baltic Sea, and thence to some concentration camp in East Prussia. They were informed that they could enlist in the army or return to their own country, as they desired.

“Thirty!” the master-at-arms exclaimed, counting the number selected; “a fine addition they will make to the German army.”

“That's to be a matter of their own choice,” the diplomat in gold braid replied, waving them away.

Within a week the boatload of men arrived at Danzig and were transported inland to a concentration camp. A number of well-groomed German and Russian officers in command of this detail seemed to be working together. All were engaged in the art of persuading those brought to camp to enlist in one or other of the armies represented. Due to the fact that Aamon's passport designated Finland as his destination, he was prevailed upon to join the Russian forces. He had the assurance that if he joined the expeditionary air force he would be transferred to Leningrad and thence to Finland in an exchange for Russian prisoners of war.

At heart Aamon was not in sympathy with the Russian cause; in fact, his preference was exactly opposite. Experience, however, had taught him that

the best rule to follow was “While in Rome, do as the Romans do!” He did not want to stay in the concentration camp, nor did he want to join the German army. His mind was set upon just one thing — Finland. That he was somewhere near the German-Russian border was quite evident. He held no favor for either Germany or Russia, but it was a choice between three evils: stay in the concentration camp as a prisoner of war, join the German army, or cast his lot with Russia. Believing that the latter held the most likely possibility of reaching Finland, he joined the Soviet Air Force.

Plock, an American-born Russian pilot, had much to do with Aamon’s decision. Being an American, he immediately singled out Aamon and learned that at one time they had attended the same school in Michigan. This gave them something in common, although their acquaintance had been rather limited. Ordinarily, Aamon would not have taken to the cocky, little, Americanized, half-Polish, half-Russian pilot, but his ability to handle the Boeing Hawk pursuit plane had won his respect and admiration. Plock thoroughly enjoyed demonstrating his ability as an aviator. He was proud of his American training. It gave him the ability to advance steadily in the air corps to which he was attached.

By inviting Aamon to inspect the various types of aircraft, Plock soon had him sold on the idea of enlisting in that division. His next move was to take him on a flight to determine if he was airworthy. Assured that he was immune from air sickness, he arranged a course of training in the parachute corps. Then followed days of rigid training. Although Plock was greatly interested in Aamon, yet back of it all was his desire to win him over wholeheartedly to the Soviet cause.

When the Soviet-Finnish war broke out, Plock had been one of the first to jump into a bombing plane at Patrozavodsk and fly with others across the Finnish border, raining bombs on unsuspecting civilians in cities and towns. The Finns, however, were not long in meeting the enemy, and shot down the inexperienced Soviet pilots like crows. Plock was one of the few pilots to survive the Finnish resistance, and because of his knowledge of mechanics and superior ability as a teacher, he was ordered back into the interior to recruit and train more pilots.

Where Plock got his name, no one seemed to know. That it was not the name given him when he was christened was generally understood. The fact that his father had been born in a city in Poland by that name had no significance. He had married a Russian woman and migrated to America

before any of their children were born, but that did not give a sufficient reason. The name Plock had some other secret connection with his past, some connection with his communistic affiliations in America. The mystery invited inquiry, and Plock capitalized upon it to give him prestige.

In a course of three weeks' training, Aamon had learned some of the principles of flying. His experience in jumping from a parachute tower taught him how to float to the ground in a open parachute. Then came the ordeal of being dragged off of the wing of a plane by an opening parachute and dropping to earth. But even this, like everything else, becomes commonplace in the course of time, and such was the case with Aamon. It was a thrilling experience which he thoroughly enjoyed, and this encouraged him to work unceasingly to perfect his training in aviation. He was an apt and willing student, and took to mechanics like a duck takes to water, under Plock's able instruction.

Then came the report that the Russian forces were meeting with disastrous results in the vicinity of Viipuri, and that a final thrust was being made to force a peace settlement. In this emergency, Plock was ordered to report at the front and a new ZBK 19, one of Russia's finest fighters, empowered with a Hispano-Suiza engine, capable of making 300 miles per hour, was placed in his command. Aamon was to go with him.

Action was what Aamon thrived upon. It was a stimulant that kept his nerves in tune. Therefore, he was glad when the word came that he was to go to the Finnish front with Plock. The desire of his heart had been granted — he was going to see Finland. The only sad part was that he was on the wrong side of the lines. He would go anyway, hoping and praying that something would happen to permit him to cross the border and stay there.

For the first time in days, the memory of Jeanne flashed before him. There was a longing in his heart to see her. He wondered what she was doing and what were her plans after she had finished college. How would she spend her vacation? Had she learned anything more about the little black book and the messages it contained? A feeling of homesickness possessed him. It was the first time he had felt that way since being released from prison. Why this should be, he did not know! What significance had it in view of his pending trip? There were a lot of questions which centered around Jeanne that suddenly troubled him, and for the moment his mind was no longer on the conflict between Russia and Finland.

A tap on his shoulder made him realize his present surroundings.

“All set with your goggles and glad rags,” Plock sang out in his good-natured American slang. “We’re pushing off into a rough sea of air pockets, aerial bombs and anti-aircraft fire.”

“O.K. Seeing that you’re the pilot with the charmed life, I’ll take my chances with you,” Aamon smiled; “when do we start?”

“Now, right now!” he emphasized; “my fingers just itch to get hold of the controls of this new wonder.”

Aamon surveyed the air cannon and the four machine guns mounted in the wings.

“Well, let’s get going,” Plock commanded sharply, directing the other members of his hand-picked crew to take their places in the big ship.

Plock stepped into the cockpit, leaving the hatch open. Aamon followed. The “br-r-rr-r” of the engines greeted him and the propeller blades flashed in the sunlight as he banged the hatch down. Then Plock gave her the “gun” and the big ship moved forward, bumping along the uneven runway until she caught the air and raced away toward Leningrad.

There was plenty for Aamon to ponder over. They were off for a new scene of adventure. After they landed and refueled a Leningrad, the beloved land of Finland was scarcely seventy miles away. With everything in readiness, they arose to survey the strange country. However, Aamon knew from his study of geography that it was only a matter of minutes before they would reach the battle front. From his position in the copilot’s seat, he studied the instrument board and wondered how long it would be before they met with opposition.

Plock picked up the mike, snapped the switch and uttered a code call in Russian which Aamon did not understand. Plock immediately changed his position and circled out across a great lake which lay far below.

“I know it goes against the grain of you Americans to look down on Finland, but here’s where you will have your opportunity. Besides, it is safer that way,” Plock wisecracked, nosing the plane up and climbing for elevation.

Aamon watched him busy at the mike, wondering at his new outburst of Russian lingo. Plock seemed to be in a fever of excitement, which was quite unusual for him. Other members of the crew who understood parts of the conversation were at rigid attention.

Suddenly a fleet of eight big bombers swung in from the right and joined their own craft, taking position in regular army formation. Aamon studied

the identifying insignia on the various ships and breathed a sigh of relief. They were Russian planes.

Plock continued to study his instrument board, still holding the mike open. The air was jammed with a jumble of radio signals. Everybody seemed to be talking at one time. Plock wore an ugly frown as he tried to tune out the interference. Still the jammed air channels piled up with a conglomeration of foreign languages. How anyone could get anything out of it all was a mystery! Plock tuned closer, deciding to stick to one certain wave length.

“They no are of to us!” he exclaimed suddenly in English. “The Finns have us spotted. A fighting squadron will be out to meet us in a few minutes.”

The ululant blare of the radio was maddening. Apparently, all the other ships had deciphered the message and were trying a once to warn each other.

“Another crying example of the Soviet ‘Five Year Plan’ efficiency,” Aamon muttered.

“Get off the air, you dupes!” Plock bellowed into the mike. “Clear the channels for a emergency warning!”

Almost immediately the air was full of Curtis Hawks, Bristol-Blenheim bombers, and other makes of aircraft which constituted the Finnish defense. Where they came from so suddenly, Aamon could not figure out. In the excitement he did not try. All about him, machine guns were filling the air with a rattling tattoo of death. Two of the Russian planes locked wings and went down together. Another fluttered in hopeless circles and plunged beneath the waters of a spring-fed lake, which had kept it from freezing.

The Russians were scattered in confusion. Now it was everybody for himself. Plock realized the situation, whipped around sharply, and nosing down, he came up behind a perfect formation of American Hawks entering the fracas. Two of them turned and pounced upon him like birds of prey.

Plock knew that others would come to their assistance if he put up a fight and he would be hopelessly outnumbered. He ordered the gunners to cease firing. His only hope lay in feigning defeat.

“What do you think of the entertainment? Fine reception the Finns are giving us, isn’t it?” he muttered.

The two Hawks circled dangerously near, releasing streams of leaden death into the outer edge of his tail assembly. Plock’s plane, with a roar of

defiance, slashed in and out, rolled over in a complete loop, as he pulled the throttle open into a reckless zoom, giving the Hispano-Suiza engine all she could take, and circled above his two opponents.

“Get into your parachutes and bale out,” he suddenly demanded of Aamon and the two junior gunners. “We’ve got to lighten this crate. We’re in for a race with death.”

Brandishing their automatics like mad men, the two older gunners emphasized the necessity of their obeying Plock’s order at once.

Dramatically and with a double purpose in mind, Plock dropped into a wild tail spin. He wanted it to appear that he had been shot down, that he was helpless and forced to take to the parachutes in the emergency. Recovering control of the plane sufficiently to make the parachute drop reasonably safe, he again repeated his order for Aamon and the two junior gunners to clear the ship.

“Bale out, you! Take it, dead or alive!” the burly number-one gunner threatened at the top of his voice in broken English.

“Yes, get out! You want to go to Finland. Now’s your chance,” Plock yelled, chiding Aamon. “See that your ’chute is in order and bale out!”

“Here, take this with you,” advised the gunner on his right, handing him a “Tommy” gun, “you may meet a regiment of hot-headed Finns and have to shoot it out!”

There was no mistaking the order. Plock and the two threatening gunners meant business. The race with the two Hawks was dangerously close. The big ship needed every ounce of energy possible in order to escape. Three men less made but little difference, but it was a case where every little bit helped some.

To Aamon it mattered not. He knew that there was no hope for him in Russia. He just couldn’t bring himself to approve of their communistic and ungodly cause, so no matter which way he jumped it meant a gamble with death. Methodically and with full realization of what he was doing, he prepared his ’chute, made certain that everything was in order, then turning to Plock with a good-natured smile, he bade him goodbye, poised for a moment, and disappeared through the open ’chute door.

Down, down, down he plunged, nearing Finland two hundred feet per second. Suddenly the ’chute opened, holding a living target suspended in the air. Nearer and nearer he came within the range of some anticipated Finnish gunner. A fleeting thought of Jeanne flashed through his mind. One

crack of a rifle would end it all. In a probability she would never know what became of one unknown Russian soldier who died in Finland.

“Help me, O Lord, in this hour of uncertainty and trial,” the young adventurer prayed. “Show them that no wait for me that I am not a enemy, but have come as a friend.”

Expecting every minute to hear the crack of a rifle, Aamon landed in a large orchard near a old farmhouse. Except for the wreckage of a smoldering airplane, the countryside was serene and quiet. The war overhead had moved on to other quarters. He was perplexed, as he studied the little cabin home, thinking that he might see a face at the window. From a appearances the house had been deserted by the family who owned it. He thought he saw someone move in a dormer window, but discovered that it was merely a piece of shredded curtain blown by the wind where the glass was broken out.

Still Aamon hesitated to approach the house, fearing that he might be shot down by someone in am bush. He released himself from the parachute harness, took off the machine gun that he carried and hung it in the crotch of a small fruit tree. The automatic was left with his parachute. It was ridiculous for him to attempt to defend himself against all Finland. What he wanted to do was to get out of the Russian uniform as soon as possible. Cautiously, he approached the house at the foot of the hill, hoping that he might find some cast-off garment suitable for a disguise.

The opportunity never camel Aamon had scarcely proceeded ten rods when two young natives came down the hill behind the cabin on skis, each carrying a rifle. From the opposite direction an armored car approached, manned by several soldiers, looking for the man who had landed in a parachute. The car turned into the driveway at the same time that one of the natives appeared around the corner of the cabin and covered Aamon with a rifle. He raised his arms to let it be known that he was unarmed. The other native came around the cabin from the opposite side and approached ahead of the car. Aamon smiled and walked toward the lad with the raised rifle.

“I came to surrender. You can put down your gun. I am your prisoner and glad of it,” he said, continuing to smile.

“He’s an American!” the rifleman exclaimed in English, lowering the weapon.

“Yes, I am an American, or was at any rate before I was deported to Finland.”

“Deported!” mocked one of the officers in the car. “An American in that uniform! That’s a likely story! He’s a Russian spy!”

“I’m not a Russian spy. I came from America less than two months ago, bound for Finland. Our boat was torpedoed and sunk. We were captured by the Germans. I joined the Russian Army in order to get to Finland and here I am,” Aamon emphasized.

“That’s as good a story as any, I suppose,” the officer in command said in reply; “we’ll find out about that later.”

“I believe that he is an American,” said the rifleman, venturing nearer.

“I — I am, sir — madam,” Aamon stammered, as he suddenly discovered that the young soldier addressing him was a girl about his own age.

“What are you going to do with your prisoner, Osa, now you’ve captured him,” her brother teased, stepping into the circle.

Osa blushed profusely and turned for relief to the officer in charge.

“Search the prisoner for weapons,” he commanded one of his aides.

“You will find my automatic with the parachute, the machine gun hangs in the tree by it,” Aamon volunteered, pointing back to where he had landed.

While Aamon was being searched, one of the officers recovered the weapons and delivered them to his commanding officer.

“We can make good use of the”Tommy gun,” someone said in Finnish.

“The automatic, too,” another replied.

“That’s all you will find,” said Aamon, submitting to the rigid search they were making of his person.

Osa viewed the scene sympathetically.

The officer in command, who appeared to be a lieutenant, addressed her at length in Finnish, evidently discussing plans and advising the procedure to be followed, which they wished to be kept secret.

“Who are you? They want to know your name?” Osa finally interrogated.

“Aamon Always.”

“Aamon Always?” Is that your real name, your American name?”

“Yes, the only name — my name’s Aamon — the rest of it I don’t know. I was born over here somewhere and taken to America when I was a child. I don’t know who I am. I — I came over here to find out. I — I have a passport.”

The lieutenant interrupted with a gesture, requiring her to explain what Aamon had said.

“Where is your passport?” she continued, turning to her prisoner.

“Sewed here in the lining of my jacket.”

“Where are your people?”

“I don’t know. Here, some place. That’s why I left America to find out — Viipuri, maybe.”

“Viipuri” the lieutenant laughed sarcastically, and addressed Osa again in Finnish.

“There’s no chance of locating anyone but dead soldiers in that battered, shell-torn town,” she interpreted.

“You, too, should be shot like a dog,” a surly voice in broken English shouted.

“No,” Osa pleaded; “he’s my prisoner; I don’t want him shot — not now, anyway, until we find out that he is not telling the truth.”

“He’s just another Russian dog; he should be shot as a spy,” said her brother.

“We respect America, and you claim to be an American. You are entitled to an investigation. We will hold you as a prisoner of war and investigate your claims. The result will determine your future,” Osa again interpreted for the lieutenant. “We’ll proceed to headquarters. They will check your story there and determine what is to be done.”

“We’ll let you know, Osa, whether you have captured a Russian spy or an American husband,” chided her brother, as they drove off with Aamon sitting between two men in the back seat of their armored car.

17. Future Without Promise

AAMON'S stay in Finland was limited. The same day that he landed in Finland, hostilities ceased for a time, pending the signing of a proposed peace treaty. Peace negotiations were entered into and a temporary armistice declared to permit the two countries to get together in an effort to stop the Soviet-Finnish War. Consequently, when Aamon was brought to headquarters as a Russian spy he was given little consideration. Army officials were more concerned in the peace terms than they were in one lone, insignificant spy, even though he claimed to be an American. Practically the only thing done was to check his passport. Experienced officials read the name "Aamon Always, Amma Alavus" and grunted in disgust. The name that Chase Barton said would mean so much to Aamon in identifying him in Finland had just the opposite effect.

"Och!" an aged general in charge of the office declared, "a fake — an out-and-out forgery! No one ever had a name like that."

He scrutinized the document with care.

"Amma — och! A town two hundred miles north of here."

He studied the passport for proof of American authenticity.

"Alavus, och! A city two hundred miles west. Och! One fool born once a minute in America; but not in Finland. Och! He should be shot at sunrise."

"Is that your order, sir?"

"American? Och! Send him back to Russia."

Therefore, the Soviet-Finnish peace terms included Aamon. Finland did not want him. He was not to be trusted. His passport was a fake, therefore he was a fake. No further investigation of his claims was necessary. The easiest course was to exchange him with other Russian prisoners of war for Finnish soldiers, if any were found that had not been executed.

Without further permission to plead his cause, Aamon found himself back in Leningrad, still wearing the uniform of the Russian soldier which he very much detested. Another door had been closed to him. He could go back to Germany, but he did not want to do that. He did not want to stay in

Russia either, but he had to make the best of it for the time being. He made an effort to locate Plock, wondering if he had escaped the two Curtis Hawks in the last battle over Finland. Plock, he was informed, was in Moscow for a conference with army officials and no one knew when he would return.

It was a dreary life for Aamon around the army barracks where he was stationed. The soldiers were dissatisfied and underfed, but dared not complain for fear that they would be promptly executed. Still, as a soldier, he had much to be thankful for in comparison to the peasants whom he met in various countrysides. Most of them were in a pitiful condition. Hundreds of them who could afford boots wrapped straw around their feet in place of socks. Those who had no boots wrapped their feet in rags and straw to keep them from freezing. Aamon's heart bled as he saw the folly of the so-called "Five Year Plan" and the destitution it imposed upon the common people.

"Every American person advocating communism should be made to live amid the actual conditions that exist in Russia," he muttered in sympathy, "then there would be no communists."

"Defying God and man, they are without hope! Each individual is a puppet in the hands of a dictator. Their very souls belong to the government. The right of free speech and the privilege to worship God according to the dictates of one's conscience are strictly forbidden. These privileges are unknown to the youth of Russia."

As he thought of these things, a longing came over him to return to America. His heart cried out for Jeanne. Her smile would be like the balm of Gilead, a precious ointment that would give comfort to his heart and bring peace to his soul. But these could not be had; she was far away.

Aamon analyzed the individual communist and considered his lot, and found him unaware that God's Word holds everyone accountable for the folly of his own acts, and has declared: "The heaven shall reveal his iniquity: and the earth shall rise up against him. The increase of his house shall depart, and his goods shall flow away in the day of his wrath. This is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed unto him by God. Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

"How can God suffer such an ungodly generation to work contrary to His plan? Why does God, with all His sovereign power, permit it?" These questions puzzled Aamon. Then came the revelation: the communists are working on a oft-repeated, temporary "Five Year Plan," which is bound to fail, while God's plan is eternal. God is permitting man to discover that

individual effort apart from His providence is bound to fail, that he cannot build for eternity, that any achievement reached outside the will of God is only temporary and has no eternal value.

