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## Chapter I

# MEMORIES

**R**EMEMBER? Can I ever forget them? Those wonderful days by wind-swept shores of County Cork, when we met from various boarding schools, half a dozen of us boys and girls, to spend our holidays with Father and Mother. They were home on furlough from their lone, pioneer mission field in Kenya Colony and had taken a meagerly furnished house for us down by the shore near Fastnet Lighthouse, a good Irish mile beyond the little village of Schull.

It seems but yesterday, though it's nearer half a century, that a rosy-cheeked, barefooted boy on his way back from market sold us a donkey for two shillings. And the boys, having saddled it with an old cushion, fastened with ropes, enthusiastically started taking us girls for rides around the low, winding road and over the heathered hilltops.

Those beautiful, warm summer evenings too, when we strolled along by the beach road, singing together our favorite songs; when night after night the parish priest, Father Frank O'Connor, would break in on our happy company. He said he liked the singing. Sometimes it might be "'Way Down upon the Suwannee

River," or "I'm Sitting by the Stile, Mary," or again "Beulah Land."

I am sure Father Frank liked the music; but I always felt it was more than our singing which brought him out so far and so frequently from his home in the village; for invariably he and Father would end up by going on ahead, wrapped in deep conversation, till the singing died away on the night wind and the rest of us were lost to view. Often the moon would be rising over the sea when Mother would turn back with us, leaving the two of them to wander on alone, arm in arm, for many another mile. We never knew what they talked about; we only knew that they were friends with a capital "F."

When the holidays were over, I recall, Father would often get a letter with a Schull postmark, which in length corresponded, I thought, with those walks in the gloaming—sheets and sheets from the parish priest, all about things vital and eternal. Father occasionally might read out a sentence here and there, such as "Ah, Mr. Watt, I think you're too cocksure of Heaven." Then Father would write pages in return.

But memory weaves another web around the past. This time it is County Galway and still during Father's lifetime. He and Mother had been to Africa for a term of service, and were back again broken in health and with empty pockets. Still they tried to bring us children together again for a few months to unite the severed ties of family love. By this time most of us were teen-aged. The house in Schull was no longer available; and as a last resort Father had taken a coast guard boat-house, a couple of miles beyond the picturesque village of Clifden, in Connemara. By legal contract signed with the coast guard, Father had managed to secure the place

for three years, had furnished it scantily from a store in the village, and got his bairns once more around him for the long-dreamed-of summer holiday.

Our little purchases of eggs and vegetables at the cottages would as often as not end up with an invitation to come in and take a stool by the fire. The barefooted colleens were like queens, holding scepters in their two-roomed cabins with grace and dignity; the men, though poorly clad, carried themselves with the air of chieftains. Before leaving the quiet seclusion of their firesides, Father would usually present them with a little Douay Gospel. This was never refused. It was new to them and their natural religious impulses responded warmly to thought of possessing a holy Catholic Book written by one of the apostles.

One Monday afternoon, however, quite unexpectedly the coast guard officer knocked at the boathouse. My sister Via, on opening the door was covered by his revolver. "See this?" he cried in an excited frenzy; "this is what I have to carry to protect myself because I let you people in here. You'll have to get out *at once*. Where's your father?" Father was laid up with a sprained leg from running races with us, but asked him in and offered him a seat by his bedside. He'd come to report, he said with half-suppressed agitation, that on Sunday morning Father McAlpine, the parish priest of Clifden, had denounced us from the pulpit and told the people to boycott us rigidly regarding food and fuel, ordering them to hand up all the Douay Scriptures to be destroyed. Further, he had come to his house after Mass in a furious rage and fairly frightened his wife out of her senses by threatening that his life wouldn't be safe for a day, unless he'd remove the family he had allowed into the boathouse.

This of course explained the coast guard's strange behavior and the revolver he carried.

But Father was unmoved. "You're a very foolish man," he said calmly, "to be frightened by the threats of any man. I have taken the boathouse legally for three years, and I will not relinquish title to it till three years have expired."

"If you're not away by noon tomorrow," blurted out the intimidated man, "I'll send the police to clear you out, I will!" And away he went.

Of course it was only bluff. But sure enough there was a boycott on. As we passed the cottages they would shut their doors or run inside and hide, these lovely, guileless Irish peasants. The parish priest's wand had suddenly cast a spell over them; they were no longer themselves; their wills were not their own. My dear father only sympathized and loved them the more. He hurried away on foot to an adjoining parish and bought a load of turf, sufficient to last us out the three months. Rather than embarrass our neighbors by trying to make our little purchases at the scattered farm homes we took turns walking the long trail by the shore road into Clifden to a provision store. And to show he had no ax to grind, Father took four of us to the Chapel the following Sunday. We sat close to the pulpit and listened to Father McAlpine's sermon and prayed for him, and for our island home, and for Clifden in particular. The love of Christ was bigger than boycotts and petty persecutions and threats; but Father could have wept for the people, fear-bound and terror-driven; driven in one case, for example, to shout to my sweet and gentle mother, "You're not fit to be a donkey to an apple man"; or in another case to send their dog on me, when I was sitting

alone on the roadside with my paints, sketching those beautiful blue mountains, The Twelve Pins of Connemara. Fear-bound, they had handed up for destruction the holy Word of God they so much prized, riches that money could not buy, "*better than thousands of gold and silver,*" as David put it.

