B.W. Spilman

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C. Sylvester Green

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Contents

Preface

Spilman: Sunday School Seer and Statesman

The Measure of a Master

A Carolinian of first caliber and culture who in faith, hope, and love sought and wrought for the whole welfare of everybody in his native state

. . . A cosmopolitan of Christlike qualities, outspreading his sympathies and sacrificial service to all mankind, helping to girdle the globe with the gospel, and lifting everybody out of the mire to the heights of beneficence and bliss

. . . A prophet and pathfinder who in the day of small things caught a vision of the great things today and chartered a challenging course to the far greater things possible tomorrow

. . . First and foremost in a long and illustrious line of Sunday school field secretaries whose service and success in the field of religious education have been notable in the annals of Christianity

. . . Father of a teacher training system dating from the first years of our century, a veritable mustard seed already become a tree wherein the birds of heaven lodge for safety and sustenance

. . . Founder of the Ridgecrest Assembly in our South-

ern highlands whither the Baptist tribes go up to meet the Master in the mountains whence streams of refreshing waters gush forth to irrigate our desert earth and make it blossom as the rose

. . . Front-line Bible teacher and preacher, Christian seer and statesman, genial fellow-worker and steadfast friend—*Bernard Washington Spilman.*

Facets of a Manifold Ministry

. . . Yearning youth aglow with aspirant activity while in symmetrical training—home, church, school, college, seminary—for his maximum efficiency.

. . . Unashamed workman rightly dividing the word of truth as evangelist, pulpit supply, missionary, teacher, pastor, training school leader, college and seminary lecturer, author of several books and pamphlets, contributor to many periodicals.

. . . Expert parliamentarian serving four years as moderator of Neuse Association, seven years president of his state convention, twenty-five years president of the state orphanage trustees, and twenty-six years directing (as general secretary and president) the Ridgecrest Corporation.

. . . Wise philanthropist, never with much money but always a plus-tither, who gave a girls' dormitory to Mars Hill College, endowment for a department library at Wake Forest College, an outdoor theater at Meredith College, and two buildings each to Ridgecrest Assembly and Kennedy Home.

. . . Radiant humorist who financed his seminary course by a revision of his college oration "Laugh and Grow Fat" and whose mastery of Uncle Remus stories (learned in his boyhood from Negro tenants on his grandfather's farm) thrilled many an eager group around him through the years.

Contribution to Christian Culture

"The launching of the Sunday School Training Course, field work, and Ridgecrest" he regarded his chief contribution. And truly they constitute a summit of service continental and cosmopolitan.

Field Work. As a Sunday school secretary of the training type, he traversed his state again and again from the Tennessee line to the Atlantic Ocean. As the first Southwide Sunday school field secretary he served in thirty states, Canada, and Cuba.

Training Courses. The transmission of truth to trustworthy teachers was his aim and achievement in the teacher training courses he originated and promoted. With his original normal course were included a lecture course and a reading course; and soon all were vastly multiplied in number, expanded in content, and immensely popular. Training classes were formed in many churches, training schools held in many cities, associations, and state assemblies; and ere long, classes of religious pedagogy were established in all our Southern Baptist theological seminaries and in many of our high schools and colleges.

Ridgecrest. The masterpiece of a master builder was the founding of the Ridgecrest Baptist Assembly in the heart of our Southern highlands. On his motion the state convention at Raleigh in 1905 appointed a committee of five to consider the matter. Their selection of property at Swannanoa Gap was approved by the North Carolina Convention in 1906 and by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1907. The grounds were improved in 1908 and the first assembly was held in 1909.

And now for more than forty triumphal years—each embracing twenty or more conferences held in June, July, and August—the Assembly, attracting multitudes from many states and many lands, has unified and upbuilt our

co-operant churches in the faith, fellowship, and furtherance of the gospel.

Sundown in "Sunshine Corner"

The promised light of life's eventide in Christ shone steadily upon him in his Kinston home with its "Sunshine Corner." In 1950 from near and far came a great company of friends and followed his body through the steady downpour of a day's rain to his beloved First Baptist Church. There during the memorial service, the heavy cloud suddenly parted so that a burst of ineffable sunshine filled the church and flooded the city, blending in celestial beauty the glow of his sunset with the glory dawn of the Perfect Day.

Hight C Moore

Ridgecrest, North Carolina

B. W. SPILMAN
The Sunday School Man

1

Tarheel Born and Bred

LECTURE tonight. 'Laugh and Grow Fat.' At the courthouse. Come one; come all. Only twenty-five cents. That won't make you nor break you. Nor set you up in business. Nor send you down the river on a steamboat. Lecture tonight. 'Laugh and Grow Fat.' At the—"

And, in chantlike fashion, ran the voice of a large and husky hawker in the town of Lancaster, Kentucky. The time was the fall of 1893, and the scheduled speaker was twenty-two-year-old Bernard W. Spilman, student at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and a young man whose size and genial manner indicated that he practiced the advice of his lecture.

Evidently the people of Lancaster had heard enough by the time they had listened over and over to the raucous voice of the hawker. That night only enough people paid the quarter fee to compensate the hawker, the printer for the handbills and tickets, and the hotel for the lecturer's lodging.

But the lecture was not always such a financial failure, and the young man who humorously capitalized on his five-by-five stature to earn part of his way through the seminary was later to make of it an asset in the great work of promoting Sunday schools throughout the South.

Bernard Washington Spilman was born Bernard Hardee

Spilman, the son of Bushrod Washington Spilman and Helva Roxanna Barham Spilman, in Weldon, North Carolina, on Sunday, January 22, 1871. His father, a native of Westmoreland County, Virginia, was a fairly prosperous merchant and farmer at Weldon. His mother was a college graduate and came from a family which had produced many teachers and preachers. Bernard was the fourth of five children, of whom only he and an older brother, John, survived infancy.

