

The Real Josiah Hopkins



THIRD EDITION



BY
ALDOPH PHILIP GOUTHEY



PARSON JOSIAH HOPKINS

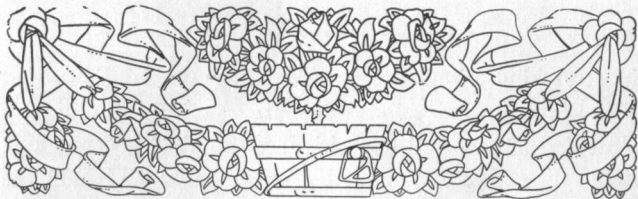
The Real
Josiah Hopkins

PARSON OF

The Country Church of Hollywood

BY

ALDOPH PHILIP GOUTHEY



N October 27, 1880, in the little town of Hazelhurst, Mississippi, an event took place which, as far as I can learn, excited no special interest, except the passing comment of a few neighbors that a son had been born to Henry Harrison and Frances Bennett Hogg. About the event itself, I have been able to find out little. The parents cannot be reached and the baby, now grown to manhood, was too young when born to remember. Like mountains in the mist, therefore, just the dimmest outline of that momentous event is revealed.

About all that I am able to chronicle with certainty is that the baby came to this country at an early age and with not a stitch of clothes on his back. He showed no special aptitude or genius for anything but eating and sleeping, except, possibly, to wonder what made his toes wiggle and to wonder about the flavor of his thumb, which he sucked until convinced that it furnished neither nourishment nor excitement; whereupon the business of thumb-sucking was abandoned in favor of more lucrative and thrilling pursuits. His father probably looked at him once and turned away with secret meditations about the economic disadvantages of one more mouth to feed. His mother, as mothers usually do, probably saw in him a great genius who would one day chisel his name into the imperishable granite of immortal fame. Meanwhile, William Bennett, for so he was christened, was busily engaged

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in stretching dimpled arms to catch the sunlight that filtered through a window pane and which, eluding his clutching fingers, fell upon his face to light it as the dawn lights up a rose. His startled gaze caught and held the morning in rapturous looks that spoke the beginning of life itself. These startled looks were revealing and prophetic. The animation and agitation in his face were scientific proof that he was not a fool. "Thank heaven he is normal," breathed a prayer of praise from a fond heart of hope, and the prophetic voice gave assurance that he would soon be investigating the meaning of life. "That argued," so the Voice said, "for great things in the future."

But, in our anxiety to get the baby out of the cradle, we are running a little ahead of our narrative. In all properly written life stories, much space is given to ancestry.

William Bennett Hogg has the advantage of having drawn his first impulses from an ancient, honorable root that runs far back into the good soil of Scotch and Irish blood. His father's family tree is adorned with the illustrious name of Sir Henry Hogg. Sir Henry was of noble birth and there was in his blood the tang of *ye bonny braes and burnies* and purple heather. His mother was of that ancestral combination which almost certainly guarantees to a wee bairn wit and worship, will and wisdom: Scotch-Irish. It was she who wielded the balance of power in moulding young William's life when it was plastic. Like most mothers of that yester-year, she was concerned to send a son out into the world in fellowship with God and with the high ideals and noble impulses which combine to build a man. Nestled in the crook of her arm, he was sung into sleep by the haunting, soul-searching notes

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of long-metered hymns. His ears hark back to prayers that linger, like the scent of jasmine on the soft breezes of a Mississippi spring morning. Like nearly all men who come to greatness and fame in after life, he was born on the full tide of the influence of noble womanhood.

The year of William Bennett's birth saw the Liberals in power in England under that prince of statesmen, Gladstone; the first Boer War against England; the completion of the Cologne Cathedral; and the death of George Eliot, the novelist. Thus we see the year of his birth weaving into the fabric of history the contrasting shades of light and dark. While it cannot be proven that the year 1880 gave mandate to William, it did combine such events as were prophetic of the checkered scenes through which the devious path of years was to lead him; statesmanship and worship, war and literature. The year of his birth is marked in the calendar, but the calendar fails to tell us how many years he has lived. Years and months, weeks and days, hours and moments are arbitrary divisions of time marked by man; but life is not so easily reckoned. One really lives in terms of desire and passion, joy and sorrow, vision and prayer. Some live a thousand years in an hour; some live seventy years and never live a day; "Josiah Hopkins," for so we know and love him now, has lived—nobody knows how long. A million years in the blood and mud and horror of the Great World War. Another million during the awful days that followed when they brought him home to die. Another million when misunderstood by some of his brethren. Another million while dreaming, hoping, longing, in travail pain to bring forth the Country Church of Hollywood and millions upon millions of years while waiting for the telephone