Noah labored on an ark for one hundred and twenty years, yet he left no material monument. His name is embossed on the honor roll of heavenly heroes. Noah built amidst the ridicule of men, but he will reap the praise of God. He preserved and made possible a posterity because he believed and obeyed God. While the communist ridicules the thought of a Supreme Creator now, yet some day he will give account of himself to God with remorse. Truly the wisdom of man is foolishness with God.

Aamon was convinced that he could not stay in Russia. The communists' régime in that country was entirely different from what its advocates in America had led him to believe. The handicaps and cramped privileges that he had been forced to contend with in the States were a paradise, a compared to the actual conditions in Russia. He wondered about returning to Finland. For a time he harbored the thought that he might disguise himself as a peasant and be smuggled across the newly-formed border. He wanted to return and locate his people, but every door was shut in no his face of account of the military activity in the newly-occupied territory. It was impossible to get through. Besides, it involved great danger. He thought of trying to enter Finland by boat, but that meant death, if he deserted the Russian army.

No, that was not the plan for him to follow. He would have to remain in the army, and when he was in the good graces of the officers perhaps he could work his way out. It was unwise to desert without friends or money in a strange country. Consequently, he sought to make himself useful in every way possible. His adaptability and willingness to learn were in his favor. His knowledge of mechanics gleaned while at college was a great asset, and this, together with the Yankee ingenuity and common horse sense that he had acquired, stood him well in hand and enabled him to work his way through many difficult places.

Gifted with the ability of human understanding, Aamon won friends easily. Everyone liked him because he was able to put himself in the other fellow's position, and make people feel that he liked them and understood their problems. Human love and sympathy are universal, whether in America, Russia, or some other remote corner of the world. Individuals everywhere hunger for it.

During the interval that Russia and Finland spent in working out peace terms, Aamon assisted mechanics at the airport as a sort of all-round handy man. Being a jack-of-all-trades and a willing worker, he became a general favorite. He was always finding something to do, which made him decidedly different from the average Russian. Lacking in initiative and fearing to take responsibility, they did only that which they were told to do; while Aamon, knowing what should be done, did it advantageously and well.

Plock's sudden return from Moscow was a happy surprise to Aamon. It was like meeting a long-lost brother. Plock had not expected to meet Aamon in Russia again, and felt somewhat chagrined for having left him in Finland as he did. He invited Aamon to visit the cabinet headquarters in Leningrad, and since he had some important papers from Moscow to deliver, he took Aamon along as a extra bodyguard.

When they arrived at the embassy, Aamon remained on the street in front of the building. Numerous ambassadors were expected to attend, and among the first to arrive were representatives from Finland. Three cars drew up and stopped at the curb, and after the statesmen and army officers had alighted, they were escorted to the embassy. Aamon noticed that there were still two people remaining in the back seat of the third car. He walked by carrying the demeanor of a sentinel on duty.

"There's your American, Osa," the young man at her side pointed out. "Maybe we should take him back with us as a souvenir of the war."

Osa blushed deeply and turned her head to hide her embarrassment. There was no mistaking the fact — the young Russian soldier that she had captured the last day of the war had crossed her path again. It was very annoying to her. They never would stop teasing her about her prisoner, for already his capture had been the cause of many jokes at her expense. Someone was plaguing her continually about the prospective American husband that got away from her. And because she had at one time made the remark that when she married she was going to pick a rich American.

"Here's your American," her companion at her side tantalized. "You'd better grab him; it may be your last opportunity."

Osa was greatly embarrassed when she discovered that Aamon had recognized her, and was standing awkwardly, gazing at her through the car window. Her first impulse was to flee, but that would make matters still

worse. The only thing to do was to regain her self-composure and brave the predicament as best she could.

Aamon likewise was analyzing the situation in an effort to determine what to do. He wanted to go back to Finland, and here might be the only opportunity that he would ever have; but he questioned whether it would be diplomatic to suggest it. What would the Russians do under such circumstances? What method of approach would the Finns use? He did not know, but at the time something kept telling him that it was an opportunity that he shouldn't miss.

Being an American, he did not miss it.

"Well, of all the people in Russia that I expected to see, you're the last one," he said warmly, smiling a welcome as he opened the car door. "I suppose I should return the favor and hold you as a prisoner of war, a ransom, or something."

Osa smiled in amusement at the remark.

"I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw you drive up. Tell me about it! How are things going in Finland?" he smiled in return.

Aamon's congenial and friendly manner put Osa and her companion at ease immediately.

"Excuse me for being so abrupt," Aamon continued. "I am sorry that I spoke as I did. Finland has my deepest sympathy. I admire your people. I am not in Russia because I want to be. Nor am I wearing this uniform because I am in sympathy with the Russian cause," he emphasized, glancing around to be sure he was not overheard. "What I told you about trying to get to Finland to locate my people is true. The little that I know about myself centers around the fact that I was born in Finland."

For nearly an hour Aamon elaborated upon his past. Everything concerning his American history was given in detail, except his arrest and conviction on a false charge of burglary. He was ashamed of that; besides it might make his story seem fantastic. His life's story was bad enough without it, and ran so much like fiction that no one could be blamed for doubting his sincerity.

His earnest appeal held Osa spellbound. The young man who accompanied her was sympathetic likewise. Both of them talked and understood some English. They had taken a course in American literature in high school, and were well versed in the history of the Western Continent. Both had relatives living in the States whom they hoped to visit some day.

When the army officers returned they found three occupants in the last car talking like old friends. There were still many things that all three desired to know more about. The interview had been far too short, but they understood each other better. Aamon might never get to Finland, but he had the assurance of the assistance of these newfound friends to help him in the event that he did. They promised to put forth every effort to try to locate his people, and Osa, too, agreed to write him at any time that he furnished her an address. They left it that way, because of the uncertain location of the Russian army. Where he would be ten days hence, Aamon did not know. Therefore, he took Osa's address, hoping to correspond with her when he became definitely located.

Both of these friends thought it unwise for Aamon to try to enter Finland now. Feeling ran high against anyone coming in from Russia. It would be safer and better for all parties concerned if he should wait until the Finnish government had reestablished itself. Peace terms with Russia did not mean that the rank and file of the Finnish citizens respected their victorious enemies. It was a unwilling choice, accepted through the force of necessity.

Aamon realized a this and reluctantly gave up hope of entering Finland at that time. He watched his new found friends drive off to traverse the seventy miles through the small isthmus between the gulf of Finland and Lake Ladoga, which had been fortified in the conquest. Beyond lay the "new border" and home — home of a brave little nation holding the admiration and respect of Christians everywhere. Forced to bend the knee to a greater power, Finland had turned the other cheek to suffer in silence. Some day, Aamon resolved, he was going to Finland.

He returned to army headquarters in silence. Plock tried to interest him in the plans that he was making for the future, but his mind was following Osa. He wondered what her home was like. He tried to visualize her people and their patriotic loyalty to the cause for which they had fought and lost. The war had claimed her father and an older brother. Now the "new border" was taking part of their farm, for which little, if anything, could be recovered. Yet she continued to smile, and from the depth of an understanding heart could sympathize with him and his troubles. Such gratitude moved him to compassion. Her cross was greater to bear than his own. Daily the "new border" would be a reminder of the sacrifices her family had made. An encroachment upon her life might be expected daily from the enemy across the border — an enemy mad with power and the evil

desires of a dictator. She was ever to be confronted with uncertainty. Humanly speaking, the peace and tranquility of spirit that she had once known would not be known again.

“What are you so moon-struck about?” Plock inquired, slapping Aamon on the back. “You’ll never get anywhere sitting around daydreaming. Come on, go to Warsaw with me.”

“You’re kidding.”

“Never was more serious in my life. I have some important papers to deliver to the military strategists there and have permission to take you along. What do you say?”

“If I thought you meant it, Plock, I would consent in a big way. But I am in no mood for joking right now,” Aamon hedged in anticipation.

“I am not joking. I am scheduled to leave for Warsaw in an hour. The question is, Do you want to go along?”

“Do I? Just let me pack my tooth brush and I will be with you,” came the enthusiastic response.

“Meet me at the airport, then. I have permission to book you as a copilot and give you a little schooling with the stick going over. You may as well continue to learn this flying game and get around a bit with me,” Plock advised seriously. “I am getting sick of trying to teach these squareheads around here anything.”

Aamon gave very little consideration to the consequences of the trip. He knew that it meant reentering German occupied territory, but inasmuch as it afforded an opportunity to get flying instructions, he couldn’t afford to pass it up. He wanted to become a pilot. Some day it might be the means of entering Finland again. He would accompany Plock with a determination to make every possible effort to master the air. His experience in college in automotive engineering proved a great asset and enabled him to read the instrument board with little difficulty. Now with this opportunity he was going to become the best pilot in the Soviet Air Force.

The distance between Leningrad and Warsaw, via Königsberg, was covered in scheduled flying time. Plock found Aamon an apt scholar, far superior to the Russians whom he had tried to train. During the trip Aamon was permitted to handle the plane, even to the extent of making a coached landing at Königsberg in East Prussia, where it was necessary to make a stop and spend the night.

As they hovered over Warsaw, the sun had barely reached mid-heaven. Aamon looked down upon a devastated and ruined city, whose people had been martyred by modern warfare. Scarcely a building stood intact. Great craters, thirty to thirty-five feet across, were to be seen everywhere that bombs had hit. Block after block had been razed by fire. The gray uniforms of the German soldiers dotted the ghost like city and gave the only evidence of life, as they swooped down at the airport.

In walking about the city with a young German soldier who could talk some English, Aamon learned much of what had occurred the September before, when the undeclared war was launched upon the unsuspecting Poles. The young German had been there from the first, having been sent out for maneuvers. He had not known that there was to be a war until he found himself on Polish soil. What followed made a record of sheer, unspeakable horror! Mute evidence was to be seen in the newly-made graves in the parks, private yards, and even in the small strip between the sidewalk and curb, where that happened to be the best available spot near which men had fallen. Literally, the city was a graveyard of martyred citizens.

Aamon was glad when Plock summoned him to return to the plane. He had seen all the war-torn ruins that he cared to see. His only desire now was to get away, to go to some place where there was no war. But Europe was a battlefield wherever he went. He longed for America and wished over and over again that he had never left her shores. He thought of Jeanne and turned to her God for consolation.

“Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come unto thee,” he struggled with his memory, trying to recall passages of scripture that he had often heard repeated and which he remembered only in part. “I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of the desert. Forsake me not, O LORD: O, my God, be not far from me. Make haste to help me.”

Retracing his steps, he found his way back to the public square, doubtful if he could go forward and face the uncertainty of the future.

“Where to next?” he asked Plock, meeting him in front of the embassy, after he had completed his survey of the ruined city.

“I don’t know, yet,” came the absent-minded reply. “Just received word to stand-by for orders. We may have to lay over here several days.”

“Don’t tell me that! Why, what’s happened?” Aamon asked in a dejected tone, aware of his error in making such a direct inquiry as soon as he had

spoken.

“I wish I knew myself,” said Plock gravely, ignoring Aamon’s inquisitiveness.

“This is a funny world,” Aamon lamented. “Here we are in another war-torn country; two weeks ago it was Finland. Now it’s Poland, or what is left of it. Fighting for — we don’t know what! Can you tell why?”

Plock was nonplussed for a answer.

“Both of us ought to be in America where we belong. Instead, we are over here in Europe killing people. Look at all the newly-made graves a about us! What was the value of life for these people? What has Germany gained by killing them? What — what is the profit in such a war?”

“Did you say America — where you belong?” Plock interrupted sarcastically. “I thought you told me America did not want you — that you were born over here — that you signed a passport voluntarily to come to Europe to find your people — that you renounced America!”

Aamon had no reply. The statement was too true. He might better have remained in prison and served his sentence. Prison in America was a paradise compared to the destruction and destitution in Poland. He would far rather be back in prison than where he was at present. Homeless, friendless, in the depths of despair, in Warsaw!

He recalled the worn and haggard faces of the few ex-Polish citizens whom he had seen about the streets, or through the pane of some remaining window in what once was their home. They, too, were in despair. They knew not which way to turn. His heart bled in sympathy for the starving women and children that had been robbed of everything near and dear to life. The curse of war gripped them like a vise. They could not release themselves from its clutches.

While Plock was waiting for orders, Aamon secured permission to make another tour of the city with a German soldier whom he had met that morning. Although the young German was congenial and courteous, Aamon did not consider him a friend. They had but one thing in common, the faculty of understanding and talking English. Therefore, he accepted him as he had Plock, for the sake of companionship.

Neither did he consider it a sightseeing tour. There was no pleasure in the horrors of war for him, but he sought comfort for his downcast soul by being moved in sympathy for the less fortunate who everywhere confronted him. He could not offer more, but even that left him with the consolation

that God had given him something for which to be thankful. He was possessed with health and strength, and the hope that there was some place in the world where he could find happiness; but he saw no such possibility in Poland or Russia. Under the godless regime of a dictator, a poverty-stricken existence was all that life could offer.

The next morning Plock received a order dispatching him and those in his party to inspect numerous concentration camps along the new Russo-German border of Poland. Considerable difficulty had arisen over who was to assume responsibility for the Jewish refugees who crowded that section. They had been driven from their homes on either side of the Pissa, Bug and San Rivers, established as the new boundary during the progress of the war, and were being continually harassed, shoved back and forth between the two countries. Neither Germany nor Russia wanted them. In the conquest of Poland, they were outcasts on the face of the earth. Consequently, thousands died for want of shelter, of starvation and disease. Scores committed suicide to escape the hopeless prospects which they faced.

Working their way south they visited camp after camp, wherever facilities for landing their plane were available. Everywhere the condition was the same — chaos, destitution and despair. Some of the refugees had been trying for months to reestablish themselves, or secure passage into some other country. One particular couple, a young Jewish doctor and his wife, who was also educated in medicine, had migrated from camp to camp, and had been subjected to vile, uncalled-for persecution. Aamon discovered them in a camp on the German side, near the Romanian frontier. Because of their educational and social standing they were singled out as objects of vicious ridicule and humiliating attacks. Time and again they had stood in line, waiting their turn for inspection and permission to leave the country. Upon the slightest pretext they were ordered to some other camp and every effort possible was made to separate them. Because of their insistence on permission to leave the country together, they were subjected to further humiliation by being stripped of their clothing, and searched for valuables and cash which they were supposed to be carrying out of the country.

Aamon's indignation knew no bounds as he witnessed this ordeal. To conduct such inhuman and uncalled-for examinations before other refugees, herded into a room like cattle, was preposterous. How could any officer have respect for his own father or mother or sister, and treat anyone in this manner? It did not seem possible that anyone could be possessed of such

anti-Semitic hatred. The incident goaded Aamon to the point of wanting to fight, but that would accomplish nothing. He was hopelessly outnumbered and realized that any effort he might put forth would be futile.

Plock likewise was incensed and did not hesitate to vent his feelings in protest. Together with Aamon, a plan was formulated to assist these two unfortunates. They knew that they had no influence with the German soldiers, but through Soviet quarters they arranged for them to enter Russia. By prearrangement, a representative was sent to the German camp to select a quota of certain qualified refugees. This doctor and his wife were among the number selected. Consequently, they experienced no further difficulty in clearing the German censors and soon found themselves on Russian soil.

Their next objective was to enter Romania. Determined that he would find some way to cross the border, Aamon began to devise a plan. He had become peculiarly attached to these two unfortunate refugees, particularly so on account of the wife, who had been subjected to such humiliating treatment. He was resolved to lend them every assistance possible. Suddenly, Plock came to his aid in an unexpected manner.

“Do you know, Dr. Zukerman and his wife impress me as very dependable people,” he declared, bringing up the subject two days later when they were working on an engine tune-up.

“Is that so?” Aamon replied. “I don’t recall that I ever heard their names — that part did not impress me. Names don’t mean anything over here. Zukerman? Both of them doctors? They should be dependable!”

“They are! I know his brother, a broker in New York.”

“That’s interesting! I wondered why they were on a hospital staff in Warsaw.”

“Specialized in surgery, so he informs me. Rather well gifted, I understand,” Plock advised. “Had a lot of money before the war.”

“I suppose the Germans got that!”

“Not all of it; that’s why they had such difficulty in getting out of the country. After buying their way out, the Germans thought they had more money and no refused to clear them without a additional payment to the government.”

“Then, too,” Aamon declared, “being cultured and well educated, I suppose they were afraid that the Zukermans knew too much and might talk about these deplorable conditions. Certainly, Germany can take no pride in advertising her responsibility in such matters.”

“That’s just it; they would rather have seen them commit suicide,” Plock commented. “But that’s not what I am interested in; I would like to see them get across the border into Romania. It might be worthwhile.”

“How?”

“Well, financially!”

“I would be willing to help them across gratis if I knew how,” Aamon declared earnestly.

“What would you say if I told you that I know how it can be arranged?” Plock said, feeling Aamon out.

“Then I would be with you one hundred per cent.”

“Shake! You and I have made a bargain. We’ll bid goodbye to the Zukermans in Romania,” came the enthusiastic response, emphasized in Plock’s hand shake. “Here’s the plan. Arrangements will be made to transfer some of the Jewish refugees by plane to the Ukrainian Jewish grant, and while en route we will fly over the Romanian border and either land or drop them by parachute.”

“Whew! Somebody is apt to get shot.”

“Not where we cross the border.”

“How soon can you make arrangements?”

“Tomorrow afternoon. I want to cross the frontier at night, develop motor trouble and land for repairs, see? The Zukermans will escape and we shall go on without them,” Plock outlined.

“And if that doesn’t work?”

“We shall have to resort to parachutes. The Zukermans will be game, if necessary — anything to get out of the country. There’s very little danger of getting hurt in a trailer ’chute,” was Plock’s comment.

“Yes, I know; it just sets one out in space to float to earth when the ’chute opens and drags you free from the plane wing. I could do that all day, but I was wondering if we had a ’chute big enough to hold them both?” Aamon replied, concerned for their safety.

“Easy! Both together are not as heavy as you would be with our regular army” Tommy’ gun, bombs and camp equipment," Plock reminded him.

True to his word, Plock’s connections enabled him to make the transfer of a number of refugees by plane. For the first trip a plane particularly adapted to the need of the occasion was selected. Leaving about midnight with the Zukermans aboard, they crossed the Romanian border a considerable distance east of the line of soldiers who were defending the

frontier against invasion. When day broke they were near a small village in a rural community. Here the Zukermans were cut loose in an open parachute only a few hundred feet above the ground. A second parachute containing camping equipment and enough provisions to last several days was released and afterwards recovered by the Zukermans.

The plan had worked without a hitch. Plock made a wide circle and came back over the field to wave the refugees goodbye as they landed. No one seemed to be about at that hour in the morning. Purposely they skirted the slumbering villages to avoid attracting unnecessary attention and returned at a high elevation across the border into Russia. Continuing on their way with the rest of their refugees, they left them at the newly-established camp in Ukraine.

“That’s an easy way to get a couple of grand credited to your account in New York. A thousand apiece is not a bad day’s work,” Plock confided to Aamon when they had the opportunity to talk over the events of the day.

“Well—”

“Yes, I know,” Plock interrupted. “It seems like a crime to accept anything for a service to humanity like that, but that was Dr. Zukerman’s own offer. He forwarded money to his brother in New York as soon as things broke in Poland. That was what made it so tough for him. The Germans wanted him to wire his brother to return it.”

