

November 1902

For about two months now I shall be alone, that is in my bedroom, the south room upstairs, the one over my parents' room, that gets its share of the warmth from the fire-place, where there is always a fire at this time of the year. Soon after new year's Bunyan will be coming home on account of his health and we shall be together until autumn comes again.

Paul had three years in Arabia (Gal.1:17,18) at such a time as this to rearrange his thinking, and perhaps the shortness of the time with me makes this period all the more precious to me.

Father and mother, as I remember it after fifty-nine years, played their parts perfectly. I was glad to be with them and they seemed grateful to have me with them. I looked around for things to do at home and they acted as if I had my own work to do, and seldom asked me to do anything for them.

I had my small new Bible, but I preferred to use the big family Bible with its large print and the fine old binding. Since this first week at home I had to get up a sermon for the following Sunday there was a new purpose that clung to me constantly and gave me a new meaning to Bible study.

The book of Matthew was the first portion to read, even to find a text. Perhaps, like so many of the Brethren, I found my text by Tuesday to have the rest of the week to meditate. There it was, my first text in Mt. 22, The Great Wedding Feast, The Slighted Invitation, and The Man without a Wedding Garment. It would be a short sermon but the congregation would not expect a long one

since it is less than two months since I was among this people as a stripling school teacher.

It was fine weather and before the 11:00 o'clock hour I had ridden the ten miles on horse back all alone. A good house full of friends were there to hear me. Some had come eight or nine miles on horse back or in buggies. They were old people, including Brother Crawford Howell and Deacon Sam But~~ten~~len, and Mr. Bill Green I believe. There were a goodly number of middle-aged people and children, including Felix Grant Robertson my 13-year old nephew who had come nearly as far as I had.

I didn't time my sermon, but it seemed to be very short. I had a good dinner somewhere and rode home alone before it got late. The memory of that afternoon is as vivid as if it were yesterday. I was not proud of the sermon, but just felt good through and through.

Some fifty-seven years later when I undertook to tell about my first sermon at the same place there were two people present who heard the original.

If that Sunday had been spent trying to warm the hearts of people, I guess it was that week that I began to look around for the means of keeping our house warm in the winter days that were beginning. My father had a good grindstone that he was said to have made himself. Anyhow there was a good sharp axe on the place. And back near the old school house were the tops of 100 fine black walnut trees that had recently been cut. Here with our axe I cut and put up two cords of wood in a day. We still had a good wagon and a team and soon I had a good pile of fire-wood in the yard to keep us warm.