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to ring and hear a voice at the other end of the wire telling him that a "sinner had come home to God." How old is he? Nobody knows—nor shall we know until that day when the soul of him is revealed in light, white enough to show us the real "Josiah Hopkins."

Like most great men, "Josiah Hopkins" was reared in the country. Be the reasons what they may, greatness is, for the most part, produced in rugged places. The voices of the night, the wind in the trees, the song of the brook, the moonlight and the stars, and the breath of flowers on spring air must be living, sympathetic friends to the person who would know the full meaning of life. Josiah knows life and he knows how to live, because he knows and loves the far places.

A country lad in the great open spaces! Fascinating! Free as the flowers and grasses and birds! Trousers frayed at the knees, patched on the south exposure and bagging to the north; held in place by a piece of rope over one shoulder and fastened in the rear to a button and in front by a nail; and all the responsibility of decency hanging precariously upon that button and nail! Shirt open half way down; flapping hat with torn brim and a gap in the crown occasioned by a battle royal with yellow jackets in a berry patch. Hair that hung low enough to make a fur collar unnecessary in cold weather, and always singing with the passing breeze, "long may it wave" — very patriotic hair, young William had. But the lad was a bit rough at play, so his mother said. Accordingly, she had a six-foot picket fence built around the yard and inside this fence Willie's world was limited. His mother hired a colored boy to play with him. Shem and Ham were thus united in indissoluble bonds, having but one other com-

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panion — the dog. Josiah, in telling me the story, said: "Yessir, we'all et from the same dish"—then slyly added "when Mother wasn't lookin'. But the dog died. He couldn't take it. That was my first experience with death and, Elder, it like't' slew me." But death and sorrow were soon to touch him more intimately. And that is life, isn't it? Gray-cloaked grief walks by the side of joy, and tears fall on cheeks alight with smiles.

It was here, hemmed in by a picket fence, that the seed was planted which, many years after, was to germinate and grow into the Country Church of Hollywood. It was like this: a family moved in next door with a little boy, named "Pretty" Smith. That little boy wanted to play with William and the colored boy, Joe, as badly as they wanted to play with him. "Well, sir, one day," said Josiah, "I tried to climb that fence. I scrambled and clawed, and Joe histed me from behind and I mighty nigh made it. But jest as I was a-makin' it over, I ketched on a picket and there I hung. The longer I hung, the madder I got at fences that separate humans." Josiah brushed away a tear and looked far off, and then repeated softly, "Yessir, there the seed was planted. I wanted freedom and people. I wanted to love 'em and worship with 'em and play with 'em without no fences." Another meditative pause and then, "That's why the Country Church stands yonder." I found it easy to trace that seed of resentment against false barriers to the Country Church with its freedom and simplicity and neighborliness.

Schooling in William's life, so far, was a game of catch-as-catch-can. Opportunities were few, and the family was too poor to buy the kind of education William's father had set his heart upon for his son. But times grew

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a bit better, and in due course William was sent to the University of Mississippi. The description that Josiah gave me of himself on his way to and arriving at the University is so graphic that I shall not risk my own language in telling the experience.

"My Father," said Josiah, "was set and determed to give me an education. You see, he had his heart set on makin' me a lawyer. Mother wanted me to be a preacher."