There was one exception at least. An old veteran had moral courage enough to hide his New Testament and read it daily. And when under the boycott order his pretty daughter could no longer deliver the daily can of milk, what did this man do, but bring it secretly across the boulder-strewn beach, when the tide was out. There may have been others, only God knows, who prized enough their liberty of soul to refuse the "handcuffs." But "*the fear of man bringeth a snare*"; and for the most part they were helpless tools, pieces of involuntary machinery rotating in a great world-wide system that involved both priests and people. Father McAlpine (I say it tenderly for he has gone) was a man of passionate zeal and could have been another Paul, if only he had had the same personal contact with the Saviour as Saul of Tarsus had on the Damascus road. Like Saul he had often unconsciously shown his animosity to Jesus of Nazareth by persecuting the very few evangelists who had ventured to preach Christ's redemption in the streets of Clifden. He had led his people in having them stoned and pelted with eggs and turf, in having them beaten almost into unconsciousness; and then in that condition carried to the station and put into the train with the remark, "Next time you come back, you needn't take a return ticket."

All he really did to us was to change the character of our holiday. We had fewer games and more Bible-

reading; fewer songs and more prayer, generally out in the sunny fields, lying face-down among wild thyme and clover; or down by the wave-swept shore, where sea gulls and cormorants cried to their mates from great grey boulders.

I am sure it was in God's plan, who knows the end from the beginning. We were learning, when the sea grew boisterous, how to hoist our sails and employ the wind to propel our craft toward harbor. We were learning that circumstances themselves can never defeat us, but only our wrong handling of them. Every Bible story that was read would be related somehow or other to our beloved country and her needs. We read how God appeared to Moses and said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows, and I am come down to deliver them." We felt that God also knew the sorrows and oppressions in a spiritual sense of our fellow countrymen, and would come down to deliver them one day. We were coming to love them, not merely because we were of the same blood, but in a much deeper way, as we were being shackled to them in their captivity. "God save Ireland" was somehow becoming to us much more than a political slogan: it was being turned to a prayer of faith by which "mountains" could be removed.

## Chapter 2

# CROSSING THE RUBICON

**S**CENES HAVE CHANGED with the years. The Schull and Clifden of our childhood are back numbers; both parish priests have gone on. The merry party of boys and girls is grown to manhood and womanhood, and scattered far and wide over the world. We have said our last good-bys to Father and Mother—to Father years previously in a grass shack in Africa: to Mother only three days before on the hills of County Wicklow.

In the months that followed Mother's death, when shut in alone with God, my sister Clara and I were forced to weigh afresh life's problems in the light of that world into which she had now entered—to sort out the worthwhile from the worthless things. We spent weeks in prayer and reading the Bible, especially studying the lives of men and women in the Old Testament. We saw there giants of faith in all ranks of life who brushed aside every obstacle in the way and triumphantly climbed the Everest heights of this fascinating life of conquest, men like Noah and Abraham, Moses and Elijah, and women like Rahab the harlot and Esther the Queen.

The clearer we saw them striding ahead with God, the more we abhorred ourselves for our wasted years and



broken vows and our lack of faith and trust in our heavenly Father; till, prostrate at the cross, we pleaded in shame the healing of Christ's precious blood and the covering of His seamless robe. "To obey is better than sacrifice," and we pledged ourselves to obey the Holy Ghost and follow Him at any cost, by any road.

There were many thrills as well as tears in store for us. Every day brought new testings: but one day in particular I faced my Rubicon. Even to write of it is to touch holy ground. I feel like Moses at the burning bush: I want to take the shoes from my feet and bow my head, because I met my Maker face to face that day and heard His voice.

I had come back from the annual missionary conference of the Worldwide Evangelization Crusade at the Bible College of Wales, where God had asked me if I would trust Him, as Elijah had at Cherith, for my daily bread; and I had promised to do so. I was then deputation secretary for Ireland of the Sudan United Mission and was receiving a regular monthly allowance. So I planned to give back my salary as anonymous gifts through the various local Irish auxiliaries of the Mission without letting anyone know. It was a strong inward urge, to which I yielded spontaneously.