Theirs was a happy home, and Bernard remembered his father as one of the best of men, kind to all his neighbors, and genuinely good. His mother devoted much of her time to the two boys and often told them of the good and great men in their own family, and of the great men and the great events of the section in which they lived.

Near-by lived Joseph Barham, the boys' grandfather, who was for many years a deacon and the clerk of Elam Baptist Church near Weldon. The Barham home was home to all visiting preachers who came to the community. To that home the children went often, listening to the visitors, playing around the farm, or sitting at twilight listening to old Henry Rainey tell stories of "Brer Fox, and Brer Rabbit, and all de udder critters."

The circle of the Spilman family was broken in 1877 by the death of Mr. Spilman. He left an estate consisting of a successful mercantile business, two store buildings, a residence, and a small farm a few miles from town. He had also three insurance policies of $1,000.00 each, one each for his widow and two sons. Those for the boys were earmarked for their college expenses. After the death of her husband, Mrs. Spilman moved into rooms over the store so that she might better keep an eye on the business.

Although he was only seven when his father died, Bernard carried throughout his life many memories of him—memories of home, store, and church. When he was

twelve, with the sturdy, independent reasoning that was to characterize him all his life, he decided to change his middle name from Hardee to his father's middle name of Washington. He even considered changing his first name to Bushrod, but decided against it, as his initials would be the same as his father's without that change.

A lover of sports, he was found often in the midst of any group of boys playing a game, taking good-naturedly their teasing about his fatness. As a small boy he was a first-rank hoop roller, top spinner, and stick-horse rider. With other boys he swam, raced homemade chariots, played "cat." When he was eight, he and John acquired a goat. The joint ownership caused no fussing, for both boys were too busy most of the time getting the goat out of trouble and off the dining room table, where he loved to climb, and where once he ate a plate of homemade quinine pills. The goat was especially useful when the boys put on their version of the John Robinson circus after it had visited Weldon.

With little concern for what the other boys might say, Bernard often rode to his Grandfather's farm in a small gum-wheel cart to which he hooked a calf in lieu of the pony he didn't own.

The boys went to church regularly, at Elam when they were visiting their grandparents, and at Weldon when they were home. But only the Methodist church had a Sunday school. The people there invited Mrs. Spilman to send her two boys, but she hesitated at first. She wanted them to go to Sunday school, but she wasn't satisfied to send them to another church. Then she hit upon the idea of going herself and teaching them, an arrangement that was thoroughly agreeable to the Methodists.

Bernard's early schooling was a hodgepodge. Private instruction was given in the home of local women—first a Mrs. Nicholson, then Mrs. Tilghman, then Miss Allen, and later a Mr. Wade. In these early schooldays Bernard

often rode piggy-back to school—a fat little boy of eight, holding tight a blueback speller, and riding a white hog down the lane.

But the cultured and educated Mrs. Spilman could not be satisfied with such fragmentary schooling for her sons, and soon sent them to the Garysburg Academy, to which they walked the two and a half miles every day for a year.

The instruction of Mr. Fetter, who operated the academy, was good, but his discipline was unduly severe. He had a rigid system of demerits, charged five at a time, and given for inconsequential things. When a student accumulated twenty-five, the fireworks started. Bernard was never in any real trouble, but near the close of the term he had twenty demerits. On next to the last Thursday, Mr. Fetter announced: "Bernard, I am giving you five demerits. I don't want to close the year with any unpaid ones on my books. No, you haven't done anything. But be ready for a whipping tomorrow afternoon."

When Bernard went home, he took with him everything that belonged to him and a determination never to return. His mother supported him in that decision.

Some other means of education had to be found, and the next year his mother sent him to live in the home of a cousin in Wilson and attend Wilson's free public school. There he was taught by "the best teacher I ever had," Miss Marguerite Hearne, better known as "Miss Maggie."

That summer, 1883, while he was home, two Wake Forest ministerial students came to Weldon working as volunteers under the secretary of the Baptist state convention. The Weldon Baptist Church was small and weak, and the young ministers, D. M. Austin and Jacob Lee White, were welcomed. Mrs. Spilman invited them into her home for dinner. While there, White laid his hand on Bernard's head and quoted John 3:18, "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned

already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

Years later Spilman said: "It stuck. After dinner, when the ministers were gone, I sat in the back hall looking out into the darkness, though the sun was shining. Mother came and sat by me and explained to me again the way of salvation, and I accepted Jesus. My brother and I were baptized the same day—Sunday, July 1, 1883—by M. V. McDuffie, then pastor in Henderson, in the pool in the Baptist church at Weldon. Seventeen of us joined the church, just about doubling its membership.

"The next Sunday my mother gave me a church envelope and explained to me that Christ's people always shared their gifts with the Lord. From that day to this the church envelope has had something in it every Sunday. All through my hard college days and two years of seminary, I shared with the Lord."

Both Bernard and John went to school in Wilson the next year, and won continuous recognition. It became a byword that no one else need compete since "the Spilman boys were in the room." Either John, then eighteen, or Bernard, twelve, walked off with all honors.

When school closed, Bernard went back to Weldon for the summer. John, admired by Bernard far beyond the usual devotion for an elder brother, had a summer job in a machine shop at twenty-five cents a day, and Bernard, too, became fascinated by the idea of working with machinery. Hoping some day to be a blacksmith, he got a job at D. C. Richardson's shop at "nothing a day and board at home." Not wanting to postpone his first practical experience too long, he decided to shoe the goat, still in the family after five years. For this project, Mr. Richardson's son William was enlisted. But the goat didn't like the idea and completed his earthly career unshod.