And thereby, my frenids, hangs a tale. Preachers, real preachers, can, nine times out of ten, be traced back to a mother's prayers and tears, longings and solemn dedication. Preachers are born, not manufactured. They are the most important men in the world. The world, alas, is not aware of this fact; but they always have, do now, and always will wield the balance of power. As long as the preachers are God-anointed men, there is hope for civilization. Let them become half-hearted, worldly, and prayerless, and the best civilization the world will ever see will rot and perish. All history is a swift witness to this truth. A king may come as an accident of birth; a ruler is often made by the whim of a people; a leader can be exalted to power by rallying a mob to support a slogan; but only *God* and *time* can make a preacher. But back to Josiah's story:

"Father was anxious to start me right on the road to learnin', so he bought me a swaller-tail coat and a derby hat and all the fixin's to go with 'em. I was as green as fodder and as awkward as a steer in yoke for the first time. When I finally got off the train, I was in a lather, I tell you. I went a-huntin' fer my trunk and when I found it I wouldn't trust nobody to handle it, so I just swung it up on my shoulder and started for the Univer-

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sity." Here Josiah paused to chuckle at the memory of that experience. Then, "Well, I finally made it, walked in, slammed the trunk down on the floor and said: 'Here I am; what's next?'"

One can easily imagine the fun the students had at the expense of this gawk from the pastures and hills. "They sure made my life miserable," mused Josiah. Then he added, "But they didn't mean any harm—just the same I got so mad I made up my mind I'd show 'em!"

Came time for the college Oratorical contest and Will entered—swallow-tail coat, derby and all. He said to me, "Elder, I never had any instructin', but I just got up there and bawled and cavorted and orated, and my heart ketched fire. And would you believe it when the Judges went out to decide the winner, they just lik't'a give me first prize! But a fellow who is now a great surgeon beat me out and I got second. Sez I to 'em, 'There, that'll hold you fer awhile,' and I took my trunk on my shoulder and headed back fer home. My, but them trees did look good to me. I got out'a that swaller-tail and riz up to tell 'em I was through with schoolin'."

But the father and head of the family had different ideas on that subject. Accordingly, the home place was sold, and all, including William, headed for New Orleans. Tulane University was in father Henry's mind. He leased a small hotel, took what money he had and put young William back into school. Here William did better. The faculty and students were kind and our country boy responded. Not only did his heart respond but his mind, also. He was soon invited to become a Kappa Sigma—a very fine honor, and his day was rich with promise for tomorrow. But tragedy—this time real tragedy—stalked

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him and finally struck with lightning-like destruction. His father took yellow fever and died. In telling me the story, Josiah choked and tried again, but it was no go. Details just would not come, so I can only leave the reader to find the story in Josiah's tears and wordless, haunted look.

William was now nineteen. He left school. An invalid sister and his mother must be supported. He engaged in a variety of occupations. He clerked in a small store; sold papers on the street; played baseball, and was "news butch" on a local train. This was all training in the University of Hard Knocks. God was getting His man ready. The idea seems to prevail with many, if not most folk, that preachers are softies; but when the story is told, it will disillusion all such shallow thinking. Preachers, real preachers, are, as a rule, more familiar with sweat than the average man. They must be familiar with the rugged road before they are of any value to the world. The priests of the Old Testament were forbidden to use any but "beaten oil" in the Temple service. So the preacher must be "beaten" in the hard school of human experience before he can "comfort with the comfort wherewith Christ has comforted him." Like the loaves with which Christ fed the thousands, he must be not only blessed but broken before he can bless a broken world. And so we see this man tramping the rugged trail of toil and sacrifice as he makes his way up to the highlands from which he can reach down a calloused hand and pull a weary, heart-broken man up to God.

We next find William night fireman in a great cotton mill. Here he worked, stripped to the waist, streaming sweat and caked with grime for eleven hours at a stretch.

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Three giant negroes were his companions on the job. The pay was one dollar and twenty-five cents per night. On this the family lived. William's spending allowance was twenty-five cents a week. In his own language, he "threw coal enough on this job to bury the Capitol building." Night after night, he worked in a temperature of 120 degrees. For a year his work continued. Then came a crisis. God saw to that. As is usually the case, God's method was a man.