“I suppose there are a lot of others who would pay a similar reward for the same privilege that the Zukermans had,” Aamon remarked.

“Anyone who has the means would do the same to get away from the persecution that exists here,” was Plock’s rejoinder. “We may never collect, but for some reason I had the impulse to help them over the border. If I never get a dime, I shall not be sorry.”

“Nor will I! My only wish is that I could help all of these pitiful souls in some way.”

“That’s a big contract — too big,” Plock wisely advised. “We don’t want to take too many chances flirting with trouble. It’s better to leave well enough alone.”

There was consolation for Aamon in the thought that they had done the Zukermans a good turn, but within his own soul he was sad. Life had very little to offer him. Wherever he went it was a round of dissatisfaction, a future without promise. Why hadn’t he escaped from the country with the

Zukermans? But that undoubtedly would have meant a ransom on their heads as well as on his own.

No, the time was not ripe for him to take that chance. When he made his escape it should involve no one but himself. He would await a more favorable opportunity.

He thought of the communistic régime in which he was ensnared, and uttered his cry of protest in the words of the Psalmist: "Keep me from the snares which they have laid for me, and the sins of the workers of iniquity. Let the wicked fall into their own nets, whilst that I withal escape."

He had started out with high hopes of locating his parents, but that had proven to be a fruitless mission. Life now held no objective other than to escape from his present environment. Like Job, the fact that he had ever been born was a nightmare of questions. True, he was not afflicted with the physical infirmities of the staunch old patriarch, yet the problem of existence troubled him.

"Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul?"

18. In Disguise

PLAYING a lone hand, Aamon settled down in earnest to effect his escape from the clutches of the Communist Army of Russia. Europe was in a turmoil. Nation had risen against nation, and no matter which way anyone turned he felt the lurking foe of distrust and uncertainty. Whether it actually involved their country or not, everyone was in subjection to the gods of war.

Aamon cast his eyes about the horizon, looking for a port of hope. There was only one direction that held any promise. The trek of the Jewish refugee was southward. Forlorn, destitute, and gaunt with hunger, they were migrating toward the Promised Land whenever opportunity afforded. But at every frontier there was a barrier against the influx of migration. Any plan that he might make would have to hurdle this opposition. He thought of the Zukermans and considered that they had chosen wisely. With a heart longing to join them, he turned his attention to Romania. Just where the Zukermans were, he had no way of knowing, but there was consolation in the fact that they were no longer in Russia.

Aamon became concerned as to what the outside world was doing. He was hungry for the American viewpoint on current events. What did they think of this World War? He would give a king's ransom for a recent edition of a Chicago, Detroit or New York daily. In fact, anything in the way of world news printed in English would be welcome.

But news was not to be had, except that handed down by word of mouth. Foreign papers, such as they were, carried nothing but propaganda to bolster the ambitions of the country in which they were published. Everything was colored with a self-serving angle which left one hopelessly in the dark as to what was going on in other parts of the world. Aamon learned this by talking with translators, as various bits of information were repeated to him. He was in a dilemma and could not decide what course to take. Germany was bringing pressure to bear on Romania to reduce her armed forces by one-third, while the youth of this Balkan country were being drafted into a vast agricultural army to satisfy export demands. The

Germans were also anxious to speed up Romanian oil deliveries in order to carry off their war program, while Great Britain was bringing counteraction to prevent it. What was the next step for him to take?

As conclusive proof that the old adage, “A watched pot never boils,” Aamon grew weary of waiting. Things were so dormant along the Romanian frontier that he was unable to smuggle his way across the border. He saw Plock depart for a return trip to the Russian capital, but in order to keep from going with him, he feigned sickness in such a realistic way that even the army doctor was fooled. He was determined that he would not return to the interior of Russia, if that could possibly be avoided.

To effect this sickness, Aamon chose the unique way of gorging no himself of raw garlic and glycerol. They were the only things available that would bring on a temporary spell of sickness. Having just partaken of the noon ration of inferior army goulash, he was notified that their plane was to leave within a hour. Arising from the bench where he had been sitting in a dejected state of mind, he left the mess hall by the back door. As he departed he took several bulbs of garlic which he secreted under his jacket, and on the pretense that he had some extra work to do on the plane, he hurried on ahead, leaving Plock to follow. Taking a can of glycerol from the machine shop, he made his way to an out-of-the-way corner where he proceeded to chew garlic like a mad man and to drink from the can of glycerol until he became deathly sick. When Plock came out to take his departure, he found him underneath the wing of his plane and ordered him transferred to the hospital.

Aamon remained in the hospital for nearly a week under treatment for gastritis. What he did in order to keep from going with Plock proved far worse than he had anticipated! However, his purpose was accomplished and he still remained on the border overlooking the Balkans.

Gloomy, homesick and dejected, he dragged himself around the hospital grounds, wondering if life would always be such an enigma. To be homesick without a home nearly drove him crazy. He tried to visualize what his people would be like, if he ever did locate them. Then doubt would seize him. There were millions of people in Europe, but where were his people? Some there were, no doubt, related to him — father, mother, sister, brother, aunts, uncles and cousins, but how would he know them, and how would they recognize him? There was no way for him to prove a blood tie to anybody.

Seized with despair, the wanderlust crowded him to action. The present atmosphere was stifling. He abhorred everything and everyone about him. The stigma of communism clung to him like a loathsome disease. He was haunted day and night with its bondage gnawing at his soul. To get away from the awful curse that was robbing him of belief in God was the paramount objective that he must pursue. His mind was horrified with it continually.

He tried to pray, seeking to get a grip on himself. He wished that Christ was as real to him as He had been when he was a boy at Mrs. Barton's knee. So many things had happened since then and God seemed so far away!

Debating with himself, he reflected upon the yesterdays of life. "Could it be possible that Christianity had failed as the communists claim? What was the profit of communism in contrast with the provisions of Christ for time and eternity?"

Aamon's soul was hungry and miserable, and yet they had nothing for him. Communism had robbed his soul of everything and left it barren. Life was robbed of human freedom, the one thing above all else that Christianity gives. Freedom of choice came by divine right in the creative act of God.

Aamon began to realize that Christianity had not failed; that communism is a thief in the night of unbelief, leading men astray; that it is the very essence of absurdity to refuse to let Christ have His way in one's life and then charge Him with failure.

"Aamon, what lackest thou yet?" he exclaimed in the depths of despair.

"Christ in you, the hope of glory," whispered a voice of comfort, recalling a verse of scripture that Mrs. Barton often referred to when showing others their need of the Saviour.

"Christ in me," he cried, falling to his knees; "Christ in me!"

A sensation of satisfaction came over him, lifting the burden from his heart.

"I see it all now, Lord. That's where Christianity fails; Christ outside — not allowed to enter the human heart."

The fact that the power of God might be experienced by him — might be appropriated for his own life, humbled Aamon. He had never seen it in that light before. All he had to do was to claim Christ by faith. It was so startling to him that for the moment he was speechless with joy. His heart throbbed with a new hope as he believed on the Son of God as his Lord and Saviour. He was saved! Paul's Christ of the Damascus highway, the risen Christ of

glory had found him in Russia. No matter what happened to his body, his soul was eternally saved! The terror of communism faded into the distant past.

It was a new and glorious revelation. The perplexing question, “What must I do to be saved?” had been answered by the promise of God, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.”

“Yes, Lord,” Aamon prayed in all seriousness, “‘there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.’ I take Thee as my personal Saviour; henceforth I shall confess Thee before men; show me what Thou wouldst have me do.”

A tranquility of mind, heart and soul, supplied by the indwelling Holy Spirit, overcame him and he was transformed into a new creature in Christ Jesus.

“Christ in me, the hope of glory! I have found Him! Praise His holy name,” he exclaimed.

Several Russian soldiers and mechanics gathered around Aamon, as he dropped to his knees and remained praying by the side of his bunk.

“O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.”

It was clearly evident that the group around him thought that he had suddenly gone crazy, and not being well enough versed in English to understand what he said, they watched him with mingled awe and amazement. Gesticulating among themselves, they whirled their forefinger around their heads, letting it be understood that they believed him to be mentally unbalanced.

A petty officer kicked Aamon; another grabbed him as he rose to his feet, and with the assistance of several companions, dragged him back to the hospital and turned him over to one of the guards, to be placed in a cell for observation.

What it was all about, Aamon did not understand for the moment! He could not understand their Russian lingo. His first thought was that he was being incarcerated for praying and that his newfound joy in receiving Christ as his personal Saviour had caused this opposition. The devil certainly was on the job, working in conjunction with the Bolsheviks. But with a heart reconciled to suffer for the sake of Him who had saved him by His grace, he settled back on his bunk, resigned to the fate of a Christian martyr.

Plock's return with news of the outside world conditions alleviated the situation considerably. For some reason he seemed to hold a position of strategic importance from a military point of view, and his interest in the young adventurer proved sufficient to effect Aamon's release. Naturally, he had a right to feel grateful that the war involving the world did not supersede Plock's interest in him.

Germany had invaded Denmark. Their planes were bombing Oslo, and the biggest naval battle of the new World War was in progress off the coast of Norway. The Nazis were crowding into Romania for the strategic position of controlling the shipping on the Danube.

Seven divisions of the German Army, numbering about a million men, were now quartered at the frontier station of Bruck on the Budapest-Vienna railway. Another detachment of like number was located at Krakow in Poland. With the German gunboats already on the Danube, Hungary could not very well refuse Germany's demands for police powers on the river. A strategic move might be attempted by the Reich at any moment. The world had its eyes on the Balkan powder keg which might be touched off at the least provocation, spreading the war into the Balkans.

How could he reach the Danube? There would be a lot of activity there, and possibly a chance to secure employment on a boat. Twenty-four hours might change everything. A perfect "blitzkrieg," the Nazis called the strategic move of taking over Denmark and the sudden thrust into Norway. Now the same technique might be used to control the Near East. The border cities were tense with excitement, awaiting the unknown.

Often it is a happy occasion when the unexpected happens. So it was with Aamon! The hours of planning which had accomplished nothing suddenly terminated in answered prayer. He was selected as an assistant mechanic on a trip to Istanbul.

"Istanbul? That's in Turkey — the capital city!" Aamon exclaimed, scarcely able to contain himself.

"Exactly! Istanbul was Constantinople, the capital of Turkey at one time, according to my geography," Plock grinned, watching Aamon struggle to hide his enthusiasm. "But Ankara happens to be the capital now and our ultimate destination."

"Constantinople, Istanbul, Ankara, or anything else they want to call her capital city suits me as long as we get there," Aamon sang out. "When do we start?"

“Tomorrow at daybreak, if all goes well,” Plock tantalized.

“Goes well?” Aamon could not help but ask, wondering what might happen next. The possibility of disappointment stunned him.

Plock, in order to be aggravating, purposely did not reply.

“Goes well?” the anxious adventurer drawled hopelessly. “What — what could happen?”

“Another blitzkrieg, if the Romanians don’t beat Hitler to the draw,” came the rejoinder.

“Christ in me, the hope of glory,” Aamon was peacefully reminded, and this lifted the burden of anxiety from his heart.

Upon retiring on that night, Aamon spent a hour in quiet prayer, asking that God would show him His will on this trip to the capital of Turkey. The possibility that the trip offered for his escape seemed too good to be true, and sleep came after he committed it all to the Lord. Strange as it might appear, it proved to be the best night’s rest that he had enjoyed for weeks, and the next morning it was necessary for Plock to call him a hour before daylight.

“Here, try this one,” he shouted, as he threw a new pilot’s uniform across Aamon’s bunk; “you can’t visit any Turkish harems in that old outfit you have been wearing. They would throw you in a dungeon and keep you there.”

Aamon bounded from his bunk and after making the best toilet possible with the facilities at hand, he hurriedly donned the new uniform and stepped out to meet Plock who was waiting at the airdrome. The propellers of a huge, red passenger plane were revolving in the early morning light.

“You look like a new man,” was Plock’s greeting.

“I sure feel as though I had been made over,” Aamon replied, eyeing the new plane.

“Think she will take us to the land of the fez and turban?” Plock asked.

“I’m willing to risk it.”

“Then hop in and get set. It’s only about three hundred miles to Bucharest. We will pick up a couple of Russian envoys at the Romanian capital before proceeding to Turkey, where they discuss a new trade pact,” Plock volunteered.

A second invitation was not necessary. Joy was in Aamon’s heart as he took his position in the co-pilot’s seat. The steady throb of the two great engines was music to his ears. The big plane took the air beautifully, circled

and headed south along the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains, which could be seen in the distance at their right. In a few minutes, they crossed the Romanian border which had stood before Aamon as a barrier for weeks. With a feeling of relief, he carefully glanced about the interior of the plane, while Plock directed the course of the ship, and notified the Romanian ground stations of his position and identity by radio.

Aamon soon discovered that there were at least two other passengers and a steward on board. They evidently had remained in their berths during the night, while preparations were being made for the ship to cross the carefully-guarded border. That the luxuriously furnished plane carried men of state was evident. When their secretary made his appearance, Aamon was fully assured that they were traveling in a government passenger plane and were on a mission of good will between the capitals of the Near East.

“Christ in you, the hope of glory,” he found himself humming over and over to a new tune in tempo with the vibrations of the engines. The words and melody filled his heart with joy, as they floated along through the feathery clouds.

Their first landing was at the Romanian capital, where the ambassadors conferred with diplomats until midafternoon, and then they proceeded with two extra passengers to Istanbul.

As they skirted the Balkan Mountains on the east and drifted along the western shore of the Black Sea, Aamon could not help but reflect upon the history of this war-torn peninsula, which for the past four hundred years has been the storm center of Europe. Some of the countries had been at war continually, and now the gods of destruction were seeking to involve them in another World War. The Eastern question had not been settled.

What part the airplane would play in the pending conflict was yet to be determined. Certainly, the short space of time that it took to fly from point to point would be a factor in changing the art of war from that of previous Balkan conquests. The strategic importance of natural barriers in the treacherous mountain ranges and the well-guarded waterway of the Dardanelles had very little bearing in aerial warfare.

As they drew near the former Turkish capital, the Mosque of St. Sophia loomed up in the distance.

“The city of a hundred mosques and as many public baths,” Plock remarked, circling around to locate the airport.

As soon as they landed, the four diplomats were whisked away in a waiting limousine to the embassy, while Plock and Aamon found their way to the Grand Bazaar with its long avenues, arched with brick and lighted by apertures in the vaulted roof. Mingling among cross-legged Turks, who sat smoking their pipes and waiting for business, the two pilots wandered from one bazaar to another and inspected the oriental wares on display. The main avenues were alive with cosmopolitan groups, many of whom, like themselves, appeared to be foreign to such an environment. Aamon assumed that they were refugees from war-torn Europe, making their way to a port of welcome.

After indulging in a much-appreciated Turkish bath, Aamon had no difficulty in sleeping that night. He was up at daybreak, leaving Plock to take a extra forty winks. He wended his way to the At-Meidan, a large public square occupying the site of the ancient Hippodrome, where he sat down to meditate. There was a feeling of satisfaction to know that he was out of Russia, yet that did not suffice, for in another twenty-four hours they would be headed back to that country to visit the vast Soviet oil fields between the Black and Caspian Seas. The mere thought chilled his heart. He did not want to go back to Russia, and he determined that he wasn't going back, if he could possibly avoid it, the Lord helping him!

Whether it would be wise to desert the airplane and make his way alone was a problem hard to settle. He had very little money, and no friends to whom he could turn. The American consul was at Ankara, but he was not an American citizen, and so he could not turn to him for assistance.

Suddenly he thought of the British consul. Great Britain and Turkey were allied nations. He would go to the Turkish capital and endeavor to affiliate himself with the British cause. One thing was certain: he never was going back to Russia! Happy in the anticipation, he made his way back to headquarters in time to meet Plock for breakfast.

"I was just beginning to think that I would have to send out the reserves to locate you," said Plock cheerily, as Aamon approached the group standing in front of the embassy.

"Just getting an early morning view of oriental customs," Aamon answered.

"Doing obeisance to Mecca, I suppose," Plock taunted jocularly.

"No, observing how others do it."

“Well, you can reserve your pilgrimage to the Mohammedan center for a later date, for we will have to find something to satisfy the inner man.”

“Quite right,” Aamon agreed. “We’ll take break fast in Istanbul, lunch at Ankara, and dinner as directed by the Kaaba of Mecca.”

“But the main thing is that we eat,” said Plock, leading the way to an oriental restaurant. After satisfying their hunger, they lounged longer than usual in a secluded corner of the coffee shop, watching the natives engage in the art of smoking their queer, hose-stem Turkish pipes.

Aamon’s prophecy proved true. In much the same environment, they were seated in a picturesque coffee shop for a late lunch in the Turkish capital. Their plane trip had been made in record time. The several diplomats were in an important conference, which promised to last until far into the night. At any rate, they were to remain in Ankara until sometime the following day.

At an opportune moment, Aamon slipped out through a rear exit into a large oriental garden and took a seat where he could observe what was going on inside the restaurant without being seen. Just before doing so, he had purposely lingered at the front entrance, while Plock was reading a newspaper and waiting for his change, after paying his bill. He wanted Plock to think that he had gone out the front entrance, and hoped he would search for him on the Street.

Nor was he disappointed. Five minutes after he had left the restaurant, he saw Plock glance at the front door, rise and go out on the street, where he soon became lost in the crowd. Certain that no one had taken particular notice of where he had gone, Aamon remained in seclusion, surveying the interior of the garden and the means of exit. Several groups were sitting about engaged in conversation, and for an hour he watched various parties come and go, trying to decide what course of action to take.

Sitting at a table nearby were two men discussing the European war in low tones. It was apparent that they were subjects of Great Britain, evidently from Australia or New Zealand, and so Aamon became intensely interested in them and their conversation. They talked a language he understood and he thought they might possibly be his friends, but he dared not approach them with any plea for assistance.

When they were joined by a third party, he was more certain than ever that he had not been mistaken in his supposition. The third man, short and stubby, was considerably younger and unmistakably English. Seeing him

about to depart, Aamon decided to follow and seek an opportunity to speak to him, if he could.

“My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him,” Aamon breathed in prayer.

The Englishman turned suddenly and came back, talked to his two companions a moment, and then came directly toward the place where Aamon was standing. Not wishing to appear an eavesdropper, Aamon turned and walked to the rear of the garden. There he discovered an exit concealed behind some latticework and shrubbery, and made his way into the courtyard of an adjoining private estate. As he made his way up the path, seeking a way to the next street, the stranger followed him.

Upon reaching the avenue, he noticed that directly opposite was the entrance to another large estate. Walking across the street, he entered the drive, thinking that he could then observe which way this Englishman would go, and possibly he could follow him with out arousing his suspicions. But as he entered the drive he confronted a Mohammedan citizen, standing alongside an automobile with its hood up.

“No work,” muttered the Turk, struggling to make himself understood in English and pointing to the silent engine.

“Here is an opportunity,” thought Aamon, as he took in the situation at a glance. Perhaps a mechanic had been sent for and his arrival at any moment was expected. Anyway, the man was in trouble, and since he had some knowledge of motor cars he might be able to help him and thus remain in seclusion, while Plock was roaming the streets looking for him.