In the fall of 1884 Bernard and John entered the Horner

Military School at Henderson, operated by a saintly Baptist minister, Rev. T. J. Horner, and his son, William D. Horner. One of Bernard's teachers at Horner was the brilliant Stephen B. Weeks, later a teacher of history at Trinity College (now Duke University), whose interest in historical data was contagious. Inspired by Weeks, Bernard became an inveterate collector of historical items and of statistical information.

In January, 1886, Bernard transferred to the Littleton High School, a private school operated in the town of Littleton, by Professor L. W. Bagley and popularly known as the Bagley School. The personal influence of both Professor and Mrs. Bagley and the spiritual atmosphere of the school gave direction to the personal Christian devotion of young Spilman. He began to feel that he should prepare himself for some definite religious service, and preaching was the only kind he knew.

When school opened in the fall of 1886, young Spilman was back in Littleton at the home of the Bagleys, after a summer of manual labor. The Littleton Methodists had a Sunday afternoon laymen's prayer meeting to which he and other students went regularly. Each man who conducted the meeting appointed a leader for the following Sunday. On Sunday, November 14, the leader announced that "young Brother Bernard Spilman will have charge of the meeting next Sunday."

This was Bernard's opportunity. He decided to get up a sermon "to see if he could preach." When the time for the service arrived, the church was filled with people who had come to hear a fifteen-year-old schoolboy "break loose and preach." In the course of his first sermon, he announced his intention to enter the ministry. Thus he found his call to the ministry in *doing* the thing that was to be his work.

His decision to enter the ministry brought great happiness not only to him but also his mother and brother

John, and to the Bagleys and other friends in Littleton. In the months that followed he preached in quite a few places, and through the years people used to tell him that they heard his "first sermon," though chances were that they had heard just one of the first, when he was beginning to preach.

Soon after the announcement of his decision to preach, he was asked to teach a class of boys in the Baptist church in Littleton. This he did for the remainder of the year, and from that day on he was a teacher as well as a preacher.

On Sunday, May 8, 1887, he was licensed to preach in his own church in Weldon and a few weeks later accepted his first denomination job at the age of sixteen.

In those days in almost all district associations union meetings were held every fifth Sunday. There were several "unions" in the Tar River Association, and one in the upper end, known as the Warren Union, was quite active. When it met in Weldon, May 27–29, Bernard Spilman was elected as secretary.

Bernard accepted almost every speaking engagement offered him, with a perfect willingness and without any self-consciousness about his size or age, or questioning of his own ability. He welcomed the opportunity to get the experience and to be of service. His willingness got him into trouble once that summer. While attending an annual Children's Day celebration at Jarratt, he was asked to speak at the afternoon session, for which no speaker had been provided. He had prepared an "oration" that he expected to give at a community picnic at another place the next day; and, confident that none of the same people would be there, he proceeded to deliver his speech. The next day at the picnic, he stood on the porch of a store to deliver his oration, looked over the crowd, and saw almost exactly the same audience as of the day before.

"I opened my mouth a time or two, gulped a bit,

grunted a few times, and sat down without uttering a single word. Thus ended the speechmaking for the day. We ate dinner and went home. I was speechless on the way home, but I recall quite well what Uncle Charles said to me, 'Laws, laws, you made a perfect fist of it.' "

But the combination of incidents was not without value, for at the first meeting he had heard a sermon by Dr. John Mason Pilcher, an ardent advocate of Sunday schools. For the first time he was impressed with the important of colportage work—the distributing of good books—and of improving the conditions of Sunday schools.

In the fall of 1887 he entered Wake Forest College. His brother John had gone there before him. When Bernard left home, he did not leave his mother alone, for she had married W. H. Brown of Weldon, a good man but of poor business judgment. The family still lived in the four rooms over the store, and Mr. Brown undertook the management of the store.

Through the years they were at home together, John and Bernard had shared a room, with a bed, a table, and a bookshelf for each. Mrs. Spilman kept them supplied with reading matter. When one good book was finished by either of them, another would be on the table waiting for them the next day.

When asked later how she knew so well what boys would like to read, she replied that she had kept in touch with Dr. R. T. Vann, prominent North Carolina Baptist minister and later president of Meredith College, from the time they reached the reading age. An occasional letter to him would bring a list of books and a recommendation as to periodicals. The books were by no means all religious. Bernard read *Tom Sawyer* eight summers in succession.

With such a reading background at home, with the excellent preparation from Bagley's and the Horner Academy, and with a seemingly natural ability to give his whole

self to the task at hand until he had finished it, Bernard went to college. The first year the young ministerial student registered for mathematics, Latin, and Greek. During his four years he took everything in mathematics that the college had to offer: algebra, geometry, trigonometry, analytical geometry, calculus, mechanics, physics, surveying, navigation, and astronomy. He graduated with a degree of Bachelor of Science.

A methodical timing marked everything that he did. He had a fine flute that he played fairly well. Exactly at midnight each night he would stop studying, walk out under the magnolias, play a tune or two, and then go to bed. Some of the fellows declared they knew it was 12:02 A.M. when they heard the first note on the flute, and they checked their watches accordingly.

But his methodical planning cleared the way for full participation in the extra-curricular life of the campus.

After the first summer vacation, when he helped in some evangelistic meetings in August, he set about to make himself useful in church work. He went to the Wake Union church about a mile west of the college and there each Sunday morning taught a class of men. They were rather elderly men, all of them, and they told him that they had held the class intact since the days of Matthew T. Yates, who had been their teacher when he was a student at Wake Forest and they were very small boys. He frequently visited in their homes on Saturdays.