Came Elder Long — a man, who, like Job had held his faith through affliction, loss and hardship. J. H. Long came sliding down the ladder into the boiler room one night about twelve o'clock. The furnaces had to be fired every three minutes. Between firings, Elder Long preached and exhorted. Said he to William, "God sent me to tell you that there are big things for you just ahead." Prophetic words! Words loaded with dynamite and glory! Before he left the boiler room, he said, "Let's pray." And there on the coal-strewn floor, he poured out his heart, while the three giant negroes looked on in big-eyed wonder. Says Josiah: "I watched that man climb the ladder out of the boiler room and my soul started on a climb for God." That was Saturday night. Sunday morning when William got home, he filled the basin on the back porch with water and scrubbed and scrubbed. When his mother asked him the reason for all the scrubbing, he answered, "I'm going to church." His mother looked her amazement for a moment and then, in good old Methodist style, "shouted all over the place." Elder Long was there at church. Says Josiah, "I watched his every movement. His every step and look and word, all panted me to Christ."

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The Elder's little girl took sick. The doctor said she could not live. William heard about it and instead of going to work one night, he watched through the window until they drew the sheet up over the face from which life had gone. Elder Long came out into the yard. For a moment, he stood looking up at the stars, and then stretched his hands to God and said aloud, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken, blessed be the name of the Lord." He turned back into the house with that calm, dignified poise manifested only by men who walk with God in a crisis hour. William fell on his knees among the rose bushes, wailed out his cry for pardon and peace; but, as he said to me, "the peace did not come. I was on my way, but I did not arrive." The reason? Like most reasons that have to do with souls, this one is too deep for us. It may be that more schooling was necessary. We shall see.

Shortly after this experience with death and prayer and heart hunger, William left his job in the boiler room to teach school at Barlow, Mississippi. Barlow was twenty six miles from the railroad. Back in the country again! His life experienced a home-coming. The trees and birds and clouds were near once more. And so was God—and another man. This time it was a preacher, Pastor F. A. Grimes. Wise man, this Circuit-rider Grimes. He knew hunger for God when he saw it. These old-fashioned preachers were much more concerned about "leading men to God" than they were to be "good mixers" or "social lions." Their heart passion made them as sensitive to spiritual things as a barometer is to weather. They could *feel* a soul in need. Pastor Grimes set himself to bring William out of darkness into light. It was he who licensed William

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to exhort. But, as Josiah put it while telling me the story, "I was exhortin' others to come and git what I didn't have." I fear many another preacher has done and is doing the same thing. But, said Josiah, "I know'd I didn't have fellership and was set and determed to git it." Wise exhorter! God grant to thousands the same courage and honesty!

Then another turning point. This time it was a book. Many a man dates a new day in the calendar of life from reading a book. The present takes up into itself both the past and the future by things one finds expressed or suggested in a book, and by these, the reader sets his course. The puzzles of life, the hopes and fears and longings common to us all have been discussed and lived by men of other days. To commune with these men of the past, to listen with rapt attention while they reveal the road along which they have come, and to take advantage of their mistakes and successes is our high privilege by reading books. Books speak to us, comfort us, arouse us, terrify us, teach us and, like a beacon on a rock-bound coast, guide us into port. A book did just that for Josiah Hopkins back there when his boat was battered by a storm of confused thinking, and his soul was riven by the zig-zag lightning of doubt and fear. Somewhere, he does not remember where, and somehow, and it does not matter how, John Temple Grave's Eulogy of Henry W. Grady fell into his hands. It was the last paragraph of that masterpiece of eloquence that heaped fresh fuel upon the smoldering fire of his hunger for God. With eyes that dreamed, and in a voice hushed to worshipful cadence, Josiah quoted from memory the entire paragraph. In

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cold type, it can never bring to you, my reader, the deep emotion that stirred me as I listened. Words *are* a rickety vehicle on which to haul emotions, aren't they? But here is the paragraph. Read it and re-read it, my friend, until you have plumbed its depths:

"I have seen the headlight of a giant engine rushing onward through the darkness, heedless of opposition and fearless of danger. I have seen the lightning at midnight leap athwart a storm-swept sky, splintering chaotic darkness with beams of light until all the heavens glittered like the midday sun. I knew this was grand, but the grandest thing this side of the light that flows from God Almighty's throne, is the blessed benediction of a human life that spends itself in forgetful service for a broken-hearted world and finds its home at last in the bosom of the everlasting God."