Noticing an open building which answered for a garage, he entered and found a mechanic’s jumper hanging on a hook. Donning this, he returned to the car and with a few tools he could find discovered that the trouble was due to a lack of spark. By cleaning and adjusting the burnt points in the magneto, he soon had the car running.

Wearing a broad grin, the Turk bowed his thanks. Reaching in his pocket he produced a handful of coins and held them out to Aamon. From these Aamon selected an English shilling and waved him back as an indication that he was satisfied.

Calling a school boy from the street, the Turk talked to him in Arabic for a few moments.

“He doesn’t speak good like you. He wants to know where he can take you,” said the lad in perfect English.

“Well, son, this is a surprise. I was wondering how I could explain to this man what I did to his car in order to put it in running condition,” Aamon said with a smile. “What wonderful command of English you have. Where did you learn it?”

The compliment completely won the boy’s heart and a smile of gratitude spread over his face.

“Here at last is a friend that can be trusted,” Aamon reflected, as he listened to the lad explain how he acquired his knowledge of English when accompanying his parents on a world tour.

“Travel is a great teacher,” Aamon advised, as the boy continued to tell how he had the help of a private tutor who came directly from America.

Becoming impatient, the Turk addressed the boy in his own language.

“Where do you wish to go, mister?” the lad asked.

“To the airport.”

“Which one would you desire?”

“Any one for a plane going south to Damascus, or the oil fields of Iraq.”

The lad turned and explained to the curious Turk.

“You drive and see if the car is all right,” the lad interpreted the order.

“Tell him all right, if you can go along. I will need you to interpret for me,” Aamon said, placing his hand on the boy’s shoulder as a friendly gesture.

He was rewarded with another smile.

Motioning them into the car, Aamon took the wheel and at the same time advised them that he would wear the jumper as it might be necessary to make other repairs. He wanted to keep his pilot’s uniform covered and this was a perfect disguise. God’s faithfulness was certainly manifested now; if there were only some way that he could exchange his uniform for this jumper or another like it. While he drove, the Turk directed him, through the boy, where to find the airport at the outskirts of the city. Fortunately, it was not the same one where Plock had landed.

Aamon’s mind was in a fog of uncertainty as he drove up to the front entrance of the airport. How could he manage to keep the jumper? He couldn’t afford to remove it there, for to appear in his pilot’s uniform was sure to excite suspicion. Driving past the entrance, he slid from beneath the wheel, left the motor running and motioned to the Turk.

Stepping around to the front of the car, he lifted the hood and started tinkering with the motor. He adjusted the carburetor, stopped the motor,

took out one of the spark plugs, cleaned it and put it back.

The Turk watched him curiously for twenty minutes, as he labored strenuously to give the motor the best possible tune-up. Replacing the hood, he stepped on the running board and signaled to the Turk to drive slowly, while he leaned over and listened to the engine perform. All this time his mind had been busy and a continual flow of conversation was carried on. Out of the corner of his eye he was watching the landing field to get the lay of things in general. When he was nearly opposite the mechanics' shed at the lower end of the field, he dropped off the running board.

The Turk stopped. This was what Aamon had expected. Walking around the car to the side where the boy sat, he was profuse in commending the lad for the assistance he had given him. Through the boy as his interpreter he was just as gracious in thanking the Turk for bringing him back to the mechanics' headquarters at the airport. Then, taking from his pocket the coin that the owner had given him, he placed it in the lad's hand, stepped back and motioned for them to go on.

A storm of protest which Aamon anticipated came from both the boy and the Turk.

Aamon motioned vigorously for them to proceed, and at the same time stepped away from the road.

When the boy attempted to leave the car under instructions from the Turk to return the shilling, Aamon vaulted the barrier along the airport. Laughing as he backed away, he continued to joke with the boy, advising him to go back to the car and keep the coin as a souvenir. Then waving them both goodbye, he started out across the landing field toward the mechanics' quarters.

19. The Stowaway

WITH A FEELING of regret, Aamon watched the car drive down the roadway. A happy boy was waving him goodbye. He felt condemned for parting with them in such a manner, and his conscience rebuked him for taking away the mechanic's jumper that did not really belong to him; yet there was some consolation in the thought that he had earned it by the services he had rendered to the owner in repairing his car. No doubt the Turk considered that he had gotten the better of the bargain; at least Aamon hoped so, for he did not want something for nothing. When he was through with the jumper, he would be only too glad to return it and pay double its value, for he believed it would render him a real service.

As he approached the building, he dismissed these petty thoughts, for he was facing a greater problem. Since he had no set plan in mind, he would need to proceed cautiously. Deciding that it would be wise to reconnoiter and discover the actual situation, he walked around the corner of the building to a dense thicket. This spot was not so advantageous, however, since he could not see what was going on about the building or the landing field; but, until nightfall, it would serve the purpose of a hideout and give him the opportunity of finding out if he had attracted any attention. He felt certain there was no one about when he crossed the open field from the road, but that did not necessarily mean that lookouts were not on or around the building.

While waiting for developments, he made himself as comfortable as possible, and gave himself to prayer that God would undertake for him. Plock, no doubt, had notified the authorities to be on the lookout for him, so he could not tell what would happen next. But as the minutes wore on, and the sun sank in the west, his mind was at ease. The Lord gave him quietness and confidence as he recalled that promise in Isaiah: "Thou will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee." A song of thanksgiving filled his heart.

The stars came out and twinkled through the foliage. Peace came to his soul as he lay there on the ground, studying the heavens. He had found a refuge for the night where alone with the Lord he could make plans for his escape, fully realizing that without divine guidance he was without hope. What confronted him he knew not, but it was a comfort to rely upon the One who had said: "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye."

Finally his mind drifted to Osa. He wondered what she might be doing and whether she had been successful in locating any of his people. He must write to her as he had promised, but what address would he give where he would receive her reply? Where would he be next? Whither was he bound? That was a question that he could not answer. His immediate plans were to get out of reach of the Russian Army, and beyond the Soviet control.

Watching the stars made him sleepy, and the much needed rest came in peaceful slumber. After sleeping an hour or so, he awoke, chilled through by the night air. At first he thought he should make a survey of the grounds, but later decided that it was too early, for someone might be about and discover him. For a time he let his mind drift back to Jeanne and America, and wondered if she occasionally thought of him and questioned his whereabouts. Reflecting upon his past made him bitter, for there was scarcely a pleasant memory in it. At every turn in the road there had been sorrow and disappointment. Was life always to be that way, with no happiness, no security, no hope anywhere for him?

"Christ in you, the hope of glory," a still small voice again spoke comfort to his soul. Could it be that Jeanne was remembering him in prayer? Subconsciously he felt that it was true; she was still holding him up before the throne of grace from whence come wisdom and strength. It was a comforting thought. He could not do otherwise than pray for her, pray with a heavy heart, homesick, alone and unhappy.

Truly, he was as sentimental as an old woman! When he counseled with the Lord his prospects seemed bright and hopeful, but when he dwelt upon material things and relied upon his own strength his spirits dropped lower and lower, until the seriousness of his plight brought him to the very depths of despair.

Disgusted with himself, he arose and made a tour of the immediate vicinity, but it was too dark to make any inspection. There were no lights in the building and from all appearances it seemed to be deserted. Certainly,

there was no one working there at that hour. As he drew near to the extreme end of the machine shop, a dog commenced to bay. Aamon stopped and listened with a feeling that it was an ill omen. Another dog answered in a weird howl. Then a general serenade of barking dogs joined in the chorus, driving Aamon to retreat to his haven of concealment.

Dropping down in the thicket, he lay quietly and listened to the canine chorus, evidently baying at the full moon rising above the horizon at his left. Finally, he fell asleep again, mulling over his strange lot in life. When he awoke, the birds were twittering in the trees about him, making their announcement that the break of day was near at hand. A cock crew at the far end of the building, proclaiming to the world that it was time to begin another day.

Through the stillness of the morning hour the approach of an airplane could be clearly heard. Closer and closer it came, until the plane finally settled on the landing field in front of the building. Immediately Aamon was on his feet ready for action. From where he was concealed at the rear he could not see the plane, and realizing that he had only a few minutes to work before daylight, he started out to make an investigation. Rounding the corner of the machine shop, he was barely able to distinguish two men as they stepped from the plane and approached the far end of the building.

It was quite evident that these men were strangers. What could be their mission? Aamon was suddenly gripped with the fear that one of them might be Plock, for the plane resembled the one that brought them from Russia. However, at several hundred feet distance, he could not be certain; nor could he be certain of the make of the plane. He hoped that he was mistaken. Since he could not afford the chance of making his presence known, he watched the men approach alongside the building, trying doors and looking in the windows, while he remained in the shadows at the corner. When they arrived at the last window some thirty feet distant, they stopped and looked into the shop.

Perplexed, the taller of the two finally remarked: "I am sure this is the place where the Baron was to meet us."

"Yes, this is the place; I have been here before. We are an hour early, but he should be here before long. I can't understand why the shop isn't in operation with the present demand for war supplies," his companion answered.

Aamon breathed a sigh of relief; neither of them was Plock.

“Let’s walk back to the pumps,” said the first one; “we’ll need to get gas here. It’s five hundred miles to Beirut or Damascus.”

“Yes, in either case the distance is about the same. It doesn’t make much difference which stop we make first,” the second spokesman interrupted.

“Beirut or Damascus,” Aamon breathed anxiously. “No difference!—I’ll say not, providing I have a way to get there!”

“Suppose we go down to the other end of the building. The Baron may be waiting for us there. Besides, I believe there’s a bake shop in the first block where we can get a bite to eat,” the younger man suggested.

“Just time for a snack,” came the reply as they walked away.

“Well, whoever they are, and wherever they are from, they have a good command of English,” mused Aamon. “I’m wondering what the insignia on the plane will reveal.”

Falling in behind them, he managed to keep from sight by hugging the building and dodging behind one clump of shrubbery and then another as he went along. At a point opposite the plane he stopped. The temptation to inspect it took possession of him. Cautiously, he watched the two men go round the corner of the machine shop and disappear. If they are going to eat breakfast, they may be gone for some time, he thought. He surveyed the grounds, debating whether to take a chance and approach the plane, if no one was in sight. As it was only a matter of minutes before daylight, he would have to work fast, so with his eye on the corner behind which the two men disappeared, he edged away from the building toward the mammoth ship.

Underneath the wings he discovered the insignia which showed that the plane belonged to a subject of Great Britain. That was welcome news. A hurried inspection disclosed that he was far more fortunate than he had thought possible. The cabin door was unlocked, and apparently no one had been left to guard the ship. What had become of the pilot? Certainly, under these circumstances the owner could not be expected to be gone for any length of time.

While inspecting the instrument board, Aamon ran into another surprise. The contact switch was not locked and there was at least enough gas to fly a hundred miles. All he would have to do would be to snap on the ignition, step on the starter, turn the ship around, and take off. With the exceptional length of runway and the favorable aeronautic conditions, he felt that he was equal to the task of taking off without difficulty. He was well

acquainted with this type of aircraft, having had experience with a similar model while in Russia with Plock. But as he considered the temptation to use the ship for his own need, he promptly declined to undertake any such venture, knowing that it would be wrong. He was not a thief and the emergency would not justify such tactics. Besides, the plane did not belong to an enemy, and therefore he could not seize it as contraband.

Glancing through the window, the first rays of the sun brought him to the realization that he had already stayed too long aboard the ship. The two men or the pilot might return at any minute. What explanation could he offer if he should be discovered?

He looked out of the window on the other side of the ship and saw three men coming around the corner of the building. His heart sank! He was trapped, unless he could drop through the cabin door and duck under the ship without attracting their attention. Quickly he stepped to the rear of the plane, thinking that he could hide for a little while and then make his escape when they were taking on gas.

When he reached the rear Pullman, he suddenly stopped, dumbfounded. There the pilot was lying, unconscious in a deep sleep. He cautiously crept past him to a small door, leading to the luggage compartment in the fuselage of the plane. Crowding back as far as he could between the braces of the framework, he lay down, making sure that he would not interfere with any of the controls.

He had scarcely reached a comfortable position when he heard the voices of the three men. All of them spoke English, and apparently planned to leave together. They came aboard, searching for the pilot.

From his position, Aamon could see the neatly polished boots of one of the men as he stood alongside the sleeping man.

“Dick certainly lost no time in catching up on his sleep,” he remarked.

“Yes, it seems too bad to waken him,” another replied; “he must be dog tired.”

“Twenty-four hours of service, with only an occasional catnap, gets one down,” they agreed.

“Oh, come on, let him sleep! I’ll taxi the ship over to the pumps and take on our supply of gas,” said the third man.

A jumble of voices came from the cockpit as they prepared to start the motor. Aamon visioned the ignition switch being snapped on. He sensed the contact when the starter button was pressed, and felt the vibrations

throughout the plane as the motor was put in motion. Aamon could tell that the plane was being taxied over the landing field, and wondered how he could escape; but there was no opportunity afforded.

Again the motor started. A deafening roar assured him that they were about to take off. It was only a matter of seconds before they were in the air. Three men, the pilot, and Aamon comprised the passenger list — assuming that the unrecorded presence of the stowaway could be considered in the listing.

As the morning wore on, the pangs of hunger began to make themselves felt. It was now nearly twenty-four hours since he had eaten. The heat for a time was unbearable and his throat became parched with thirst. Finally, the temperature changed and Aamon knew that they had reached a higher altitude. He breathed a prayer of relief. If he only had something to drink and a bite to eat, the agony of the trip would not be so intense. He could endure the discomfort of cramped quarters, but when thirst and hunger were added, the misery taxed his power of endurance.

Shortly after noon, he became aware that the plane was nosing downward. He felt the contact of the landing gear with *terra firma*, and was happy that they were about to land. There was joy in his heart when the plane came to a complete stop and the motor was turned off. This meant that the occupants would probably be leaving the ship soon, but he was doomed to disappointment. They were at Beirut and were only stopping long enough to discharge one of their number and eat the lunch which was being brought to them by a caterer. Only this one man left the ship. He was to transact some business and await their return later in the week.

The fact that they were not stopping over at Beirut was discouraging, for this was a seaport controlled by the French Government, and he might have enlisted as a seaman with some shipping industry, or have worked his way to France to join their army. Every country in Europe needed soldiers.

In a few minutes the plane had taken off again and was proceeding on its way. The lunch which the other two men and the pilot were enjoying en route only added to his misery. As soon as they had gained the proper altitude and struck the air current they were to follow, the lunch was unpacked and divided. The aroma of baked ham and other edibles drifted back into the fuselage where Aamon was concealed and was tantalizing to say the least. The gurgle of the thermos jug and the clinking of glasses tempted him to throw precaution to the winds and make himself known, but

the fear of serious results controlled his better judgment. He did not want to be placed in a concentration camp, and for him to be found in the uniform of a Soviet airplane pilot meant just that. Certainly it could not help but complicate things, for how could he explain his presence on the ship? Europe was infested with spies, and they would naturally think that he was one of them.

Praying for sustaining grace to curb the desire to satisfy his physical needs, he laid down and turned his back upon the temptation to call for something to moisten his parched lips. He had seen a bottle of liquor near the small door when he passed through it to his place of concealment. This could be made to serve in the emergency, although he detested liquor in any form. He shuddered as he thought of the destruction of humanity that the Russian drink, vodka, had left in its wake. No, he did not want to drink that which had been such a curse.

He went to sleep for a few minutes, only to be aroused by the landing gear bumping along over another landing field. The plane settled down, taxied for some distance, and then came to a stop. Voices were shouting orders outside, and a porter came aboard to carry out some of the luggage. Apparently they were going to stop here for the night.

Aamon changed his position, turned around and proceeded feet foremost toward the opening where he had entered. Certain that the ship was deserted, he became somewhat reckless. He was determined that as soon as it was reasonably safe he would locate the thermos jug and quench his thirst. That opportunity never came, for the porter soon returned, and, in searching for additional luggage, he grabbed Aamon by the foot, thinking that he had discovered a stray shoe.

Naturally, Aamon recoiled in alarm, knowing that he had been discovered and that he would be obliged to face the consequences. He crawled out through the luggage compartment and stood erect in the aisle, facing the frightened porter.

“Where’s the thermos jug?” Aamon demanded.

The porter mumbled an apology in broken English, bowing profusely as he backed toward the cabin door.

“The water, drinking water! Where is the jug?”

“Here — here, sir!” said the frightened porter, pointing to the cockpit.

Fortunately, there was nearly a quart of water left, and as he hurriedly drank it to quench his intense thirst, the porter fled, uttering a cry of alarm.

A guard and several ground-attendants crowded around the open cabin door in great excitement. Everyone was trying to talk at the same time.

“Is there anyone here who can speak English?” Aamon asked with a smile. His disheveled hair, his dirty hands and face, with a great streak of grease across one cheek, his untied shoes, and his unbuttoned jumper and uniform, open at the neck, gave him the appearance of the typical stowaway, who had just emerged from an endurance test.

“Find someone that can talk English and I will explain,” he continued. “Where are the two men and the pilot who came in on the plane?”

The porter ran to the waiting room of the airport and returned with the stubby Englishman, whom Aamon immediately recognized as the man who had followed him from the coffee house in Ankara the day he had left Plock.

The crowd was still holding him at bay in the plane when the little Englishman, who was identified as the Baron, arrived and pushed his way through the crowd.

“Permit me to explain, sir—”

“Permit you to explain?” blustered the cocky Baron, trying to make a display of his authority. “Why, you—; I demand an explanation! How did you get here?”

“I came with you from the Turkish capital.”

“Ankara? A stowaway?”

“Right!”

“How? Why? Who are you?” he stormed.

“I am a deserter, a student pilot in the Soviet Air Corps. I didn’t like it and here I am,” Aamon answered meekly.

The pilot and the other passenger joined the circle.

“A deserter on our plane! What’s the meaning of this, Baron? Search him! You’ll find that he is a spy!” someone demanded.

“Search me, make any investigation you like. You’ll find that I speak the truth. I am a deserter, sick of communism, the”Five Year Plan, and everything else in Russia,” Aamon replied with feeling.

“But you’re not a Russian! You have perfect command of English, good enough to be an American,” said the Baron.

Aamon then gave a brief history of his past, explained how he came to leave America, his experience in Finland, and how he had deserted Plock and his Russian plane in Ankara.

Impressed with his apparent sincerity, the Baron resumed a normal attitude and listened carefully to what Aamon had to relate. He gave a low whistle of surprise when he mentioned how he had seen him in the courtyard of the coffee house talking to two other men, and how he had preceded him through the back entrance, intending to make his acquaintance later, if he could, because he was English and therefore considered a friend.

For some reason, Aamon had touched upon a subject that aroused the Baron's interest. His plea that he be taken as a prisoner and thoroughly investigated was unusual. Consequently, he was to be booked for entering the mandate of Syria illegally. His detention was a matter of necessary routine in which the French authorities would be interested, but the Baron did not want that. He had a personal reason for the investigation which he wished to carry on himself.