Then on Sunday afternoons he went to Forestville, a mile to the south of Wake Forest, to teach a class of boys. Between the two Sunday school classes he walked back to the campus to attend morning worship in the college chapel.

A devout member of the Forestville church was L. Crocker Dunn. Mr. Dunn had been crippled most of his life, and he owned an old army ambulance, usually drawn

by two gray mules, that he used each Sunday to travel the five miles from his home to the church. On the way he would pick up enough children to make a fairly good-sized Sunday school class.

When the famous Sam Jones was holding a meeting in Durham, Mr. Dunn heard Spilman and some of the other students say they wished they could hear him preach, but that twenty-three miles was too far to go. He immediately insisted that the boys take the old army ambulance and his mules and make the trip. A dozen piled in and set out on Friday afternoon. That night they slept in a barn, and the next morning they went on into Durham. They heard the preacher, went out of the city that night and slept again in a barn, and returned to Wake Forest on Sunday.

Under the auspices of the Y.M.C.A., John R. Mott and Fletcher S. Brockman came to the Wake Forest campus and held a series of meetings. Dr. Mott called for volunteers for the foreign field and asked all who had definitely decided to go to a foreign field to retire to an adjoining classroom. Although he had said very little about it, Spilman had been thinking of himself as a medical missionary, and he felt that he should go to the special meeting.

At the door Dr. Mott asked him whether he had definitely made a decision. When faced with the directness of Dr. Mott's question, he could only answer that he had been seriously considering the matter. Dr. Mott replied: "You cannot take part in this conference unless you have made a definite decision." Spilman turned away disappointed. Never again did he have any impression that he should be a foreign missionary.

About that same time, in the spring of 1889, the secretary of the Baptist state convention, Dr. Columbus Durham, called on all district associations to organize Sunday school conventions. Central Association, in which Wake Forest was located, fell in line. When its meeting was

held, the Wake Forest student who had been teaching two Sunday school classes was elected secretary.

Spilman took the job seriously. The next fall, in his junior year, he gave up his Sunday school classes to devote as much time as possible to the Sunday school convention. Every week end he traveled to some of the churches. Most of the time he went on foot, and often he made as much as thirty or forty miles between Friday afternoon and Sunday night. He learned by name nearly all of the Sunday school superintendents in the association, and when a statewide Sunday school convention was held in Raleigh in the spring of 1891, Spilman not only went but took a group with him.

When he took the job, there was no provision for financial compensation for the work. But when the money his father had left for his education had been exhausted and the family's business was failing under the administration of the well-meaning but unbusinesslike Mr. Brown, he appealed to the Baptist state convention for help. During his last two years at Wake Forest he received an average of $6.00 a month from the convention to pay his board. In the meantime, some of the boys had gone together to form a boarding club, and their expenses never exceeded $6.25 a month.

In addition to his Sunday school work, he attended many fifth Sunday meetings in both Wake and Franklin counties, and made many friends in that section of the state.

While his Sunday school work occupied a large part of his week ends, he had time during the week to take part in athletics, literary societies, and clubs. He was the founder of the Wake Forest Scientific Society for which Dr. William Louis Poteat served as adviser.

Wake Forest had two literary societies, and Spilman was a "Eu." He started as chaplain of the Euzelian Society his first year, and went through the entire list of offices, serv-

ing as president his senior year. The society provided an excellent opportunity for public appearances, and all of the members were required to engage in debates and deliver essays and orations. The "critics," usually seniors, were very severe in their observations, and some work of high quality was done in the meetings.

He played on the varsity baseball team, usually as catcher, but occasionally as first baseman. During the summers he played for his home town of Weldon in the little league, and in 1890 turned in a perfect season. The saying was that a baseball just couldn't "get around that fat catcher from Weldon."

While Spilman was in college, football went from the old kicking type to the Rugby game. He took no part except to play as center on the scrub team to give practice to the regulars, but he was at all the games, yelling himself hoarse and whooping it up for the varsity.

When the game was first introduced in North Carolina, in the fall of 1889, Wake Forest played a series of three games. The old baseball team was called out and put to playing football. First Wake Forest played the University of North Carolina and won by an enormous score as scores went then, some thirty-odd to nothing. A little later Trinity College in Durham defeated the university, and that greatly frightened Wake Forest, soon to play Trinity.

So the Wake Forest boys held a meeting in the college chapel to raise a fund to do something about it. At that time Lehigh University was famous for its football team. They wired Lehigh to send them a football coach by "return mail," and agreed to pay him $40.00 a week and his expenses. When he arrived, he was none other than Wallace Carl Riddick, former Wake Forest student and graduate of the University of North Carolina, then working on a degree at Lehigh. Later he became president of North Carolina State College.

Riddick took the whole college group, weighed them in at the gymnasium, tested their strength, and organized a team. Men went into football who had never played a game of any kind before. Riddick fed the boys raw beef and drilled them every afternoon for two weeks. When they finally met Trinity College, Trinity went down in defeat on the small end of a big score.

In his senior year, Spilman was chosen as the class orator. He prepared a commencement oration on "The Psychology of Laughter." When his faculty adviser, Dr. Charles E. Brewer, read it, he advised him to drop that title and pick up in its stead a phrase from the opening sentence, "Laugh and Grow Fat." The humor of the speech, combined with the appropriateness of its being delivered by the good-natured and rotund Spilman, made the address immediately popular.

But Spilman had little time to think about the success of his oration, for he had a real financial problem on his hands, one that involved his last $2.50, with which he had been planning to buy a ticket home.