For several seconds Josiah was busy wiping away the tears, and, truth to tell, I could see my paper only dimly. At length Josiah spoke again:

"About that time Pastor Grimes sent me to fill an appointment over at Blue Hill. I riz and took my text, '*I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.*' There wuz about seventy-five people present. I beat the pulpit and hollered and exhorted fer an hour. I wuz through preachin' in a few minutes, but I couldn't think how to close a meetin'. I knowed there wuz a benediction but I couldn't recollect it, so I jest went 'round and 'round in small circles a-tryin' to stop and couldn't. I'd come back to where I'd stopped a-fore and take a fresh start 'round the same circle. How long I'd a-been goin' 'round and 'round, I don't know, if old Brother Maples hadn't riz and histed a tune. He

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rapped his tunin' iron on a bench and do, ra, mi'd under his breath until he wuz hitched. Then he histed, 'No, Never Alone,' and I set down."

All of us have our criterion for forming our judgment of men. I have mine. I estimate a man's strength and largely his value by the effect adversity has upon him. How does he behave in the furnace? If he is gold, he, like the metal itself, will lie in the fire for months and even years without losing a grain. Certainly Josiah Hopkins was "tried in the fire." The heat was intense and the test was long. A lesser soul would have been dumped upon the dross pile and forgotten. But he was furnishing the material out of which God builds men, and as long as men keep furnishing material, God will continue the job.

So, when Pastor Grimes had made his contribution, God providentially led Josiah to Auburn, Mississippi, to teach another school. Auburn was nine miles back in the country, and many miles nearer to two experiences which were to fit him into his niche for life: God and a woman.

Came E. A. Ferguson, that redoubtable evangelist who, for years, shook this nation with his mighty message and blazed a trail to God for thousands. Young William Hogg heard him, and under his spiritual leadership came from darkness into light! At last the climb had been made. Light crowned the hill tops and set the valley ablaze! Almost at the same time, William heard that prince of Southern orators, Dr. Henry Clay Morrison. Under the spiritual spell of this great preacher's message, he hurried on to the Baptism of the Holy Ghost. His heart and tongue were set aflame and, like the Apostles after the

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day of Pentecost, he "went everywhere preaching the Gospel."

Came Virgie Marshall—a lineal descendant of Chief Justice John Marshall—to the community to teach music. The kaleidoscope of time now began to move rapidly. Event piled upon event in quick succession. It was love at first sight and marriage upon second—almost.

"When I set eyes on her," said Josiah, "I knowed I wuz ruint." Then he slyly added, "She was ruint, too." There was serious objection upon the part of Virgie's parents. "Oh, doubtless the boy is good enough, Virgie, but, thunder, girl, he's green as April apples and twice as awkward. Besides, you're a Marshall—Old Southern stock—can't have it mixed up with common—jumpin' mint juleps, daughter, can't you see it just won't do?—"

"Yes, Father," whispered Virgie, but in her heart she said, "No, I don't see—besides, I love him. The Marshalls aren't marrying him, I am—anyway—."

So off they drove in a buggy and were married. Enough to say, the Marshalls have no reason to be ashamed of him now—and, Ah reckon they aren't, sur, Ah reckon they aren't.

Well, the buggy came slowly back along the country road that serpentineed its lazy way between low-lying hills and pastoral scenes of Edenic beauty. It was "the cool of the day" and "God walked in the garden." The sunset placed a crown of splendor upon the brow of every hill, and the last notes of homing birds mingled with the soft music of tinkling cow bells, while two made one by the mystery of love, looked far up the River of Life to where it faded into years to come and lost itself in a dream

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of fame and glory. The reins were on the dash and Old Dobbin was left to pick his way among the stones and ruts. Nor was he chided when he turned aside to browse among primrose bushes. Josiah had so completely lost his head that he was oblivious of time, and the helpmeet made for him encouraged the dallying. But we must not intrude further upon this idyllic conjugal felicity.

A new spiritual experience, a new day, a new outlook upon life and a new partnership for life seemed to call for a new environment, so a move was made to Bolton, Mississippi. For two years, William and Virgie taught "readin', writin', 'rithmatic" and music at Bolton. Their "apartment" was in the school house, and here little Virginia was born.