Aamon found himself in Damascus in custody of the Baron, and was told that his orders were to be obeyed implicitly. Protesting, Aamon was taken to the Baron's own hotel suite. There the porter had prepared his bath and arranged every possible convenience for his comfort. A tasty meal was awaiting them in the hotel room as soon as he had finished his toilet. During the time they were eating, in response to a liberal tip, the porter was sent to secure a moderately priced civilian garment that would fit Aamon. Without giving the reason, the Baron insisted that he must discard the uniform he was wearing.

Feeling like a new man, Aamon answered the many and varied questions that the Baron asked. He had nothing to conceal, and with some difficulty he convinced his host that he knew nothing whatever about the conversation that he had with his two friends, when he saw them together at Ankara; nor did he know anything about their discussion during the plane trip. As a stowaway, he had not been able to hear any of their conversation.

"I wish I knew how to convince you of my sincerity," Aamon declared with earnestness. "I am not a spy as I have repeatedly told you; neither am I interested in any kind of information, commercial or otherwise, that would help any of the warring nations. I am not in sympathy with the war. All I want to do is to get away from it, to go to some place in the world where folks are at peace with one another."

"Then you are a pacifist!" said the Baron, trying to trap him.

"No, I would be willing to fight for my country, if I had one—"

The Baron studied the ceiling, deep in thought, waiting for Aamon to volunteer more information.

“Or, I would fight for any country which had a just cause. I am not a pacifist in the sense of refusing to fight,” Aamon continued seriously; “my enlistment in the Soviet Air Corps proves that.”

“I’m wondering?”

“What do you want me to do? What can I do to convince you?” the young stowaway asked.

“That’s what I am wondering about; I must be certain.”

“Certain of what?”

“That you are honest.”

“Honest?”

“Yes, I want to be sure that you can be trusted.”

“My honor is the only thing I have to be trusted with. Trust me with that and give me my freedom and you will never have occasion for regret,” Aamon assured him.

“But that would never do in Damascus. I am your custodian here. You came in my plane. I have assumed responsibility for you. You cannot be released here in violation of the immigration rules. Smuggling aliens into the country is not my business,” the Baron elaborated forcibly.

“How far is it to the nearest border?”

“It’s about forty miles to Palestine, as the crow flies.”

“Then that’s easy! All you need to do is to make a circle around that way in your plane. In thirty minutes your troubles will be over, and all it will cost you is a little gas and one of your parachutes.”

The Baron’s eyes opened with curiosity.

“You no mean that you would take a chance on crossing the border in that way?” he inquired.

“Certainly! I did it in Finland. Why not in Palestine? I am willing if you are. And that is not all — no one will ever know that I ever saw you or your plane, unless your parachutes are marked,” Aamon assured him.

“That’s a bargain. We’ll get a night’s rest and drop you off when we leave in the morning at daylight,” said the Baron. “I am depending on one thing — that you will keep your mouth shut.”

“You never took a safer risk,” was Aamon’s rejoinder.

20. The Holy Land

IN THE TWILIGHT of early morning a parachute hovered over a tributary of the upper Jordan. A small lake into which this noted river emptied lay gray in the distance. The parachute, exceptionally large and carrying a friendless youth, settled slowly.

No one was ever more conscious of his failings than was Aamon. Released from the Baron's plane at a high elevation after crossing the border, he drifted southward in the open parachute. The first rays of the sun, not yet visible to the troubled world below, greeted him. Suspended between heaven and earth, he drifted along, following the river valley, the parachute reflecting the sun, so that it resembled a white cloud. The solitude of the occasion touched his soul as he continued to be held aloft. He had never had such an experience before, and seemingly he was never going to land. Suddenly, he was forcibly reminded that he was over the Holy Land — the land which Christ trod nearly two thousand years ago. Christ had ascended into the clouds, while he was descending from the clouds with the support of a parachute. He remembered that the apostles who had witnessed the ascension had been admonished to watch for the Lord's return.

“Why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”

He was filled with remorse, for he was not comparable to Christ, and it grieved him that he had even associated his descension with that of Christ's ascension. He felt so unworthy that the very comparison convicted him of sacrilege, as he thought of his own sin. But try as he would, he could not dismiss the thought from his mind. Shamefaced, he looked down ward and saw people from every direction running toward a small hilltop, watching and pointing upward — looking up in much the same manner as Christ's disciples had done nearly two thousand years before, as they beheld Christ taken up, until a cloud received Him out of their sight.

“Oh, wretched man that I am,” Aamon lamented as he watched the excited, awe-struck assembly. “Am I deceiving those who are looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ?” Just then the words of Jesus consoled him: “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

What could he say to a group so sadly in need of being prepared for the coming of the Lord? They did not realize their personal need of a Saviour, nor the need of the world in her multiplying perplexities. They did not know that Germany had invaded Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg with airplanes and the latest equipped parachute squadrons; nor that the greatest battle of all time, with death-dealing armies of destruction, was raging on the Western Front. They did not know that the only quarter Hitler offered humanity and civilization in this new World War was death; and that he had no other policy for anyone that opposed him.

Though his conscience rebuked him, Aamon was not sorry when his parachute drifted above the Jordan and crossed to the opposite side of the valley. He was motivated by conflicting desires, because he did not feel equal to meeting the anxious crowd that awaited him, and yet he longed to tell them of the Christ he had so recently learned to love. Not being able to console them, he felt that the Lord had dealt kindly with him, for now the river was a barrier to their continued pursuit of the parachute. He did not want to be accepted by the people in their superstitious unbelief, nor did he want to break any thread of faith, however small, that they might have in the appearance of the coming King.

Drifting across the valley, he prepared to land on a hillside, but the parachute was caught in a new current of air and carried over the top. The waters of Merom, often called Lake Huleh, disappeared and were left sparkling in the sunlight. He thought of the possibility of following the Jordan to the Sea of Galilee, some ten miles distant, but the treacherous descent of more than six hundred feet necessitated another course. Nor could he follow the Jordan in its flow of nearly seventy miles from Galilee to the Dead Sea.

The rough and rugged country of the Holy Land exceeded his conception. He little dreamed that it was so mountainous and treacherous. Certainly, there were unlimited opportunities for a hideout. His problem now was to avoid the unfriendly bands of Arabs that inhabited the land.

The parachute finally no settled of the shady hillside of a barren, rock-bound goat pasture. In order to keep from being dragged down the precipitous decline, Aamon kept his footing and raced along the upper edge, until the parachute became entangled in a scraggy growth of trees. The whole countryside presented a picture of devastation and desolation. A herd of goats, browsing among the shrubs, scampered out into the open and stood looking with amazement at the strange sight.

Truly, the word of the Lord was manifestly fulfilled: “For I will lay the land most desolate, and the pomp of her strength shall cease; and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate, that none shall pass through.”

The desolation of the land was evident on every hand. How life could exist in this barren waste was beyond Aamon’s comprehension! What a rebuke to a nation that had forgotten God! The judgment of sin had invoked a curse upon the land which cannot be removed until the personal reign of Christ upon earth. Ezekiel’s prophecy will yet be fulfilled: “And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. And I will make them and places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing. And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them. And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen, neither shall the beast of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and none shall make them afraid.”

But the law of selfishness in the sinful heart still dominates the human race. Wars and rumors of war have culminated in another world holocaust in preparation for the great tribulation which will follow the revival of the Roman Empire.

Yet this is the individual exhortation: “Seek ye the LORD__, ALL YE MEEK OF THE EARTH, ... SEEK RIGHTEOUSNESS, SEEK MEEKNESS: IT MAY BE THAT YE SHALL BE HID IN THE DAY OF THE __LORD’S anger.”

The day is too late for the nations who are catering to the law of selfishness to avert the catastrophe coming upon them, because they have defied God. The die has been cast! They still continue to disobey His law and to dishonor His name; and God is not mocked:—“Vengeance is mine, I

will repay, saith the Lord.” But to His own He has said: “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

World conditions and the battles that raged throughout Europe had as little effect upon Aamon’s plans for the future as they had upon the family of Arab peasants that occupied the tent at the lower end of the goat pasture. He came upon this forlorn family of eight or nine at the foot of the decline, a family living under an old, weather-beaten canvas, stretched from corner to corner between four upright posts. Another piece of canvas had been stretched around three sides, leaving the tent open in the front. Aamon visualized the use they might make of the enormous parachute that had served him so well. A whole new home, far superior to the dilapidated hovel of canvas that they now occupied, was possible.

Suddenly, he was struck with the idea of offering the parachute to the occupants of the tent as a peace offering, thinking that it might appease them for being on their land without permission. If the parachute was to remain where it had fallen, the goats would eventually destroy it. His real problem was to make the occupants understand his mission of good will. Being unable to talk Arabic, he felt sure he would have difficulty in selling himself as a friend.

He was about to turn and go around the tent, when a puppy came from the rear and commenced to bark. One after another of the occupants emerged from the tent to see the approaching stranger.

“Good morning, my good man,” Aamon ventured.

A jumble of excited voices greeted him. It was thoroughly evident that they did not understand English.

Aamon pointed to the hillside where he had landed, making gestures for one of them to follow him as he retraced his steps.

Thinking that one of his goats might be in distress, the sheik followed him, while the curious and suspicious members of his household ventured after him, Indian file, at a reasonably safe distance behind.

Still waving his arms and pointing, Aamon encouraged them to approach near enough so he could show them the parachute. Signaling as best he knew how to make them understand that he wanted to present the article to them as a gift, he backed away so that they might inspect it. Following a Arabic dialogue which meant nothing to Aamon, the sheik directed his older son to leave on a mission to a neighboring goat owner.

Off like a deer, the boy bounded down the path and disappeared over an adjoining hill, bounded by a narrow, treacherous ravine. In the meantime, the sheik directed his wife and children to gather up the parachute and take it to their place of abode. Not knowing whether he was considered a prisoner or not, Aamon accompanied them to await developments.

Within half an hour, a signal from the top of the opposite hill called their attention to a procession of several men, who were following the sheik's boy down a winding trail. After they had crossed the ravine and approached the tent, Aamon noticed that an old, white-whiskered man was carrying a black bag which seemed to be the center of attraction. Everyone was talking at once and asking him questions, which he was trying to answer as he hurried along.

"They tell me you speak English," wheezed the old man with a distinct Jewish accent.

"Yes, sir," Aamon replied, taken by surprise.

"Englishman?" panted the aged Jew.

"American," said Aamon, without thinking about the complications involved concerning his nationality.

"When you come from America?" the old man asked.

Aamon answered indirectly, giving a brief history of how he had arrived and what his purpose was in Europe.

"But when you come here?"

Interrupting the old gentleman, Aamon explained his presence and his purpose in calling attention to the abandoned parachute.

The faces of the Arab family lit up with smiles, when they realized that they were to be given the material that could be utilized in constructing a new home.

To his surprise, Aamon learned that the old gentleman with the flowing white beard was a Jewish rabbi who had fled from Poland, and for months had been working his way toward Jerusalem. He had been befriended by an Arab family who felt kindly toward him because of their Jewish connection by intermarriage. The wife of this sheik had a strain of Jewish blood in her veins, leading back to a purebred Jewish grandmother, and the old rabbi had been able to capitalize upon this fact.

That night Aamon had a new experience as he slept under an Arab tent alongside the aged Jewish rabbi. Bedfellows for the night, they were to be companions in a weary jaunt on the morrow, making their way to the

historic city of the promised land. Why he should go there, Aamon did not know, other than it promised a place of refuge. If he were a Jew, he had a right to be there. Oh, if he only knew the secret contained in the little black diary of the Bartons.

The old man slept peacefully, while Aamon restlessly awaited the dawn, when they were to suffer the hardships of trekking southward together. As for the rabbi, he was looking for a port of hope, where he might spend his declining years in peace. They were two of the vast multitude who had been called for a purpose known to God, but still unknown by them.

“I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. . . . Fear not; for I am with thee; I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him. . . . I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour.”

Yet the dictators are waging another World War for supremacy, unwittingly shaping the boundaries of the nations of Europe according to the Bible prophecies, which outline the new Roman Empire and the Great Northern Confederacy. Blind leaders of the blind that see not!

At daylight the following morning, the Arabian family watched the rabbi and his young friend depart, each carrying a lunch which had been given him from their meager store. The good lady of the household bade them goodbye and wished them Godspeed with tears in her eyes. She watched them as they wound their way from the valley to the adjoining hillside, and then disappeared. With a heavy heart she reentered her tent, thinking of the traditions which she had learned at her grandfather's knee and which she had cherished since childhood.

“The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

“When shall these things be?” she asked o'er and o'er, and the question troubled her. The land was full of refugees, but none came with singing. Few exhibited any evidence of joy. Certainly, sorrow and sighing had not departed. She still awaited the day when “the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.”

Oh, the folly of seeking consolation apart from the promises of God!

Progress was slow and toilsome for these two travelers, as they made their way over the rough, uneven country, blanched for centuries by the winds of adversity. That night they found a place of rest on a mountainside, overlooking the Sea of Galilee. Beyond it lay the city of Tiberias, adjacent to the historical site where the Lord fed the five thousand.

Too weary to talk, the two refugees lay under the stars and slept. To the rabbi, the fact that they were following a path that Jesus had often trod meant nothing. To Aamon, there was a thrill of consolation which brought him into closer communion with his Lord. The memory of His having lived in that land made Him nearer and dearer.

After a night of peaceful sleep, they were ready to resume their journey along the road that led to the least among cities, Nazareth, where the Master worked as a carpenter. The evening of the third day found them camped on the river Kishon, near the ancient site of Megiddo in the Valley of Jezreel, and across the plain to the east rose Mount Tabor which they had passed that morning.

“The battlefield of the great battles of the Old Testament,” the aged rabbi remarked at sundown, surveying the plain.

“And ll the future’s greatest battle of a time,” Aamon reminded him.

“Behold, the day of the LORD __ COMETH,” MUSED THE RABBI, REPEATING A VERSE FROM ZECHARIAH. ”FOR I WILL GATHER ALL NATIONS AGAINST JERUSALEM TO BATTLE. . . THEN SHALL THE __LORD go forth, and fight against those nations.”

“When the allied armies of the world are about to take Jerusalem!” declared Aamon.

“And he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked,” continued the rabbi, absentmindedly.

“Yes,” Aamon interrupted, “it looks quite serene and peaceful here tonight, but when the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD, and against His anointed, twenty-four hours will greatly change the picture.”

“Isaiah’s prophecy shall be fulfilled when the land shall be soaked with blood, for the LORD has declared:”The day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come,” the rabbi quoted by way of comment.

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! What prophet could have fore seen the value of this plain as a landing field on which the allied armies of Satan shall one day mass the greatest array of airplanes and implements of modern warfare of all time! In twenty-four hours all the airplanes in Europe and the Near East, and possibly in the whole world, with the vast enlargement in modern production, could be gathered here,” Aamon elaborated.

“Yet the LORD shall have them in derision. In their folly they shall be the laughing stock of the most High,” of the old man chuckled in scorn. ““Why do the nations rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?””

Aamon was touched with emotion.

“But it is not the way of the world to serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling,” said Aamon.

““O LORD__ GOD, TO WHOM VENGEANCE BELONGETH: O GOD, TO WHOM VENGEANCE BELONGETH, SHOW THY SELF,” THE AGED RABBI WAILED. ”LIFT UP THYSELF, THOU JUDGE OF THE EARTH: RENDER A REWARD TO THE PROUD. __LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?””

Aamon watched the old man as he struggled with his emotions. It was evident that his feelings ran deep. Unquestionably, he had been a thorough student in the Word of God as touching the prophecies in the Old Testament scriptures. What a pity that he was not as well versed in the New Testament! What a light it would throw upon prophecy — prophecy that he now saw through a glass darkly, prophecy that puzzled him as one without hope; and so Aamon ventured aloud:

“The only hope for the world is the Messiah.”

“Ah!” the rabbi’s face brightened with understanding.

Aamon watched the expression of joy which spread over his features, revealing the love that he cherished in his heart for the letter of the Mosaic law.

“The Messiah? Ah, the Messiah! He is our only hope!” he repeated in adoration.

“He is our peace and bringeth tranquility to the soul, when once you know Him,” Aamon elaborated.

“Know Him! How can you know Him until He comes — until you meet Him?” the rabbi interrupted seriously.

“Having met Him, I know Him! He is my peace! ‘Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous

judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

The old rabbi stood perplexed.

“Do you love His appearing?” Aamon asked seriously.

“The Messiah?”

“Yes.”

“Ah!”

“Do you love the appearing of your Messiah, my Messiah? Your Christ, my Christ?”

“Your Christ, my Messiah?” the old man repeated slowly.

“One and the same! Your Messiah, your Hope! He is the Passover Lamb which was sacrificed for the sin of the whole world,” said Aamon.

“No! No! Not that; God forbid!” the rabbi recoiled in horror.

“God cannot forbid a fact. Truth must prevail! Christ is the propitiating sacrifice for your sins and mine,” Aamon enlightened him in reverent humility.

“Christ, the Messiah?”

“The very same! Why longer reject Him? Can’t you see that He is the perfect sacrifice for sin, to which the Passover and the Old Testament scriptures point? He was chosen at the last official Passover as the Lamb of God without blemish. Can’t you see in Christ the literal fulfillment of the types? He was chosen on the tenth day of the first month of the Jewish calendar and kept separate until the fourteenth day, in keeping with the Mosaic law. Then came the hour when He fulfilled the demands of the broken law by His sacrifice upon the cross, and yet not a bone was broken, as had been prophesied. Can’t you see that the death of Jesus was not an accident, but the fulfillment of the law to the last jot and tittle?”

Spellbound, the old man stroked his long, white beard in silence. Aamon’s ability in explaining familiar passages of Scripture astonished him.

“Jesus, the Messiah!” he finally exclaimed, breaking the silence. “Jesus, the Messiah? It cannot be! That — that would make us Jews guilty of murder. Murdering our Messiah? Never!”

“No, not guilty of His murder. He had power to lay down His life and He had power to take it again. You unwittingly chose Him as the perfect Passover sacrifice. Guilty of His murder, no! But you are guilty of rejecting Him,” Aamon explained with sympathetic feeling.

“My God! My God!” wailed the old man, trembling under conviction.
“It cannot be! It cannot be!”

“The proof is in the Word of God. Compare the Old and New Testament scriptures. Trace Christ through prophecies and find why the Passover was kept for a definite purpose, and you will have infallible proof that Jesus Christ is your rejected Messiah.”

“Oh, my God, my God! Charge not this sin to my account!” exclaimed the aged rabbi, falling upon his face.

Aamon, too, in sympathetic humility, joined him in prayer, laying upon his face in the dust of the predestined plain of the world’s last battle, where the war lords of satanic majesties are to fall in defeat under the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

21. An Ensign for the Nations

WORN, WEARY, and meeting with rebuke on every hand, the two travelers wended their way from hamlet to hamlet toward Jerusalem. Their progress was slow. They were not in a hurry; they had no occasion to be; for time, as far as they were concerned, was an element of unlimited resource. Yet they plodded on, uncertain what the next hour might bring forth.