The family fortunes had gone from bad to worse. The mercantile business had failed; the farm had been sold, and Mr. Brown was working at odd jobs wherever he could. Bernard's mother had been making aprons and selling them to get a few dollars to send to him at school, and had even mortgaged the home-place to get enough money to see him through.

Now, just before commencement time, he was down to his last $2.50, only to find that he would have to use it to pay his assessment for the commencement speaker, who happened to be Dr. John A. Broadus, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Hurriedly he wrote home to ask his mother if she could scrape up enough money for a ticket to Weldon. Commencement time came, the day was over, and the dormi-

tory was about to be closed. He persuaded "Dr. Tom," dean of the college janitors, to help him get his trunk out on the campus under the trees. If a money order came, Dr. Tom was to receive ten cents to take the trunk to the depot. If it did not come, Dr. Tom was to keep the trunk, and Spilman would set out on foot for home. He calculated to make it in three days by walking fairly fast each day.

The afternoon train brought the money order. Dr. Tom got his ten cents, and Bernard Spilman arrived home shortly after midnight.

Years later, when he expressed his appreciation to his mother for the sacrifices she had made to educate him and his brother, she said:

"There is another side to that story. It was a sacrifice. We had hard living and had to stint to the point of real hardship. But the other side to it is that you and John accepted the opportunity and made good. That is worth all that it cost."

2

"Swamp Theology" Pays Off

THE summer months slipped away, and no opportunity for ministerial service presented itself. More than anything else, he would have liked to go on to the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville for further preparation, but that, he knew, was financially impossible. He was twenty-one years old, had a college degree, a store of Uncle Remus stories to tell, and a call to preach.

He began to wonder, had he been mistaken in thinking that the Lord wanted him as a minister of the gospel? Perhaps, by not opening up the way for him to preach, God was showing him that he had mistaken the call.

He set out to secure a position as a schoolteacher. An offer came from Franklin, North Carolina, far up in the mountains, just to "come up and take over the building and work up a school." All he could make would be his—that was the way many locals were run in those days. He decided to try it.

Leaving Weldon, he went to Wake Forest, to the home of his "patron saint," the man with the ambulance, L. Crocker Dunn. There, in the current issue of the *Biblical Recorder,* he read a note written by Rev. O. L. Stringfield about a place where he had recently held a meeting: Smyrna, on the coast east of Morehead City. The article

said that three little churches were without a pastor and wanted one.

Spilman knew that Stringfield was then living in Wakefield, about twenty miles east of Raleigh, where he had a large school. Borrowing a horse and buggy from Mr. Dunn, he set out for Wakefield, only to find that Mr. Stringfield was out of town. Dejectedly he journeyed back to the home of Mr. Dunn. Gone was his hope that the door to the ministry might still be open. He wrote to Franklin that he would be along in a few days to open the school.

On September 24 he headed for Franklin. While waiting for the train in Raleigh, he checked his luggage at the depot, then went up town and wandered aimlessly around. While he was standing on a street corner debating which way to take, along came Mr. Stringfield himself. Spilman poured out the story of his trip to Wakefield a few days before. Slapping his knee and laughing, Stringfield said: "The Lord sent you right here. Come on. Let's go see Dr. Durham."

Together they walked to the state secretary's office. Dr. Durham was out of the city. Again Spilman thought the door was closed. But Stringfield was insistent. "No. You go to Smyrna. I know what I'm talking about."

He was so convincing as to the need at Smyrna and so sure that the state mission board would stand by him that Spilman wired Hight Moore: "Will arrive in Morehead City on afternoon train." Moore, a close friend at Wake Forest, was pastor of the First Baptist Church at Morehead.

In a few minutes' time his destination had been changed from a schoolhouse in the western North Carolina mountains to a pastorate in an isolated area of sand dunes and fish and swamps on the Atlantic coast.

Stringfield wrote the people at Smyrna that the young preacher was on the way and to get ready to "nab him on

sight." They did just that. The day after his arrival in Smyrna, Spilman preached at the Smyrna church. The next Sunday he went to Davis, and the next to Woodville, a small church between Ward's Creek and North River. At each church he preached as earnestly as he knew how, met the people, talked with them, enjoyed their hospitality, and received a call to become pastor.

He knew that he would need to be ordained, and since his home church at Weldon was too far away, he asked the church at Beaufort to ordain him. They readily agreed to do so, and the ordination was arranged for the last day of the annual Atlantic Association session.

Although God had led him away from a schoolteaching job, he soon found himself teaching school. The Smyrna people had built quite a good two-story schoolhouse alongside the church and had appropriated $25.00 for the school year. The school committee asked the young minister to take the school and "teach out the money." There was one difficulty. He had no license to teach. He had to stand an examination; and in trying to find out what would be expected of him, he became fearful that he would not be able to pass the specific examination on Page's *Theory and Practice of Teaching*. He wrote to Raleigh for a copy of the book, but word came back that it was out of stock.

The examination was given in Beaufort. Most of the questions dealt with things he had learned from "the best teacher I ever had," Miss Marguerite "Maggie" Hearne back in Wilson. Then came Page on the scene. Spilman had never read a line of the book. He had never studied pedagogy. He offered a little prayer to the saints, specifically "St. Maggie," in words like these: "Do you remember a little boy who went to school to you back yonder in 1882 in Wilson? Stand by me." Then he would ask himself, "What did Miss Maggie do under this condition?" He passed the exam with flying colors.

Four weeks were just enough to whet the appetite of the people for a school. They raised an additional $25.00 and ran the school for another month. "Some school it was," Spilman once declared, "—the best in the county, outside of Morehead City and Beaufort."