"You see," said Josiah to me, "we sorta figgered that havin' the baby borned in the school house would give her a lift to learnin'."

Not long after little Virginia's birth, death played another leading role in the drama of William's life: a preacher died. The Presiding Elder came to William and insisted that he take the place vacated by the death of the Pastor of Red Bone Circuit. He finally added the duties of this country circuit to that of his school.

Red Bone was located "out a piece from Vicksburg," said Josiah, "and wuz a fine preachin' appintment circuit. Now that I wuz a circuit-ridin' preacher," he mused whimsically, "I sorta figgered I orta have some seminary learnin'—You know, Elder, theology and stuff like that."

That much settled, our man of Destiny began to cast about for ways and means. There were some debts, and,

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as always is the case when God is leading, there was a way. Not a magic way. There rarely is. "By the sweat of thy brow" is the established order. William was no modern "run-us-through-quick-without-sweat-or-sacrifice-and land-us-at-the-top-without-inconveniencing-us" type. He knew enough about life to know that the world did not owe him a living or anything else, until he had put the world in debt to him. His was the "root-Hogg-or-die philosophy of life—The only sensible, workable philosophy of life that has ever been written by man.

So, our William Hogg went out to root. He won a magazine contest, sold their sewing machine and furniture, and saved until the money was in hand to pay the debts and car-fare from Red Bone to Nashville, Tennessee. Here they arrived at three o'clock in the morning with exactly twenty dollars and forty cents in William's pocket. He and Virgie held a council and decided they could not afford fifty cents for a bed, so they sat in the depot until morning; that is, Virgie did. William sat until four-thirty, at which hour, he made his first major venture of faith. He walked out to the viaduct, knelt in the gray dawn beside an iron post and made a covenant with God. "I told Him," said Josiah, "that if He'd take care of me, I'd never betray Him. I'd work like a dog to bring honor to His name and fetch men into His Kingdom." God most certainly hears that kind of prayer!

But again it must be said that God's method with a man is hard work. The money to matriculate in Vanderbilt University had to be earned. And let no one feel sorry for William. Only hard places produce men, and God was and is determined to have men. Daniel, Moses,

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Paul and the whole army of men who have blessed the world were started on the road to greatness in the same Preparatory School of Hard Knocks.

William's buggy was hitched to a star, but the whip he used was heart-breaking sacrifice. So we find him selling papers and magazines on the street, with hardly sufficient clothing to protect him from the winter winds. Virgie was making equal sacrifice. Her lot was hard, and the days and nights were long. But love knows no limit but death itself. And what can a man not do backed by such devotion? Like faith, love knows but one thing: to win. Backed by such a love as Virgie gave, a man faces all opposition and discouragement shouting, "All things are possible!"

William had set himself to master the B.D. course, tough enough under the most favorable circumstances, but doubly tough under such circumstances as I have herein described. But William had nerves of steel, muscles of rawhide, a heart that knew how to break but keep on, and a faith that laughed the impossible out of countenance. Like Moses, he kept steadily on his way "as seeing Him who is invisible." Needless to say, he won, and won with flags of honor flapping in the fiercest winds the devil could whip up and blow, ice cold, down over the hills of discouragement. And this same devil, who knew that a great preacher was in the making, saw to it that he had plenty of discouragement piled upon him.

Little Virginia took pneumonia. There was no money to buy medicine. There was no money for food. William stood in front of a drug store trying to sell enough papers to fill a doctor's prescription. Discouragement,

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booted and spurred, rode him hard toward the "Valley of Despond."

"That was a dark hour," Josiah confided. "The devil almost made me fergit that covenant I made. He whispered that God didn't care and I mighty nigh believed him."

But, again, God was "in the shadows keeping watch."

"I finally got enough pennies to fill that prescription and hurried home. When I busted in through the door, Virgie met me with shinin' face and hollered, 'Look!' And would you believe it, Elder, somehow the folk had found out and made a poundin' fer us. There, heaped up on the table, wuz vittles enough to supply a road gang fer a week!" Then, very softly, "And God had tetched little Virginia. Yessir, she was mighty nigh well."