Occasionally, Aamon found it necessary to leave his aged companion on the outskirts of some village, while he went ahead to make meager purchases. He still had a handful of francs that the Baron had given him on the morning he left his plane in a parachute. At Samaria he purchased some food and was returning to his companion, when a ragged urchin approached, bearing a basket of notions. Sensing that Aamon was a stranger, he followed along by his side, anxious to make a sale. Finally, in despair at Aamon's repeated refusals to buy, the lad produced a blue-covered copy of the New Testament, written especially for the Jews. Aamon had never seen one like it — a special prophetic edition, published in English. Some traveler, no doubt, had lost it, or possibly discarded it, or perhaps had given it to some Jewish refugee to interest him in the gospel. Regardless of its origin, of how it came to be in the hands of the ragged lad, he wanted it. It was food for his soul. He had not seen a Bible for such a long time that he would gladly have given all the rations he had bought and a he possessed for it. Spiritual life was more to be desired than physical life. Trembling with emotion, he drew forth his last coin.

"It's all I have," he said.

"Ah," the lad gasped in surprise, reaching for the coin.

Fearing that Aamon might repent of the purchase, the urchin took the coin, thrust the little volume into his hand, and hastened away.

"Can it be possible? A New Testament in Palestine?" Aamon exclaimed in amazement.

Amused at the antics of the boy, who was running down the street as though pursued by evil spirits, he watched him until he disappeared in a

cloud of dust; and then he made his way through the outskirts of the village toward an olive grove where the aged rabbi was awaiting him. There they prepared and ate their evening meal, and remained for the night. The next day they would traverse some of the thirty miles which lay between them and Jerusalem.

Trudging along in contentment, and carrying enough supplies to answer their needs for another day, Aamon let his mind dwell upon the history of Palestine. There was always something to be thankful for! How strange that when one's soul is in tune with God, it takes so little to cause peace of mind and joy of heart!

At any rate, he was not motivated in thought by his own problems or by the problems of the world, which never before in history had been so distressing. His thoughts were upon the lowly Nazarene and the little blue-covered book which recorded His life and teachings, His death and resurrection. Somehow, the warmth of it all seemed to stimulate faith in the restoration of mankind. It inspired him with new hope. He was traveling along the same highway as was traversed by his Lord, rejoicing in spirit, and he was going with Him in spirit to Jerusalem — back where nearly two thousand years before He had declared, "I am the Way," and the world received Him not. Expressing his thoughts in a monologue, Aamon emphasized the divinely inspired creed of the Nazarene with dramatic gestures as he walked along.

"He is still pleading, standing at the crossroads of this dark hour of despair, and saying: 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but my me.' His invitation is extended to all.

"To a world gaunt with hunger, greed, selfishness, hatred, war and sin, He offers everlasting sustenance: 'I am the Bread of life.'

"In the darkest blackout, He enlightens humanity in its crucial hour with this assurance: 'I am the Light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.'

"To those in chaos and sin, groping through the dark alleys of life in search of hope, He beckons: 'I am the Door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.'

"To the wanderer, lost, forlorn and forgotten, His exhortation is: 'I am the Good Shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.'

"To those facing the end of this life be physical death, He offers the hand of hope, assuring them of His promise: 'I am the Resurrection and the Life:

he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.”

“Whatever you need, the risen Christ can supply it! Why not receive Him and live? It’s not religion that is vital, it is life,” he assured himself, ending the soliloquy. His aged companion listened attentively, but still needed to be brought to the full knowledge of Jesus as his Messiah and Lord.

After the evening meal had been eaten, it was too dark to read; therefore it was impossible for Aamon to take advantage of the New Testament he had purchased and the opportunity which he had anticipated of explaining portions of Scripture to his companion.

Too tired to engage in a general conversation, they lay down side by side and slept until daylight. The ancient city, built on a hill three hundred feet high, also slumbered in its traditional custom. Twenty-three miles west, beyond a range of rolling hills, the waves of the Mediterranean Sea lapped the shore.

The landscape had a strange charm, vastly different no from the goat pasture of which Aamon had first set foot. Here, at the setting of the sun, a dreamy mist no hid the ruggedness of the barren hills, while of the lower slope numerous fruit orchards decked the hill y tops and were daily invigorated be the moisture blown in from the sea.

When they awoke the next morning, the first rays of the sun were creeping through the top of a fig orchard on an adjacent hill. Taking advantage of early morning travel, they did not wait to partake of any breakfast, for it could not be eaten while they were en route.

The day proved to be one of those typical days in Palestine when the atmosphere is transparent and invigorating. On their left, miles in the distance, the mountain ranges stood out like a painted picture. Below them on the right, the tops of the pomegranate, peach, apple, and olive orchards appeared on the rolling hills, as a vast green carpet with varying shades.

“Just a mere token of what God’s promises hold for the future,” Aamon remarked, as he pointed toward the landscape.

““Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates,”” the aged rabbi quoted. “His promise includes it all.”

““The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose,”” Aamon reassured him.

“Oh, God, if I could but live to see the coming of the Messiah.”

“Christ!” Aamon interrupted. “He must first be recognized. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people.”

“Ah!”

““And Jehovah shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.””

“Ah!” The aged rabbi injected the interruption, beginning to see light.

“Jesus is that ensign, your rejected Messiah.”

“I see it, O Lord! I have continually sinned against Thee in unbelief. Have mercy, O God, upon my soul,” he lamented.

“Jesus is your Messiah and Saviour,” Aamon whispered, drawing him to his knees beside him, while the old man looked up into the heavens through the branches of a roadside olive tree where they had stopped to rest, and prayed.

Aamon joined him in prayer, and quoted Isaiah 53:4-6, “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

Trembling with emotion, the aged rabbi was deep in thought until Aamon quoted another passage of Old Testament scripture, written especially for the Jew, which he found among those that prefaced the New Testament purchased at Samaria:

““Thus saith the Lord GOD __, BEHOLD, I WILL LIFT UP MY HAND TO THE GENTILES, AND SET UP MY STANDARD TO THE PEOPLE: AND THEY SHALL BRING THY SONS IN THEIR ARMS, AND THY DAUGHTERS SHALL BE CARRIED UPON THEIR SHOULDERS. AND KINGS SHALL BE THY NURSING FATHERS, AND THEIR QUEENS THY NURSING MOTHERS: THEY SHALL BOW DOWN TO THEE WITH THEIR FACE TOWARD THE EARTH, AND LICK UP THE DUST OF THY FEET; AND THOU SHALL KNOW THAT I AM THE __ LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.””

“Jesus is my Messiah — my Saviour,” said the rabbi reverently.

“Yes, and when He returns, we who wait for Him shall not be put to shame. What a privilege we have of accepting Him as our personal Saviour

now, and of knowing that He accepts us; that we are born into His kingdom before He returns; and that we two Jews should choose Him and love Him, because He first chose us and loved us!”

“I shall not longer be ashamed of the gospel of Christ,” said the reborn rabbi with a shining face. Straightway he arose, and they proceeded on their way toward Jerusalem with a new joy in their hearts.

As they walked along together with hearts that were agreed, they rejoiced in this new understanding of Jesus, and Aamon read various portions from the New Testament to prove the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. The Word of God became a living reality to the rabbi for the first time. The dark passages of Scripture that he had stumbled over in his unbelief were now scintillating with new power and life. Two days later, with God’s promises to comfort and sustain them, they found themselves near the Holy City.

Jerusalem is the one city that every Jew longs to see —the city divinely chosen by God as the future capital of the world, and to which the Jews will soon return. When converted to Christ Jesus they will be a blessing to all nations during the millennial age, when Christ shall reign in power and great glory.

When they reached the city, they found it tense with excitement. What would happen to it as a result of the new World War was of vital concern! The spectacular German drive across Belgium and northern France, and the capture of channel ports, had given the Nazi forces strategic advantage. The outlook was dark, particularly for the Jews. Should the threatened invasion of England prove successful, the Palestine mandate might become the object of barter, and fall under the control of the Romans.

This was the first authentic news that Aamon had received since he had landed in Palestine by means of a parachute from the Baron’s plane, and gave him some indication as to how the tide of battle might turn. With the Germans in control of the channel port of Calais, twenty miles across from the chalk cliffs of Dover, their position for twisting the proverbial tail of the British lion was perfect. What would be the outcome? Did the headlines of the morning papers disclose that the real purpose of this war was to bring about the fulfillment of prophecy? Would the final shaping of the revived Roman Empire take place at this time? How long would it be before Palestine became subject to the heel of the great boot of the Mediterranean?

Surely the ghost of the Caesars lurked in the shadows, haunting her in this dark hour of world history.

No doubt the world situation was gravel Clouds of despair hovered over and threatened the entire civilization. But Aamon had his own problems to consider. Where was his next meal coming from? How was he going to maintain an existence? Now that he was at Jerusalem, what was he going to do next? He meditated upon this matter for some time.

“I am not a beggar,” he insisted, studying his own situation. “I cannot beg. The beggars are already thicker than flies.”

“Where will you get work?” the question taunted him.

“I certainly can’t beg with all this competition here,” he smiled at the thought.

Then his mind was directed to other channels. A vision of Osa flashed before him. He had not written to her as he had promised, and perhaps she had located his people.

“The next thing is to find the post office,” he assured himself, fully resolved that his first duty was to write Osa. He could give a general delivery address at Jerusalem and wait for her reply. In the meantime, he would find some way to earn a living.

At y the post office he was accosted be a recruiting officer, soliciting volunteers for the British Army. Reluctant to reveal his past, he talked of generalities and inquired about the service, for he did not want them to know that he had been in the Russian Army. If they knew, he might be accused of belonging to the undesirable fifth column, who did their deadly work from within. To throw off suspicion, he talked of joining the navy, for he liked that service better. Recently he had come to that conclusion, and he wanted to know where he could go to get more information. A crowd had gathered to listen, for war was a popular subject. Several expressed their desire to volunteer, which gave Aamon the opportunity to slip on into the post office.

Here the fact dawned upon him that he had no money to buy either paper or stamps. A lady, sensing his predicament, engaged him in conversation and volunteered to give him a sheet of paper on which to write his letter. Ashamed to ask her for a stamp, he lingered over his writing until she had taken care of some business and left. Then he closed his letter to Osa with painstaking care. He wanted to express himself clearly in seeking information that he desired. This done, he folded the paper, placed it in his

pocket, and joined the crowd outside who were listening to the recruiting officer.

To add interest, the officer was giving a resumé of the latest news bulletin from the front. The Belgium king had unconditionally surrendered, and his country and that portion of the army which he still controlled had joined forces with Germany. The English and French armies needed more men. Great Britain was being oppressed by a stubborn foe. Her relentless Nazi enemy now occupied the whole waterfront across the English channel. It was expedient that every available recruit be sent to the front.

Aamon was at the point of yielding, for here was an opportunity for him to be sure of something to eat and a place to sleep. Besides, if he joined the British Army, he would be nearer Osa and his people.

Then he was confronted with the fact that he might not be sent to England. More than likely he would go to France, or perhaps some Balkan frontier. Nobody knew when nor where Germany's next "*blitzkrieg*" might occur. There was no assurance that he could join the army and go anywhere near Finland. In fact, that was the one place in Europe that he was least apt to be sent.

No, his idea of joining the navy was best. Then he might possibly reach the coast of Norway or some port on the Baltic Sea, which would bring him nearer Osa.

Drifting away from the crowd, he fell in step with a Salvation Army officer. Here was someone in whom he could confide, someone who would mail his letter.

"Thinking of joining the army?" asked the adjutant, opening the conversation.

"I was wondering about service in the navy," Aamon replied casually.

"One should honor God and country, regardless of the times or the hardships," said the adjutant. "God first, amidst all this darkness, and then country. There is no joy like serving in the Army of the Lord."

"I have found that real joy comes in expecting Christ to go before me into the battle," Aamon replied modestly.

"You are a Jew, are you not?" came the cautious inquiry.

"Why do you ask?"

"You talk like a Christian. Few Jews have found the Christ. Do you — do you know Him as your own personal Saviour?" stammered the adjutant in surprise.

“Christ is the only friend that I have in the world. There is no other to whom I can turn.”

“No one can have a better friend,” the adjutant assured him; “but few are the Jews who know Him.”

“I am not denying that I am a Jew, neither do I affirm it. The fact is, I don’t know definitely, for I don’t know who I am,” said Aamon gravely. “The only thing that I am sure of is that Jesus Christ is my personal Saviour.”

“Then, whether Jew or Gentile, you need not be ashamed of Him.”

“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, nor of the fact that I am probably Jewish,” Aamon declared with confidence.

“You have every right to feel happy that you are one chosen of God, both in natural birth and in rebirth as a Christian,” said the adjutant. “I am interested in your past, fascinated in fact to meet one so highly favored. Won’t you please come to our headquarters with me? I should like to talk with you.”

Tears of gratitude came into Aamon’s eyes and ran down his cheeks. God had not forgotten him. This was His way of supplying his immediate need. His heart overflowed with thanksgiving. Again the grace of God had proven sufficient.

22. A Man of Mystery

MY PEOPLE have changed their glory for that which doth not profit."

Such was Aamon's conception of Jerusalem. Ceremonial worship was much in evidence. The gospel was preached, but having little effect, apparently. People everywhere were running to and fro, seeking strange gods. Traditions were capitalized upon and eulogized, but the people made a mockery of Christ. Menpleasers were giving lip service to God in a fever of false faith.

"A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps." Aamon had no better reason than this for being in the Holy City. He was in Jerusalem without a specific purpose in mind, but he felt that the Lord had directed his steps. He could do no better than wait upon the Lord that he might know the course he was to pursue.

However, in the matter of duty, he was between two fires. The adjutant was returning to Egypt in the near future, and had asked him to go there with him. The logical thing was for him to accept his invitation to accompany him. He would be sure of a place to stay and enough to eat, as long as he was loyal to the cause of the Salvation Army. It was a surprise to him that they did not maintain an Army Corps in Palestine. The adjutant's mission at Jerusalem was merely to make another survey concerning the advisability of opening a corps in the Holy Land.

Aamon reflected upon the cold, indifferent attitude of the citizenry of Jerusalem; nevertheless, he decided to remain there. He did not wish to leave his good friend, the rabbi, for he felt a responsibility for his welfare. Then, perhaps he could more readily prepare for definite Christian work, if he were to continue to operate as he had in the past. Also, he wished to await a reply from Osa. This, he secretly hoped, would direct his future. No one but the adjutant and the rabbi knew his exact status. Here he was looked upon as one of the many outcasts from Germany. As a Jewish refugee he could join the army or navy with few questions being asked. No Jew loved Germany. Great Britain needed him to defend her far-flung shores.

He meditated upon his duty. He had no established country to fight for. If he served under the British flag, it would have to be by adoption. He would keep his American connections a secret, as well as his service in the Soviet Air Force. No one would suspect him, a Christian Jew, of having been attached to the air corps of Russia.

Therefore, he waited impatiently for a letter from Finland, the land of tragedy — tragedy that was spreading and engulfing the whole of northern Europe. Oh, the tragedy of war in its wave of destruction — tragedy that interfered with all forms of service and commercial enterprise. Would his letter reach its destination? There was no assurance of it. It was doubtful if he would ever receive a reply.

But hope born in the heart keeps it inspired. It burned within Aamon's soul and gave him new courage. It invigorated him with the desire to secure food and raiment for himself and for his aged companion. Therefore, he became unusually active, searching for an opportunity to earn enough to meet their living expenses.

Suitable quarters for the aged rabbi were secured with a small mission that was struggling for existence amid the cold, hardhearted Arabs and Jews of Jerusalem, who made up the majority of its citizenry.

The transformation that took place in the conduct and conversation of the old man was striking. He seemed to take on a new lease of life. To redeem the time and to compensate for the wasted years of his life was his sole ambition. He watched daily for the second coming of the Messiah. His daily work among his fellow men was to preach the risen Christ and Him crucified.

He was a new creature in Christ Jesus, and his personal appearance disclosed his change of heart. The sordid memories of the past were hidden in the new joys of the present. His flowing beard and snow-white hair ennobled his appearance. Seemingly, he was enshrined with a glory that few Christians attain.

The persecutions that he was called upon to endure among his own people only humbled him. Like Paul, he could do all things through Christ who gave him daily strength. He had discovered the Light of the world. His few remaining years were to be spent in witnessing and bearing the torch before others. He was willing to endure a hardships for the glory of Christ.

Aamon found it practically impossible to procure regular employment, but by learning the places of interest and historic value in the city, he was

able to pick up odd pieces of change by serving the tourists and others. He made it his specific duty to learn more about Solomon's temple and the sepulchre of Christ. He visited Calvary, the Mount of Olives, the pools of Siloam and Bethesda. He knew the traditional history of the three walls, who built them, and how they were destroyed. The story of Crassus, who plundered the temple and carried away treasure from the city in excess of ten million dollars, was a fascinating topic, outlining the ancient glory and splendor of Solomon's reign. His main objective was to be versed in the truth of Scriptures and its application to present-day conditions.

In the meantime, the adjutant returned to the land of the pyramids. Before leaving, however, he tried again to persuade Aamon to return with him and join the Salvation Army Corps at Cairo; but Aamon was reluctant to leave Jerusalem, thinking he might miss a letter from Osa. However, the adjutant pointed out that it would be better for him to go to Egypt, for his mail could be forwarded there and the opportunity for locating his people through the Salvation Army was much greater. They had several corps in Germany, Finland and the Scandinavian countries, which would leave no stone unturned in a service of this kind. Then there was the remote possibility that he might be sent to Finland sometime in the future should he join the Army.

However, immediate action was what Aamon wanted. He couldn't afford to wait upon a course of training in the Salvation Army in order to qualify to go to Finland. No, that might take years. He wanted of to go back there as soon as it was possible. He longed to see Osa and to find out what she had learned about his people. The reflection occasioned a feeling of homesickness that he neither recognized nor understood, yet it continually kept his mind on Finland. To reach there he would attempt to run the gauntlet, if the opportunity arose, and neither the naval blockade, nor army and airplane forces, could prevent him from trying. Anything would be better than waiting there indefinitely.

Moreover, there was a fascinating appeal in Jerusalem — something about that city which held him. The Jewish population, made up of refugees from other lands, furnished a pathetic background. The stories of their horrifying experiences, which they had endured before escaping, were vivid with the color of fiction. The atrocities of anti-Semitic hate were incredible. What hope had civilization, motivated by such satanic Venom?

Catering to the tourists not only supplied Aamon's temporal needs, but also kept his thought off his troubles. Although competition was very keen and worked continually to his disadvantage, he made the best of every opportunity. From his contact with tourists, merchants and world travelers that passed through the city daily, he learned that there was a special place that he could fill. Since no one catered to a clientele of fundamental Christians, he would endeavor to serve them. He left to his competitors those lacking in the knowledge of the fundamentals of the Christian faith. Because he was not an established, recognized citizen, he needed to take the humble place. This worked materially to his advantage.

He was surprised to find that the average guide knew very little of the attributes of Christ and the need He came to fill in the world as Saviour. They were interested only from a business angle, and were not concerned in what anyone believed or practiced. Versed only in the ritualistic history of Christ, their efforts were spent in seeking to entertain. Realizing this, Aamon tried to avoid infringing upon what they claimed to be their business privileges. In catering to tourists who were Christians it was different. His knowledge of the Bible had an appeal which they immediately recognized by showing their desire to select him as their guide.