The school building was also used for a weekday Bible school which Spilman conducted throughout the year. The school proved very popular in the community and gave him an opportunity to do some real Bible teaching.

Concerned about expanding his field, he bought a small boat, sixteen feet long, had a sail made for it, and put on the boat a topsail and flying jib. It served as transportation across the creek and as a connection between various swamp paths that went in and around Smyrna.

The woods around Smyrna were full of bears. Once a bear got in his boat with him and forced him to ferry him across the creek a quarter of a mile or more, then trotted off, glancing back as if to say, "Thanks for the ride." Shortly after Spilman's arrival in Smyrna a huge bear, his tracks measuring seven inches across, caught a hog just a few feet from the young minister's window.

The trip from Smyrna to Woodville lay in a dense jungle with no road at all, just a blazed trail that was never traveled alone. Usually two to four men in the community would volunteer to go with the young preacher along the trail when he went to Woodville to preach and then meet him when he was due back on Monday morning.

About three miles from Smyrna was Marshallburg, the home of several faithful members of the Smyrna church. They wanted the young preacher to come and preach to their neighbors. He arranged to use the school building and preach there twice a month—the two moonlight Thursday nights in each month. After he left the pastorate at Smyrna, a church was organized at Marshallburg as a result of his work.

But the principal achievement of the year was the enlarging of the church at Smyrna. Because he lived in the Smyrna community and had an opportunity to know more about the people, it was easier for him to concentrate on the development of the work there. He preached at Smyrna six times a month, and just before each sermon he would take about ten to fifteen minutes to explain some phase of the denominational program. He brought the denominational papers, the *Biblical Recorder* and the *North Carolina Baptist,* to the people and encouraged all who could possibly afford to do so to subscribe to one of the papers.

In addition, he encouraged his members to attend the fifth Sunday meetings with him. In May, 1892, such a meeting was held at Trenton. That was a two-day journey by private boat from Smyrna to New Bern, then by passenger boat up the Trent River to Trenton. On that trip the pastor was assigned the job of cooking. But after trying to eat his biscuits, the party agreed that he would make a better deck hand.

Spilman had not caught the idea that giving was a real act of public worship and did not take a public offering during the entire year, a fact that he always regretted later.

Financing the church and giving to the various missionary objects was interestingly handled. He would simply announce that anyone who had an offering to make should hand it to the financial secretary, Miss Effie Willis, who lived next door to the church. Once an old saint of God took him for a walk up the road and asked him, for the sake of the kingdom, to let up on all "them mission things you talk about every time you preach." He explained that the folks were flocking to Miss Effie with funds and that all would go bankrupt and the preacher would not receive a cent of the small salary he had been promised.

The previous year the church had given $8.35 to missions, education, and the orphanage. Spilman encouraged them to try putting on a program of giving and to send their offerings quarterly to the association. When the year ended, the oldest deacon suggested that they appoint a committee to get up money to be sent to the association. The preacher reminded him that they need not do that, since they had already sent in quite an amount and the financial secretary had the report ready. Miss Willis read the report. A bit more than $135.00 had gone to the various causes. The deacon wiped his hand across his forehead and said, "My grade, I hope! Whoever heard of anything like that!"

At the end of the year, even more aware of his need of further preparation for the ministry than he had been when he left Wake Forest, Spilman began to make his plans to go to the seminary for a year. His salary from all sources—the state mission board, the three churches, and teaching—had been $350.00. But room, board, light, fuel, and laundry, all, had cost him only $6.25 a month, and he felt that he could manage one year at Louisville.

It had been interesting to watch the people develop. He had been not only their pastor and teacher, but friend and companion. He had introduced the game of baseball to the young people, he had entertained them in the evenings with Uncle Remus stories, he had organized the "Seaside Scientific Society," he had had Hight C Moore over for a revival meeting. He had learned that you do not joke with those you do not like.

But he felt that he had received more from the people than he had given them. The people there taught him how they could love a preacher. And as he had applied his knowledge to the needs of the people, he had received a course in "swamp theology" that could not be taught in any seminary.

Before he left, the college friend he had recommended to them as pastor had arrived and preached his first sermon—on Sunday, September 18, 1892. For years afterward the people talked, and chuckled, about Happo Mathews' first sermon. He had taken for his text Exodus 4:4—"Put forth thine hand and take it by the tail."

On Monday morning the one bank pony—a wild pony captured on the Outer Banks of North Carolina—that belonged to everybody in the village was requisitioned and hooked to a cart. The preacher's small trunk containing his clothes, his money in a shot bag, and his library were put on the cart. He walked beside it from Smyrna to Marshallburg, to go with the mailman to Beaufort, thence to Morehead City and by train by way of Goldsboro to Weldon.

About half of the population went with him part of the way. One of them who told about it later said, "The men talked a bit, and every woman wept silently, and many of the children wailed aloud."

After a few days in Weldon, the young minister took a circuitous route to Louisville, by way of Baltimore and Washington, D. C. He arrived in Louisville late in the evening, and spent the night at the Victoria Hotel. The next morning he went to the seminary and was assigned to a room with William E. Crocker, one of his friends from Wake Forest, who later became a missionary in northern China.

Immediately Spilman ran into difficulty. He did not have an ordination certificate and could not enroll in the seminary. President Broadus suggested that he audit the classes and write at once for the certificate. It was a whole month before the chairman of the council was able to get the certificate made out, signed, and dispatched to him.

Louisville was a new world to Spilman. The stores were open on Sunday. Saloons were wide open. Trucks pulled

by horses moved through the streets of the city. Business in certain sections was always going with a rush. He was surprised that people passed each other on the street without deigning to speak to one another.