Came Dr. John A. Kern, father of Bishop Paul Kern. "As Godly a man as ever riz to preach the Gospel in the old Southland," said Josiah. "He told me that fer quite a spell he'd been a-watchin' me, and ain't it wonderful, Elder, how God sets a watch over a feller when he's set and determed to do His will?" I 'lowed it was, and Josiah continued: "Well, he sez to me, he sez, 'William, they ain't got no preacher over at Ashland City. How'd you like to take that preachin' 'pintment?' Sez I, how'd I like it? Jest like a baby'd like his bottle when it's feedin' time!"

I waited with my pencil poised for Josiah to go on with the story. His pause was so long that I began to think he had finished. I looked back over my notes and knew that couldn't be. I looked up at Josiah, then I knew the reason for the pause. He had "riz up" on his

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elbow (he was in bed. They had brought him home from the hospital the day before. "They told me I'd hafta be a mite keerful fer a spell" he had explained to me when I first went into the room. You see, he was convalescing from a major operation) and with a dreamy stare, Josiah was gazing out of the window where the soft breezes were gently stirring the fronds of a palm that brushed the side of the house. The look on his face told me that The Muse had him in far off places. At length he spoke:

"Ashland City, Elder, is Goose Creek. It was there in the Cumberland foothills that all the folk lived who I've made to live again here in the Country Church."

Again Josiah paused to dream. I waited while he walked those country roads, preached those "powerful sermons agin'" and "how'dy'd" with all the neighbors. I found myself dreaming with him, for I, too, had had experiences with a country circuit. Presently Josiah's continued narrative broke into my reverie:

"I walked those mountain roads and preached and how'dy'd with the folk and grow'd in grace like a hollyhock in black dirt. Elder, them wuz the best days me and Sarah ever know'd."

Another dreamy pause and then:

"By'n bye I got me old Dan—yessir, the old Dan the neighbors have heard about. He really lived, Elder, and so did every one of the folk I've named on the Country Church program. They ain't dummies we use to fill in; they air real folk."

Knowing this, old Dan and Lige and Obe and Joe and

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Rudy and the Professor, and all the others will have a new meaning for me, and I rather think for all of you who "listen in" to the Country Church of Hollywood.

The work that W. B. Hogg did on the Ashland City Circuit is a matter of Conference record. It was the marvel of all who heard the reports. Hundreds were converted and thousands will rise in That Day to call him blessed. Those who know, tell me that his face shone like the face of Moses, that he was as saintly as the Apostle Paul and that he preached with the eloquence of Isaiah.

Other churches heard about this "Son of Thunder" up there in the Cumberlands and began to make flattering offers. Among the Churches to make such offers was the First Methodist Episcopal Church South of Clarksville, Tennessee.

Bishop Candler was presiding Bishop at the Conference where the request of this Church was presented. He wisely refused to allow William to go. Many a boy preacher has been ruined by the pomp and flattery and wealth of a "city Church." "Youth must be served" is pure bunk when applied to preachers and preaching. A tree must take deep root before it can battle high winds successfully. Just so a preacher must have time to sink his soul roots down into God before he can successfully battle depraved pride entrenched in high places. Not only so, but age is necessary to poise and vision. Too bad our day has made the blunder of superannuating preachers when grace and years have ripened them for their best work. But we seem to like our fruit green—very green and, in the language of the street, "So, what?"

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Bishop Candler called William aside and told him the story, then added: "But I am going to send you back to Ashland City." Wise Bishop!

Back at Ashland City, William had time to ripen without rotting. Both soul and work grew mellow and mature. After several years there among those simple, godly, country folk, he was ready for the city. And to the city he went to set church after church ablaze with spiritual fire. He was at the top when——

Came the war. The Board of Missions of the Great Methodist Episcopal Church South met for the purpose of selecting ten outstanding men to represent the Church with our army at home and in France. W. B. Hogg was the first man chosen. This was an honor which any man might have coveted. It could only go to one and W. B. Hogg was the one.

To Camp Pike went Chaplain, First Lieutenant Hogg. Once there he was made Chaplain of the 312th Engineers. Shortly he was promoted to the Chaplaincy of the 87th Division. It was in this capacity that a warm friendship sprang up between Chaplain Hogg and General Sturgis, that redoubtable soldier and leader of men, which continues to this day.