The aged rabbi was often found at Aamon's side. His expositions of Old Testament prophecies pertaining to Christ were remarkable. This illuminated the New Testament and provided him with a fund of knowledge that few new-born Christians obtain. Oh, if all Jews could only visualize the gospel as he saw it! He knew that it contains the hope that their souls hunger for, yet in their unbelief they see it not. They little realize that without Christ they are facing eternal despair, and yet they cling to that which the world has to offer, and struggle to surmount the obstacles confronting them, unaware that they have reached the precipice of destruction, and are fighting against the Semitic hatred. Christ, their Messiah, remains their only hope, and yet they continue to shun Him.

Aamon's heart ached for them as he saw them blinded by traditional theories, ritualistic paganism, and unbelief. What a contrast to the pastors, men of letters, and Christian laymen, all well versed in the Word of God, whom he met on the common ground of fellowship, who talked a familiar language, under stood each other, trusted one another as friends, and knew Christ as a personal Saviour.

How strikingly different this was from the mystic chant of paganism which most of the guides employed. It was different from those who have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof; different from the mystic rites to which Jews and Mohammedans still cling. Nor were they the exception. Other religious sects and cults had their forms of worship that deny the power of Christ, clinging to their own bootstraps, trying to lift themselves out of the mire of sin and unbelief.

“From such deliver me,” Aamon prayed one evening, as he made his way alone toward the Mount of Olives.

He had endured a trying day of criticism, abuse and personal rebuff. The power of Satan seemed to be in full force against him. The avalanche of ridicule to which he had been subjected nearly crushed him. He had tried to find a place of solitude in the Garden of Gethsemane where he could pray and commune with God, but the night was hot and sultry, and the garden overcrowded; so he walked on, studying the stars, burdened with a heavy heart.

“The LORD__ IS MY LIGHT AND MY SALVATION; WHOM SHALL I FEAR? THE __LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” came to him as a consolation from God’s Word.

The whole psalm brought encouragement as he read it, and when he reached the summit of the Mount of Olives he dropped upon his knees.

“LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honor dwelleth,” he prayed. “Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins. Consider mine enemies; for they are many. O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee.”

Peace came to his soul, and rest to his tired, worn body. He slept!

It was nearing midnight when he awoke. He heard someone close by agonizing in a prayer of repentance. The voice seemed to have a familiar ring. Where had he heard that identifying articulation? Surely, it belonged to someone whom he knew.

“Who can he be?” Aamon reflected. Whoever the person was, the consciousness of sin had gripped him. Aamon was so moved by the pathos in his petition, that he arose and debated what he should do. Although convinced that he knew the voice, he would not eavesdrop in order to make sure. However, he could wait, and possibly he might have an opportunity to speak to this one who was so greatly burdened and distressed.

Just then the man discovered that there was another present, and hurried away. It was too dark for Aamon to distinguish his features, but there was something familiar about his walk. He was puzzled.

“The least I can do is to follow,” he resolved, falling in behind him; but the faster he walked, the more determined was the person ahead of him not to be overtaken. Finally, Aamon gave up the chase and followed along leisurely, thinking that at least he could locate the place where this stranger was stopping. Perhaps he was someone whom he had met in Europe.

He let his mind travel back to his association with Plock. He thought that possibly it might be Dr. Zukerman. He wondered about the Baron, and where he and his English-speaking friends were located. He thought of those whom he had met on the boat. He recalled the German lad that he had met in Warsaw. The soldiers, sailors, airplane pilots, and mechanics that he had contacted were also considered. Then he let his mind drift back to his school days, to his experiences in America, to Ted, detective Olson, and those whom he had know there. The memory of his prison sentence and those who were with him in jail flashed before him. Still he could not associate this man with any of them. He was not satisfied. This stranger must have been a former acquaintance somewhere. Could it be one of his school chums, or one of the Barton boys who had disowned him as a brother? No, he thought that he would know any one of that number anywhere!

Upon reaching the city, the man he was following suddenly disappeared. He stopped to see if a light would appear in one of the homes nearby, but nothing happened.

Aamon was surprised and puzzled. The events of the evening struck him as peculiar. The more he thought about them, the more certain he was that this man knew him, or at least would know him, if they were to meet face to face. He wondered if this stranger had purposely evaded him because of his former acquaintance.

For several days Aamon visited the place where the man had disappeared. When nothing came out of this, he went back to the Garden of Gethsemane and to the Mount of Olives, thinking that he might chance to run onto him again, but he was doomed to disappointment.

Thus the course of events continued until late one Sunday afternoon when he had occasion to meet the aged rabbi by appointment. The rabbi had contacted a party of archaeologists while on the Mount of Olives the week

previous, and knew that they expected to be back on this particular date. He wanted Aamon to meet them, give his Christian testimony, and hear of their experiences in the Holy Land. They had traveled extensively, and had placed their scientific approval upon every word of the Bible from cover to cover. It was a real opportunity to have fellowship with them, and an occasion that he could not afford to miss.

When they arrived, they learned that several in the party had left. One of their number became ill and it was necessary that he be taken into the city. They were informed, however, that they were coming back, and if the aged rabbi and his companion chose to wait, they would be pleased to keep their appointment.

Inasmuch as there was nothing unusual in such an arrangement, Aamon was glad to wait. It was often necessary to accommodate tourists and travelers in this way, and the people appreciated this courtesy. Usually such people were generous with their tips.

Leaving the old man seated upon a rock, Aamon wandered to the very summit where he could see the surrounding landscape and watch the sunset. Below him on the westward slope a man and woman were seated with their backs toward him. The woman was reading from an open Bible which lay in her lap. The man looked up and for a moment stood horrified.

“No! No! No!” he cried; “God will never, never, never forgive me!”

She uttered a sympathetic appeal and tried to quiet him by directing his thoughts into other channels.

“Look!” he exclaimed, his eyes fairly bulging from their sockets. “Look! God only haunts me!”

Gently, she tried to persuade him to be seated.

“Look! Look! His ghost, I tell you!” he cried, tearing at his hair in mad despair and bolting down the hillside.

The echo of his pitiful cry rang in Aamon’s ears as he watched him flee.

“He haunts me! He haunts me! God will never forgive me!” burst from the lips of the mysterious stranger, whom Aamon had found again only to lose.

23. The Lord's Doing

AAMON stood spellbound, watching the fleeing man. He couldn't believe his eyes. Was it possible that he recognized him? He must be mistaken, and yet he knew him as no other upon the face of the earth.

When the man disappeared, Aamon's thought turned to the woman who had called after her companion.

She stood with bowed head in silent prayer. One could see that she was deeply moved. Quietly, she turned to discover Aamon's presence.

A tense moment, then their eyes met in recognition.

"Aamon!"

"Jeanne!"

Embracing each other, they both wept for joy. It was a time when emotion overcame them; words were inadequate to express their feelings. The joy of having their prayers answered left them speechless.

The inexpressible delight that surged through their souls was beyond their comprehension. The present world around them was forgotten, nor could they explain the trance-like ecstasy which filled them through and through.

Completely overcome in a state of bliss, they clung to each other, letting the tide of emotion subside until they found their voices.

"Am I dreaming?" she managed to whisper.

"A — a dream," he stammered, folding her in his arms and showering her with kisses.

She offered no resistance, but wept for joy.

"No, Jeanne, it certainly is not a dream; we're—"

"We're in Jerusalem," she interrupted.

"On the Mount of Olives together."

"Together?"

"Yes."

"Together," she murmured. "God has brought it to pass."

"Yes," Aamon replied, deeply moved. "God has been gracious — to us."

“And answered every prayer — except—”

“Forgive me, Jeanne,” he interrupted, releasing her. “Basil — I forgot. Where did he go? Please forgive me for letting him run away. I should have called him.”

“Oh, now I understand,” she exclaimed. “He saw you but did not believe it possible that you would be here in person.”

“Do you mean that he ran away thinking he saw my ghost?”

“Yes, Basil is so different; he has changed completely. Your going away preyed upon his mind. That’s why I came — hoping, praying, but not really expecting to find you,” she explained.

“That explains it,” he assured her, beginning to comprehend. “I was here several days ago and saw Basil kneeling by this same rock, praying. But — but I did not know who it was. I never thought of him praying, and so did not connect him with the voice that sounded so familiar. It has been a mystery ever since, but now I understand it all.”

“Aamon,” she pleaded, “Basil has done you a great wrong, but I want you to forgive him for — for my sake.”

“Jeanne, please believe me,” he said, “no matter how grave the wrong, it is forgiven. He has atoned for all his wrongs by bringing you here. There is nothing I would not forgive.”

“Not even being sent to prison?”

His face clouded for a moment.

“Yes,” he smiled bravely, “for your sake, I can forgive him even that.”

She crept into his arms and lay sobbing on his shoulder.

“Christ exhorts us to forgive,” he continued, “and my heart is overflowing with the joy of forgiveness. I shall never cease to praise Him. Basil is forgiven even to the seventy times seven.”

She drew his head down and kissed him affectionately. “Now I know why I have always loved you,” she smiled through her tears.

The aged rabbi, standing on the summit of the hill, heard all, saw all, felt all! Though he did not understand, his soul was touched by the true devotion that the scene before him revealed. As a student of human nature he rejoiced with them, uttering a prayer of thanksgiving for their happiness, for the love of Christ inspires respect for the true Christian love of others.

With his head uplifted and his flowing beard catching the reflecting rays of the setting sun, the rabbi stood as a statue asking God’s divine blessing upon their lives. Though unknown to them, their happiness was sealed by

the blessings invoked in their behalf by this friend, who had so recently come to know Christ. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

Who the young lady might be, of course he did not know, but that did not make any difference. His confidence in Aamon was sufficient to ward off any apprehension that he ordinarily might have entertained. A few months before he would have been concerned whether or not she was Jewish. Now the thought never occurred to him. Her characteristics were those of a Christian.

After the joy and surprise of such an unexpected meeting had subsided, they proceeded with plans for the future. There were many things to be done, many things that would need to be talked over, many questions that each of them wanted to ask, but they could not take the time now. Their first duty was to find Basil.

"Let's not be selfish over our happiness," said Aamon; "he is our brother and in need. Let's go to him and explain."

"First, let us kneel together and pray, asking for divine guidance in our every thought and deed; we have so much to thank God for," she replied. "We must be led by Him. Shall we not pray that He will prepare Basil to receive your forgiveness and believe that God has forgiven him?"

The aged rabbi who was standing several feet above them at the summit also knelt in prayer. Each heart was beating with a rapture of joy and contentment. Earnestly, they made their intercessions with thanksgiving, and asked that God would guide them and give them wisdom in every detail.

Rising, Aamon discovered his aged friend whom he had entirely forgotten on the elevation above him.

"Jeanne, let me apologize," he said, leading her to the summit where the rabbi remained in prayer.

Hearing their approach, the old man arose, his face glowing with divine light.

"May I present Jeanne? She was my — my sister in America," said Aamon, stumbling over the introduction. "She is the nearest and dearest girl in all the world to me."

"Was your sister, but now your sweetheart," replied the old man with a twinkle in his eye, acknowledging the introduction with fatherly affection.

Jeanne bravely let the color flood her cheeks in happy approval of the rabbi's ready wit.

"This is leap year," she jokingly said. "Aamon ran away from me in America. Should I let it happen again here?"

"I wouldn't approve of your letting it happen anywhere," declared the rabbi, remembering what he had learned of her from the confidential conversations which he had had with Aamon concerning his past.

"Thank you," Aamon replied eagerly. "It isn't going to happen again here, there, or anywhere!"

"Now," said the old man, listening to their plans, "let me go to your brother and break the news. Coming from a stranger, it will not be such a shock as though you met him unawares. It's the better way," he continued, particularly addressing Aamon. "I should be the one to go to him."

Then, with a twinkle in his eye, he turned to Jeanne.

"You have months of experience to talk over, a lot to tell each other, I should imagine. While you and Aamon are settling your problems, I can prepare the way for the meeting with Basil."

Aamon protested.

"What about his anti-Semitic attitude? Is it wise to antagonize him now?" he asked.

"But Basil is broken in spirit in that respect," Jeanne assured him; "I would like to have the rabbi talk to him."

"About the gospel and his soul's salvation?"

"Yes, show him that God will forgive — that you have forgiven all — that you want to see him," she interrupted eagerly. "Basil is now under great conviction. Let the rabbi show him that God is ready, willing and able to save."

"I shall be glad to do all I can," said the rabbi.

"We no can discuss further plans on our way to the city. Jeanne will have to show us where Basil may be found, then we will leave it all with you and the Lord," Aamon replied taking the initiative.

Returning to Jerusalem, three minds were meditating upon the events of the past few hours.

The verse of scripture particularly helpful to Aamon was that of the prophet Isaiah, as quoted in the Gospel of Luke, "The crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth." This seemed to fit his needs. Perhaps the rough road of disappointments and hardships

would lead him to a avenue of peace, happiness and contentment. Certainly, that afternoon's experience had charted a new course. The detour of despair and unhappiness had suddenly terminated. Hope now directed him to the appealing highway of Assurance.

Jeanne found comfort in the statement of Jesus found in the Gospel of John: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." This corresponds to the word of the Law: "Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself." She had just proved that God is able to use the devices of Satan to execute His own divine will and reveal His work of grace. Aamon had been found! He had forgiven Basil! Her heart was overflowing with a happiness beyond compare.

The sunshine of God's favor had suddenly shone through the dark clouds that hung over her future. The bridge of impossibility had been crossed. Again, it had been proven that God's way is perfect.

The aged rabbi, ready for another opportunity to serve the Lord in his new faith and vision, reflected upon a verse in Isaiah: "Now the Lord GOD, and his Spirit, hath sent me." He had been given a duty to perform in which there was promise of reward: "Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God." As a child of God through his faith in the risen Messiah, he was to lead Basil into the new light.

When they reached the small lodging house where Basil had been staying, he could not be located. The landlord had not seen him all afternoon, and suggested that perhaps they might care to wait for him in the garden.

Seated beneath the branches of a stately olive tree, Jeanne gave a resumé of events that had transpired in America since Aamon left. Detective Olson had been responsible for their trip to Palestine. His untiring efforts had uncovered the accomplice who had committed the crime of breaking and entering the Old Gold Shop. Armed with the evidence that Ted was responsible for enticing Aamon to walk into the trap that he had set, detective Olson had gone to Chicago, arrested and returned him for trial. On account of their interest in the previous trial, this arrest placed attorneys Styles, Soules and Barton in an embarrassing position. To further jeopardize their standing, Ted suddenly changed his plea to guilty during the course of trial and confessed how he had used the telephone to involve Aamon in connection with the crime. His story, how he had secreted the stolen property under Aamon's building after burglarizing Kirsch's store, resulted

in Aamon's being exonerated, and placed a cloud of suspicion around Basil for promoting the scheme.

It cost these attorneys dearly to prevent a complaint being filed against Basil and the issuance of a warrant. When the case was finally settled, they found that the experience had cost them a sum far in excess of Aamon's rightful share in his foster father's estate.

In addition to this, the disgrace preyed upon Basil's mind. Caught in his own pitfall, he had discovered that "God taketh the wise in their own craftiness; that heaven shall reveal their iniquity; and that the earth shall rise up against them." Likewise, the three attorneys made the same sad discovery, and at their expense Basil was advised to take the trip abroad which had brought him to Jerusalem with his sister.

"Which doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number," quoted the rabbi at the conclusion of Jeanne's story.

"This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes'!" Jeanne exclaimed with earnestness.

24. The Stumbling Block

ITALY has entered the war! Mussolini has definitely declared her alliance with Germany!" Basil exclaimed, announcing his return as he approached his landlord in the yard.

"You remain here with Aamon," Jeanne whispered to the old rabbi, rising from a secluded corner in the garden where the three had been sitting, "I'll prepare the way for him to meet you."

"No!" said the old man, holding her back, "he does not know we are here. The opening is perfect for me. The two of you remain in seclusion. I'll engage him in a conversation — talk about the war and make his acquaintance. You can appear for the official introduction later, if you wish."

"The rabbi is right," Aamon interjected; "let him go, ahead while Basil is excited about the war. Naturally he will want to discuss it with someone. We'll remain here and see what happens."

The aged Jew rose and met Basil at the front of the garden.

"I was looking for my sister," said the young man irritably.

"You mean Miss Barton? I presume you are her brother?" the rabbi smiled.

"Yes! Do you know where she is?" he asked eagerly.

"She was here with a gentleman a few minutes ago. They are not far away, I am sure. They are rather anxious about the latest war bulletin."

"I wonder if she knows that Italy has declared war?"

"Italy has declared war?" The old man dramatized his emotion. "With whom? Sit down and tell me about it!"

"It's the three dictators now against the Allies."

"Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin?"

"Yes, Germany, Italy and Russia."

"Nazi, Fascist or Communist, it makes no difference! They all face the day of reckoning," the rabbi said with assurance.

"Reckoning? No difference?" Basil exclaimed, baffled.

“It is written, Isaiah 45:23, ‘I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear!’” the rabbi quoted God’s Word with authority.

“But it all looks so hopeless—”

“It is hopeless apart from Christ,” came the earnest reply.

“You are a Jew and yet talking like that!” said Basil, captivated with interest.

“Yes, son, a Jewish rabbi with a answer to all the dictators in the world, who may rule for a day in the power of his satanic majesty.”

“That’s interesting! All of us would like to know the answer, I’m sure,” Basil said, doubtfully.

“The answer is in the return of Christ—”

“Obsolete folderol,” Basil interrupted in protest.

“Wait, my son; don’t be misled and fall into the pitfall of unbelief,” came the sage advice in reply. “Listen to this word from Daniel:”I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him; his dominion is a everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”

“I don’t pretend to understand Old Testament prophecy—”

“Please don’t use that expression. We Jews as a nation have been verily guilty of professing not to understand and not to believe the prophecies of the Old Testament,” the old rabbi confessed with feeling.

Basil was nonplussed for a answer.

“Listen to this further prophecy in Isaiah: For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace,” quoted the rabbi, stroking his white beard.

After waiting to master his emotion, he continued: “And that is not all, ‘Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this’!”

“It sounds convincing,” Basil meditated.

“The word of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting; it cannot be changed,” the rabbi assured him. “The hour of fulfillment seems to be very close at hand. The whole world is wondering about the outcome of this second World War in relation to prophecy.”

“He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: a nations shall serve him,” the rabbi quoted from the Seventy-second Psalm. “Surely, the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.”

“I am frank to confess I don’t know. Hitler wants dominion from sea to sea. Mussolini wants all the Mediterranean for his own private swimming pool, and Stalin wants everything but God. Again, I confess I don’t know,” Basil lamented in a state of perplexity.

“You have touched the keynote,” replied the venerable philosopher. “There is no fear of God before their eyes. Their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace have they not known.”

“Our rabbi knows his Bible,” whispered Aamon, standing back of some shrubbery with his arm around Jeanne.

“They mock at the certainty of prophecy, and defy God to fulfill His prophetic Word,” the rabbi continued; “but notice what God has declared: ‘Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it. For the indignation of the LORD is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies.’”

Anxious to hear more clearly what they said, Jeanne and Aamon left their corner in the garden, and stood behind the bench on which Basil and the rabbi were seated.