Classes at the seminary were a shock to him.

At Smyrna he had had no study, and in the forest back of the village, out of range but not far enough from the village for the bears to be numerous, he had built a retreat that he called "Camp Solitude," a sort of booth with a seat in it. There he went often to meditate and to pray, to read his Bible, to study, and to dream of the years ahead.

There he had made his plans to go to the seminary. He envisioned classes in which the teachers would tell him how to preach, and he thought of all that he would like to do while in the city. He even made out a list of things he was going to study on his own there with a large library available.

When the first lesson was assigned by Dr. Broadus, four hours were required just to read it, not to mention really studying it.

Wake Forest students at the seminary remembered Bernard Spilman's love of a prank, and they counted him in on theirs. Since it was his first year there, however, he decided not to risk involving himself in more than "silent partnership."

One evening the boys in New York Hall spread molasses on sheets of newspapers, placed them in front of doors all over the building, and put molasses on some of the doorknobs. About midnight they raised an alarm that a robber was in the building. There was much rushing about in the hall. A policeman on the street heard the racket, rushed into the yard, fired his pistol into the air in front of the building to give the alarm, and went in.

Knowing about it, Spilman was not caught, but he went out to see the fun—the young preachers in various degrees

of night garb, many of them carrying lamps (since there were no electric lights, and gas was used only in the halls), walking up and down the halls, their feet covered with sheets of paper.

The boys had stopped the gas jets with putty so they could not be lighted. A good friend of Spilman's was Henry F. Cope, fresh from England. When Cope complained that he could not turn on the gas in the hall, Spilman told him to take a pin and get the putty out, and then he could light it.

Cope asked, "Do you in America shut off the gas with putty?"

"Of course we do," Spilman said, "how else can it be done?"

"Why in England we never think of doing it that way. This little stopcock will shut it off perfectly."

But Spilman held his ground that it could not be done that way, that putty had to be used. By that time several fellows had gathered, and Cope gave them some lessons in shutting off the gas. All appeared skeptical. The Britisher called on all the saints living and dead to prove that in England nobody ever thought of such an absurd idea as shutting off gas with putty.

Spilman went with Crocker, his roommate, to the Walnut Street Baptist Church, of which Dr. T. T. Eaton was pastor. Dr. Eaton also served as editor of the *Western Recorder*, Kentucky Baptist paper. He was tall, with a full beard, quick and rather jerky in his speech, but one of the great preachers of his time, and had been a stalwart advocate of the founding of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board the preceding year. At Walnut Street they attended a Bible class taught by Dr. William Heth Whitsitt, professor of church history at the seminary.

Later in the year, a friend, W. H. Hubbard, urged Spilman to go with him to the Broadway Baptist Church,

which had just recently called Dr. William Lowndes Pickard from the First Baptist Church, Birmingham.

Mrs. Pickard had organized a Bible class for seminary and medical students, and Hubbard was in that class. From the very first Sunday Spilman was fascinated with Mrs. Pickard's class, and went to Walnut Street only on special occasions after that. He had been smoking a pipe ever since his early teens, but Mrs. Pickard spoke one Sunday in such a gentle, courteous way about smoking, showing that it would be so much better not to smoke, that from that day on, tobacco had no place in Spilman's life.

Knowing how much literary societies had meant at Wake Forest, Spilman called together a group of students at the seminary and organized the Broadus Literary Society. He wrote the constitution and was elected the first president. They did some good work and had a few public debates. But the seminary men took more to literary clubs than to debating groups, and the society was short-lived.

Led by Spilman, a group of students organized the James Whitcomb Riley Club and spent much time reading the poems of Riley, then a popular household poet. Spilman often substituted his Uncle Remus stories for the poems, and had the club members begging for more.

Students at the seminary did a vast amount of missionary work throughout the city of Louisville, holding Sunday schools at various places in the afternoon and preaching services at night. Spilman volunteered to help with a mission called Marker's Hall, and also worked in the evenings at a place called "The Point," down on the river.

The highlight of Spilman's first year at the seminary, however, was that lecture, "Laugh and Grow Fat."

Students who had heard it as a commencement oration at Wake Forest asked him to give it at the seminary. Its fame spread into the city. He was asked to deliver it as a feature of an annual entertainment program at a down-

town business college. From that time on, he received a steady stream of invitations from other schools, local churches, and societies in Kentucky and Indiana. Once in Winchester, Kentucky, the lecture was being delivered in a church house. The people were not at all responsive. Not a soul in the church laughed, and few even smiled. After the lecture, which Spilman himself had not enjoyed, a small, sweet-faced woman wearing a veil came to the front, pushed the veil back, and said: "Mr. Spilman, I thoroughly enjoyed the lecture. I came nearer laughing in church than I ever did in my life."

The lecture became more and more humorous as he added to it for each delivery. And when school was out, he still had lecture engagements to fill before he could go home to North Carolina.

He went home with no expectation of being able to return to the seminary in the fall, for he had spent all that he had saved and had needed the income from his lecture engagements to help with his expenses.

But when he reached home, he was invited to serve as supply pastor at the Memorial Baptist Church in Greenville, North Carolina. The money paid him made it possible for him to plan for another year at the seminary, and he looked forward to getting his degree there.

While in Greenville he attended a teachers' institute conducted by Superintendent Alexander Graham of the Charlotte city schools. Near its close, Ben Hardy, then agent for the *News and Observer*, went to Greenville, and the teachers asked Hardy and Spilman to give an entertainment in the courthouse.