We next find Chaplain Hogg in France working out of General Pershing's Headquarters with the official title of "Cheer up Chaplain." I say, "official title," because he was so designated in General Pershing's official orders.

Those of us who were "over there" know the importance of the work Chaplain Hogg was sent out to do. Men who had lived in the blood and mud and hell of the trenches, who had seen their "buddies" cut down like weeds by machine gunfire and torn limb from limb by

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exploding shells, who had seen human beings gassed until they were bloated like dead beasts, and who finally came out more insane than sane with nothing to believe in or hold to—these needed Chaplain Hogg—needed him as those who did not experience that hell of trench life can never know. Only the opening of the records in *That Day* will disclose the value of his work. There are stories that cannot be told in this world. This is one of them. Those who would know the story must so live as to be present when God, before the assembled universe, pronounces words of commendation and decorates the good and brave with heaven's highest honors.

A glimpse of Chaplain Hogg's bravery and value, and the esteem in which he was held by both the men in the lines and by his superiors, is given us in the fact that when three Chaplains were chosen to go into Germany with the Army of Occupation, he was not only chosen, but selected as number one man. And another outstanding honor must be mentioned: fifty thousand francs were cabled from New York to be given to some man or men for meritorious service. After searching the records, General Pershing selected ten men, and to Chaplain Hogg went the first thousand francs with the official message, "For meritorious and outstanding service."

From Coblenz, Germany, Chaplain Hogg was sent to Little Rock, Arkansas, on a stretcher, where she, whom we now know and love as Sarah, waited with the children—five of them: Virginia, Mary, Martha, Mildred, and William Junior.

There are some chapters of suffering in a life story which cannot be told. The night is too dark and the

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road is too long. The shadows are so haunted by spectres of pain that it would be bordering upon the sacrilegious to lift the curtain upon a past that one shudders to remember. To do so would be like tearing a breast open and ripping a heart from its place. I draw the curtain on a whole year of suffering following the Chaplain's return that must have made the cheek of Hell pale with pity.

Once out of the hospital Chaplain Hogg was destined to meet several of the greatest crises hours of his life. One had to do with finance; and it was met so heroically and sacrificially as to forever write the lie upon the shallow, cynical saying that preachers are all in it for the money.

Another had to do with the shaking of confidence in men. This, to a lesser soul, would probably wield no destructive influence on life, but to a soul as great and as sensitive as Josiah Hopkins, the shaking of confidence is a serious business indeed. I am not free to write details concerning this crisis. Like all men who know the meaning of being crucified with Christ, Josiah preferred this curtain to remain down. Suffice to say that it was this heart-break that brought the man, whom all the nation now knows as Josiah Hopkins, to a bench at the corner of Vine and Hollywood in dejection, discouragement and almost despair. But just as the setting sun sometimes uses the darkest cloud on which to paint its most gorgeous picture, out of his dark broodings and almost bitter soliloquizing, came his dream of the Country Church.

He harked all the way back to Ashland City, Tennessee, with its reality, and said to everybody, and yet to nobody,

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"We've lost that. So help me God, I'll rebuild it right here in Hollywood. In the midst of sham and shallowness and soullessness, I'll build reality!"

Came a friend—W. A. Barr, affectionately known to a host of admirers as "Billy." Billy caught Josiah's vision and backed him with sacrifice and devotion and, when the record is opened, it will disclose the fact that it was he who held up Josiah's hands as Aaron held up the hands of Moses. Later, thousands rallied with prayers and gifts and words of praise, but it was these two, together with Sarah, whose devotion never faltered, who blazed the trail.

Came the Country Church.

Came Parson Josiah Hopkins.

That the message of the Parson of Goose Creek is reality, ten thousand and ten thousand stand ready to testify. As the spire of "The Little White Church on the Hill" points to the stars, so the Parson's message points to the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." And when the redeemed sing their new song around the throne of God, and nations and tongues and kindreds and tribes and peoples pour out their praise in thunderous volume, like the sound of many waters, ten thousand and a thousand will call you, Josiah Hopkins, blessed.

Salutis, Josiah Hopkins.

Salutis, Sarah Hopkins.

Vive la Country Church!



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