“Listen to his exposition of Deuteronomy which refers to the Messiah, and foretells His coming as a Prophet like unto Moses. How any Jew can deny himself the comfort that is given in the books of Moses, is a mystery. Listen to what he quotes from Moses,” whispered Aamon.

”The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken. And again the Lord said unto Moses:

“I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all

that I shall command him.’

“And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.’

“These passages of Scripture,” said the old man, after he had quoted them, “clearly throw light upon the persecution of the Jews in the world today. We have brought it upon ourselves. We did not hearken. We rejected the Prophet that God raised up. We disregarded the words from His lips in the New Testament. Jesus came in fulfillment of the Scriptures as our Messiah and we demanded His crucifixion. We have become a barren fig tree. Oh, that my people could but catch the meaning of this sacrifice for the sin of the world.”

It stirred Basil’s soul as he watched the aged rabbi struggle with his emotions. His heart went out to him in Christian sympathy; the present war was forgotten. The consequences of sin, which involved the chosen people of God who rejected His Son was of greater importance.

“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed,” declared the old man.

Basil waited, agreeable to his continuing.

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. For the transgression of my people was he stricken.”

“Could such passages be in the Bible?” Basil thought; “could it be prophesied as clearly as this, telling how the Messiah was to die as a sacrifice for my Sin?”

The stillness of the oriental night seemed to magnify his conviction. He realized as never before that he was a sinner; he had gone astray; he had turned to his own way; he needed Christ, the rabbi’s Messiah, his Saviour.

The old man continued with the answer that his soul needed: “When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He was numbered with the transgressors; and he bear the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

“God have mercy upon me, a sinner,” Basil moaned; “but he haunts me — continually haunts me.”

“God never haunts anyone whom He has reconciled to Himself through Jesus Christ, our Lord,” said the old prophet with comforting assurance.

“But Aamon — he haunts me; I cannot forget him. I see him in my sleep. He haunted me on the Mount of Olives. He — he was there tonight. It’s driving me insane—”

“Aamon has forgiven you everything,” said Jeanne stepping forward. “He is here, but not to haunt you.”

“Forgiven! Here?” he looked about wildly.

“Yes, forgiven,” she emphasized. “Aamon is here in person. I talked with him on the Mount of Olives and brought him back to the garden with me.”

“This is not a delusion; your sister speaks the truth,” the rabbi assured him. “Aamon is here. Do you wish to see him?”

Again he surveyed the garden with a wild look of doubt.

“It is written, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thy self’; you are freely forgiven everything by a friend and Christian brother,” Aamon assured him from within the shadows.

Basil trembled in the fear of uncertainty. It was Aamon’s voice, but could he believe him?

“Don’t you know him,” said Jeanne, throwing herself in Aamon’s arms and permitting him to carry her out into full view. “Our long lost brother! Certainly, you can no longer doubt,” she said happily.

Basil, breaking under the tension, sobbed like a child. The joy of realizing the possibility of having his sins forgiven moved him with compassion. The impossibility of its being a dream left him expression less. Surely Aamon was there in the flesh. He had turned the other cheek — had really forgiven him; but that was not sufficient. He had another to whom he must render an account. He had sinned against God. Suddenly it became plain. Aamon had forgiven him because of the indwelling Spirit of Christ. It was Christ-like for him to forgive the great wrong he had done him. Words could not express the thrill that stirred his soul; he, too, wanted the same Saviour. Oh, the wonder of the grace of God that renews the spirit of sinful man.

It was a happy reunion. The four of them became inseparable. After the reconciliation in the garden, they decided that their first duty was to cable Chase Barton, advising him that their lost brother had been found. Then they went to an oriental cafe for a midnight lunch. After that, they spent hours together each day, for there were so many things to talk about and plans to be made for the future.

For each of them life presented a different outlook, and there were still obstacles in their pathway. Basil saw things for the first time from the viewpoint of a Christian. The rabbi, too, having believed that Jesus was the true Messiah, and his God, received a new vision which he was sharing with these friends in Christian fellowship. Jeanne had newfound joy in answered prayer that promised to change her whole future. While Aamon, with one step nearer the secret contained in the little black book, waited in hope that he would soon know who he really was.

But their hour of joy was of brief duration. The dark, threatening war clouds settled lower and lower, and hung over the whole world. Italy had scarcely entered the war when Paris fell. "When and how would it all end?" was a question of the lips of nearly everyone. "Who would stop this mystery man of Central Europe, who talked of his destiny and led the German forces in a blitzkrieg of victory? Who would stop this self-made dictator of the Mediterranean, who waited like a vulture to pick the bones of the vanquished Allies? Who would stop this silent, ravenous, demon-possessed, God-defying leader of the Northern Empire, whose tentacles of communism had reached into the vitals of democracy and civilization?"

"What is the answer to all these perplexing problems that face the world today?" Basil asked his rabbi friend the day after Paris was evacuated. "War certainly isn't the answer. No one wins in such a conquest. It promises only physical and financial destruction, individually and nationally, to all who enter upon such a course."

"God alone holds the infinite power to rule the nations," the old man replied. "Man must first learn that he is a failure under this dispensation of Grace; that world peace still depends upon God."

"The Jewish nation failed under the dispensation of Law, yet they still cling to it in hope," Basil commented knowingly.

"Man has been a failure ever since sin entered the human heart in the Garden of Eden. We are all alike! We have been trying ever since Adam to save ourselves in some way other than God's way."

"And have been continually warned of our human failures," Basil added.

"Yes, the whole of prophecy warns us that our only hope is in Christ; yet we believe not," replied the rabbi sorrowfully. "We were told that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem, but we stumbled over the virgin birth, even though that prophecy was fulfilled. We failed to recognize Him as a Prophet like unto Moses. He was not recognized as the King when He

entered Jerusalem in triumph. The Jewish nation has fulfilled the prophecy that tells of His rejection by His own people. He was betrayed by one of His own disciples, and my people approved of Pilate's action when He was condemned to death. They marveled not at the fulfillment of prophecy when they saw Him stand silent before His accusers. They enjoyed seeing Him smitten and spat upon by His enemies. They mocked and taunted Him and disregarded the prophecy that foretold He was to die by crucifixion. They saw Him suffer with the transgressors and pray for His enemies. They gave Him vinegar and gall in fulfillment of the Sixty-ninth Psalm. They saw the soldiers cast lots for His garments, and yet were unmoved."

Tears of repentance rolled down the old man's cheeks and moistened his beard.

Basil sympathetically waited until he became quiet.

"They shall leave none of it unto the morning, nor break any bone of it," continued the old man, trembling, quoting from Numbers. "Yet we Jews have stumbled over this law of the Passover which pointed to the Christ, and ignorantly consented to His being offered as a sacrifice for our sins. We ignored the Sixteenth Psalm which foretold that the Holy One would not see corruption, but that His body would be raised from the dead."

"Yet the whole chain of prophecy was fulfilled," Basil mused, deep in thought.

"Yes, but the most pathetic part is that we keep on stumbling over the prophecies yet to be fulfilled," declared the rabbi. "In the Old Testament, we are told that the Messiah is to come in the clouds of heaven; in the New Testament, Christ is to appear in the twinkling of an eye. We fail to see in this present World War the possible fulfillment of prophecy in the revival of the Roman Empire, as it was in the days of Christ. We fail to see in the fanning mill of Time the omnipotent hand of God sifting the perfect kernel from the chaff. In our foolishness, we still ridicule the possibility of God's doing all things according to the purpose of His will. The return of Christ to sit on the throne of David in fulfillment of prophecy is also questioned, although it is foretold that He shall yet reign over all the earth. Oh, the folly of the finite mind! We scorn and mock at the power and wisdom of the Almighty. What hope have we when the wisdom of men is foolishness with God? Why is the world in distress? Certainly, there is but one answer: Because we have *forgotten God!*"

25. The Great Iron Claw

BUT BLESSED are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear," was the salutation of the venerable rabbi one morning, as he greeted his three new-found friends on the Mount of Olives.

They stood, the four of them, looking out upon the surrounding territory in much the same manner as Christ had done years before. At the east lay the Dead Sea, thirty-seven hundred feet below. At the west the indifferent city of Jerusalem basked in the morning sunlight.

"My people see, but see not; they hear, but hear not," bemoaned the old man. "As a result chaos confronts my people in this weary world of war. Christ spoke to them in parables. Now the world speaks to them in parables and they perceive not."

"My heart grieves for the Jew," Jeanne said in deep sympathy.

"Still, they are God's chosen people," was Aamon's consolation.

"And yet they are being persecuted by the world dictators, who would annihilate and destroy them," Basil added. "And with whom, like Paul, I once consented," he further confessed in humility.

"Can one remove the salt from the sea?" queried the rabbi.

"Or the Jew from God's human program?" was Basil's rejoinder.

The old man beamed with joy. Basil had won his way into his heart. He was his first convert since he had received Jesus Christ as his own Lord and Saviour. Naturally, he should be closer to him than some man of the world in whom he had no special interest or relationship. Likewise, Basil enjoyed the sage philosophy of the venerable rabbi. His knowledge of the Bible, particularly of the Old Testament, seemed to be unlimited. There was scarcely a question concerning prophecy that he could not answer. Now, as he delved into the New Testament and compared one scripture with another, he became as enthusiastic as a prospector in the discovery of a new vein of gold.

"Now," said the old man, addressing Basil, "forgive me if I have digressed from the subject and the purpose of our meeting here today."

“I shall have to make a further confession of family secrets before I can be fully satisfied in professing to lead a Christian life,” Basil began humbly, ignoring the other’s remark. “I know that God is faithful, that He has forgiven my sins, and I am happy in the belief that Aamon has forgiven me also; but still my conscience has a sense of guilt. I know that you will think me a despicable wretch and I am! My heart convicts me. I have tried to hide this sin — tried to live it down, but I am still unhappy, although I have found Aamon and received his full forgiveness. Not having confessed all, I have no right to expect that I have been forgiven all.”

““But love rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth,”” said Aamon consolingly, placing his hand upon Basil’s shoulder; “therefore, I have forgiven all, not requiring an itemized account of each sin. Has not God said:”If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness’?”

“That’s just it — I haven’t confessed all. I — I am guilty of burying your past — your true identity — your real father and mother — and — and your sister — and brother,” he said in despair.

“Yet, you have been forgiven all,” Aamon assured him in sympathy.

“Forgiven — even that?”

“Yes, are we not exhorted to be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you’?”

“The way of transgressors is hard; but good understanding giveth favor,” the rabbi wisely quoted the Proverb.

“O God, have mercy upon me, a sinner,” was Basil’s repentant plea.

“How true is Solomon’s Proverb,” quoted Jeanne, ““He that diligently seeketh good procureth favor: but he that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him.””

“Your sins will surely find you out. No one is more conversant with that fact than I,” said Basil. “Now I want to make amends and live a life worthy of Christ Jesus, my Lord. I have spent hours praying that I might be directed in this matter.”

““The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way,”” was the rabbi’s reminder.

“Knowing that soon we shall face a parting of the ways, I have made provisions for a new Gospel Center which you are to supervise,” Basil said to the rabbi. “I am now of age and have full authority to dispose of my property as the Lord leads. Supporting you in this work is my contribution

to Him. I want all of you to be praying that this Center will be for the glory of God.”

“Oh, how wonderful! What do you plan to call it? The name is quite important, I think,” was Jeanne’s enthusiastic comment.

“That’s another thing to be praying about,” said her brother. “We want a name that is significant, something outstanding in view of the vital needs here.”

“May I suggest that you call it ‘The Star of Hope Center’? Aamon volunteered. “I can think of no name that would be more appropriate as an incentive to serve Christ.”

“Let us consider this name and any other that may suggest itself, as we make it a matter of prayer,” was Basil’s fitting suggestion.

“Basil has told you something of the burden which he had on his heart,” said the rabbi, withdrawing a large envelope from beneath his frock and opening it. Aamon immediately recognized the photostats of part of the mysterious black book. “We have here a reproduction of some of the pages of the Barton diary, so I am informed, which Basil gave me recently, with the request that I translate them from the Hebrew into English,” he began, “and I have found them very interesting.”

The group listened for several hours to the rabbi’s translation of the photostats, which had much to reveal as to Aamon’s adoption. His genealogy was traced from his birth at Helsingfors, Finland, to the time when he was placed as a delicate, undernourished child in the arms of Mrs. Barton at Leningrad. His father, Aran Ashkenaz, a German Jew, after visiting Russia from East Prussia, was arrested and deported back across the border. The Russian authorities accused him of a political crime against the Soviet Government and placed him in exile in Siberia. Aamon’s mother, Hester, with her two children, left their former home in Germany and went to Russia to intercede in the father’s behalf. Persecution followed and the mother fled to Finland, where Aamon was born a few months later.

“That is not all,” Basil interrupted, “Chase discovered in corresponding with authorities in Europe that you have a sister, Pauline, four years your senior, who graduated as a nurse at Helsinki, Finland, where she met and married Doctor Aaron Zukerman of Warsaw, Poland. She since has secured the degree as a doctor of medicine and is practicing with her husband in a hospital in Warsaw.” After explaining how he had met Dr. Zukerman and his wife, and had helped Plock transport them across the Romanian border

in an airplane, Aamon permitted the rabbi to continue with his translation of the photostats.

“Well, now you know who your relatives are,” said the old man; “next comes the problem of locating them.”

Aamon visualized the world in a new light. Perhaps the cruel hand of fate had released its grip upon his life. He had a sister living, a beautiful woman, cultured and refined. But a pang of disappointment gripped him, she was not a Christian. He must find her and his brother-in-law, if for no other reason than to present Christ to them. He liked Dr. Zukerman and had admired him from the very first time that he met him and his wife! He knew now why she had impressed him so favorably. It was the subconscious brotherly love that he bore for her. What a happy reunion it would have been for both of them, if they had known of this relationship at the time they were together! But some day they would meet again, and what a joy that would be! What a thrill to explain, to produce the proof, and to claim the relationship! Yes, he could thank God for her. His heart glowed with anticipation, as he dwelt upon the subject. Perhaps she would have a picture of his mother, would know where to find her, and could tell him about their parents and possibly another sister or brother; or perhaps there were brothers and sisters, yes, and grandparents, who might be living. Listening to the rabbi explain the contents of the little black book had given life a new outlook. He at least had a beginning. His people were respectable, except for the cloud hanging over his father’s banishment to Siberia; and even that was probably without just cause. Perhaps he was a victim of Jewish persecution, dying a martyr to the cause, or perhaps he had escaped. Was it too much to hope that one day even he and his father might be reunited?

Aamon, unquestionably, had a strange and colorful career, and like thousands of other children born into this world it was through no fault of his own. A peculiar chain of circumstances had directed his course. Why, he did not know, but in and through it all God had touched his life and brought him to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour. Perhaps he was the only one in his family who knew Christ. Perhaps God had ordained this chain of events, in order that he might present the gospel to his people, the Jews. “God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform.” Aamon was not the only one to cry with a Christian voice unto God’s chosen people: “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. . . . Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” But now the day

of grace was nearly spent and the day of God's wrath was nigh at hand, and he realized that he must warn his people quickly and by all means save some.

Certainly, the circumstances in his life could not be attributed to chance. The same could be said of the rabbi. Basil's life, too, had been shaped to a pattern other than one of his own sinful choice. Definitely, God's supreme purpose and plan of the ages had touched each of their lives. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" What a glorious gift is eternal life through Jesus Christ as a personal Saviour — a free gift to all who believe in His name!

The distant, shrill cry of a newsboy brought back the realization of his present need. The group that had been thinking of what effect this revelation from the pages of the Barton diary might have on Aamon's future course in life were suddenly faced with the affairs of this world. "France has surrendered!" The heartbreaking news echoed in the distance. This meant that England was left to fight on alone. It meant that Palestine was facing the possible loss of her strategic position under the British mandate. The great iron claw of the Roman Empire was casting another shadow over her future. What a rebuke to human judgment this newsflash contained! Four words included a stinging challenge:—"The Folly of France." Towering above the pages of her history, the half billion-dollar Maginot Line was a fickle monument to world peace.

Jeanne and Aamon withdrew to the rock where they had so recently met. This spot held a sacred attraction for them. The bond of mutual understanding had been sealed there. In heart, in thought and in deed they were of one accord. Come what may, the feeling that they had been chosen of God for one another drew them together like a magnet. The deep sense of Christian love was a force that they could not resist. "Aamon," she whispered breathlessly. "Jeanne," he replied, with no attempt to conceal his feelings. She came toward him, holding out her hands, bareheaded, the tresses of her hair waving in the breeze. How fair she looked! Their eyes met in mutual understanding. "Is it wrong to love you better than a sister?" he asked wistfully. "No, Aamon, God understands." He took her in his arms, kissed her and then seated her on the rock above him. "But the name — my new name, how can I ask you to change your name to one we know so little about?" he said, reflecting upon the name, "Ashkenaz."

“Let’s compromise and make it Jeanne Always,” she replied with a twinkle in her eyes. “Always?” “Yes, ’Always forever.”

“I can’t help it, Jeanne, I love you. I shall always love you, though I am a Jew,” he confessed meekly.

“Joseph took a Gentile bride,” she replied with a smile. “You mean it would make no difference—?”

“Not with God’s approval upon honor, virtue and true Christian love,” she said sweetly.

“That’s all I have. I cannot offer you more — being — an outcast—”

“Stop! Don’t ever refer to yourself like that again. You are rich beyond measure in spiritual gifts, in wisdom and in the knowledge of the Lord — far more precious than fine gold. He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.”

The threatening war clouds that hung like a pall over the Holy Land were for the moment forgotten. Their hours of happiness were being blessed by God. His omnipotent hand shielded them from the powers of darkness. From the standpoint of the world, the future looked dark, pathetic and hopeless; but from God’s standpoint, the future was illuminated with the promise of the Lord’s soon return in glory and power. Life still offered enchantment to them. Marriage vows were soon to be spoken. A new Gospel Center was soon to be dedicated. What could be more fitting than to have their good friend, the rabbi, conduct the first service in the new Star of Hope Center by their marriage, at which time they would dedicate their lives to the work of giving the gospel to the Jews! “Star of Hope Center!” No other name could be more fitting! No other purpose in life more honorable! What a service!

Who knows the hour when the last soul will be saved to complete the Body of Christ — the Church? What a remarkable event! What an objective for a Gospel Center, as the curtain of time descends lower and lower! When the last one is saved, then the trumpet will sound and Christ will return to claim His chosen Bride! Aamon and Jeanne meditated upon the promise that He had made to His disciples while upon earth the first time. “I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” They also thought of Paul’s revelation of that event: “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them

in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” There is no other hope for the future of this world! Within its war-torn borders there is no other assurance of peace! But Aamon and Jeanne relied wholly on the sure promises of God, and looking out over the hills of the Promised Land, faced the future in confidence.

The End

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How Can You Find Peace With God?

The most important thing to grasp is that no one is made right with God by the good things he or she might do. Justification is by faith only, and that faith resting on what Jesus Christ did. It is by believing and trusting in His one-time *substitutionary* death for your sins.

Read your Bible steadily. God works His power in human beings through His Word. Where the Word is, God the Holy Spirit is always present.

Suggested Reading: [New Testament Conversions](#) by Pastor George Gerberding

Benediction

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. (Jude 1:24-25)

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