That, however, was in the warm atmosphere of a spiritual convention of no ordinary caliber. How different it all seemed early next morning, when the Liverpool boat landed me at North Wall, Dublin, and I started with a heavy suitcase to walk in drizzling rain up the dismal wharf! My heart was storm-tossed, and I felt I had no anchor. Difficulties piled up like the waves of the sea, as I seriously counted the cost of my vows.

In this frame of mind, how could I go home to my sister Clara and ask her if she would join me in living

by faith? I couldn't! I had reached the customs house steps by this time and took refuge from the rain behind the portico facing the Liffey, where so often I had watched groups of dockers gambling over a pack of cards. I believe Heaven and Hell were struggling that minute for my soul. I put down my case and prayed, "Oh, God, I will not move from this spot till You speak to me. Was the voice at the conference Thy voice or the whisperings of a self-planned venture? Give me a word from Thyself on which I may rest. 'If it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water,' and I will come."

I remained in silence some time. All the other passengers had disappeared. I was quite alone. I got my Bible out of the case and it fell open at Joel 2, where my eyes caught these words: "Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice; for the Lord will do great things. . . . The floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with wine and oil. . . . And ye shall eat in plenty and be satisfied . . . and ye shall know . . . that I am the Lord your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed." I thanked the Lord and confirmed my vow. The question was settled; the Rubicon was crossed. I accepted by faith, not alone the plenty here offered from God's bountiful hand, but the latter-day, world-wide revival promised in the verses that followed: "It shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions."

When I reached home and told my dear sister, she not only agreed but said it would be lovely. Yes, it was lovely to begin to trust in a new and practical way the

One who had always loved us with an everlasting love. We found that as our trust became more true and we cleared away the boulders of unbelief, the streams of His love flowed fuller and freer.

A tiny note from home reached me during my deputation travels to say, "I'm living these days on cattle turnips which I got at Miss O'Toole's in exchange for a jar of jam. They're quite nice. TURNIPS + SUGAR = MELONS. Hallelujah! (Signed) Clara"  
That was an addition learned in the school of faith, where God was our only Teacher.

Alone with Him one Sunday night, without a half-penny in the world, and the oil cruse and meal barrel quite empty, we knelt together and prayed for a sack of potatoes, which were delivered at the door by car next day. The widow lady who brought them did not know we had any real need. She was trying in a philanthropic way to get rid of a surplus crop, because there was a glut on the potato market. So we were proving experimentally that Elijah's God still has His widows at Zarephath and still His ravens to deliver foodstuffs, and still deep wells from which to draw, when the dwindling brooks dry up. "The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth."

*Until the day.* Elijah was not concerned about his bread and butter; he was concerned about his apostate nation and the honor of his holy God. Cost what it might, he would stand in the gap and intercede before the throne and keep the windows of Heaven's mercy tight shut and withhold the rain, till backslidden Israel would realize her whoredom, forsake her idols, and in penitence

turn her heart back again to Jehovah. That was the glittering peak for which he strived. All else was merely incidental.

So, we knew, it must be with us. We must earnestly pray for revival in Ireland and work to that end. We found a few others in Dublin equally burdened—especially Miss Cecilia Mandeville from County Tipperary—and with them we united in asking the young Scottish evangelist, James Stewart, to come to Dublin and give us some lectures on revival. He was home for a little rest after the conclusion of a seven weeks' campaign in Budapest during which thousands packed the great auditorium each night and the city was swept with revival.

On Saturday, February 26, 1938, God brought him among us for a week of special meetings called "A Back-to-God Campaign" in the Metropolitan Hall, Dublin. The hush and solemnity of eternity pervaded all the gatherings. The afternoon talks to Christians upstairs were times when the dew of Heaven dropped on parched ground; and by the end of the week we had to move into the larger hall. The prayer meetings that started with half a dozen or so soon grew in numbers and intensity till the room was overflowing. The local papers gave full publicity to the meetings; and Catholics as well as Protestants were drawn together to fill up the body of that great building, where Moody and Sankey, and Torrey and Alexander, witnessed such a work of grace in the last generation. Revival had not yet come, but there was conviction of sin among God's people.

In May, 1938, we sent out our first IRISH PRAYER BULLETIN. After quoting from Finney's *Revivals of Religion* the signs of our need of Revival, it reads:

The morning prayer meeting for revival continues daily in the YMCA, Lt. Abbey Street. Christians in Dublin City are earnestly invited to join us and may come and go from 7:00 A.M. till 8:45 A.M. Can we not rise up, as our blessed Lord did, "a great while before day" and spend some time with His people before office hours to cry for revival? The revival fires that have started in Czechoslovakia and Hungary could blaze across Europe and set our Island aflame for God, *if we would only pray*. And when we have caught the fire, the furthest parts of the earth will feel it. . . .

Dear fellow Christians, do let us be real with God. Holy Ghost prayers will shake the foundations of earth and Hell. "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken, where they were assembled together."