The next morning a Greenville citizen remarked that from the uproar he had heard way out at his house one of two things must have been true. Either a certain well-known citizen of Greenville was on a big drunk and had been placed in jail, or Ben Hardy was in town.

That same day, as Spilman walked down the street, a rather corpulent Negro woman met him and with a broad grin said, "I was up in dat co'thouse last night, and I 'clare to gracious yo' sho' does talk the most like a colored man of any white man I'se ever heard."

A friend arranged for him to give his "Laugh and Grow Fat" lecture in Washington, North Carolina, that summer. As there was no railroad to Washington, he went by steamer from Greenville. On the boat coming back the next day, he met a man who asked him if he had heard the lecture in the courthouse the night before. Spilman asked him what kind of lecture, and he replied that a fellow by the name of Spilman, who lived in Kentucky, had delivered it. Spilman asked more questions, and for half an hour the man gave a glowing account of the entertainment.

When the two walked into the hotel in Greenville together, the proprietor said, "Glad to see you back, Mr. Spilman. Hope you had a full house in Washington last night." His friend looked straight at him for about a second, dropped his suitcase on the floor, and said simply, "Well, I'll be —."

When he returned to Louisville, in the fall of 1893, there went with him his cousin, Thomas M. Green, who had been an agent for the Life Insurance Company of Virginia, working in Portsmouth and Suffolk.

Green became Spilman's business manager for his lecture tours, and they divided the profits. In the early spring, Green became ill and was compelled to return to his home in Virginia.

With his money all gone and no source from which to get more, Spilman decided soon after Tom Green left that he, too, would have to leave school. In his desperation, before making a final decision, he went to a park far out on Fourth Avenue, sat under a tree, and thought the matter through. Returning, he went immediately to the home of

President Broadus and told him that his money was all gone. Dr. Broadus asked how much he would need. Spilman replied that $20.00 would make it possible for him to remain until other money would be available.

With a pleasant smile Dr. Broadus reached into a pigeonhole in his desk, pulled out an envelope, and said, "A friend recently handed me this and said if some student came along who really needed help, to let him have it." The envelope contained a twenty-dollar bill.

The diploma, however, was still elusive. Spilman himself became ill near the end of the session and missed two of his examinations. Some years later he made a request of President Mullins that he be allowed to study in the Ridgecrest Summer School of Theology and to stand the examinations on those two subjects to receive his diploma. But Dr. Mullins could not see his way clear to grant the request and said that Spilman would have to take a full year of study in the seminary in order to get the credit. So he never received his diploma.

Once again Spilman was out of school and without a definite opportunity of service. After filling a few lecture engagements in the eastern part of Virginia, he spent some time at his home in Weldon, and about the first of July received an invitation to go to New Bern to supply the church there for two months. When that work was finished, he went again to Smyrna, where he had spent such a happy year as pastor, and supplied the group of churches there during the fall months. Mathews had resigned as pastor the preceding summer.

In November a letter came from a college friend, James A. McDaniel, in Kinston, asking him to come to Kinston on a week day for a conference with a group of the church members there. He went and was a guest in the McDaniel home for a few days. Kinston was a village of about fifteen hundred people. There were no paved streets or side-

walks, no electricity, no city water system, and no telephones. The business district was small, but there was an air of culture and refinement about the village and in its many beautiful homes.

While he was there, Spilman conducted prayer meeting at the First Baptist Church. A short time after that, the church called him as pastor. The doors were opening again, and again he told his Smyrna friends good-by.

He entered the pastorate at Kinston on January 1, 1895, and went to live in the home of Dr. and Mrs. Richard H. Lewis, who had a school next to their home.

Although Kinston was to be "home" to him for the rest of his life, Bernard W. Spilman was to be pastor there for only fifteen months. At that time the church was worshiping in an inadequate structure of one room, and there were churches in the city with memberships that overwhelmed that of the Baptist church.

It had been less than a year since illness had kept him from getting his diploma. Just a month after he began his work in Kinston, he was stricken with pneumonia. His mother came from Weldon to help him back to health, and then he returned to Weldon for a short period of recuperation. While he was there, he had a letter from Mrs. Lewis saying that a fire had destroyed a whole block in Kinston. From then until the middle of June incendiary fires destroyed almost the entire business section of Kinston, as well as many private residences. Finally detectives rounded up a group of alleged arsonists, and the reign of terror ended in Kinston.

The series of fires left the town a mass of charred ruins, and its social and economic life almost broken. Although Spilman supplied the inspiration for a new church building, actual construction did not begin for several years. A town had to be rebuilt first.

Because of the failure in business of his stepfather, Spil-

man deemed it wise to move his mother and her husband to Kinston. So he rented a large residence there and by the middle of 1895 had them well established.

Spilman's interest in Sunday schools had never lagged since the days when he tramped the area around Wake Forest in behalf of them. That summer, 1895, he attended the North Carolina Baptist Sunday School Chautauqua, conducted in a large open-air tabernacle at Red Springs. The chautauqua was in reality a school of methods, with demonstrations in both administration and teaching, and with a discussion of the methods used in the demonstrations. An open forum, with the audience asking questions, would follow. The teaching demonstrations showed Sunday school classes for the different age groups—primary, junior, intermediate, and adult.

Some such plan of teaching Sunday school methods ought to be available to the local churches, thought Spilman, and he sought out Needham B. Broughton, who was in charge of the chautauqua and who had conducted the first one in the state in 1893. Broughton was a member of the Tabernacle Baptist Church in Raleigh, which then had probably the largest Sunday school in the South.

Spilman talked over his idea with Broughton and with others. As an experiment he decided to try the type of meeting he had in mind with a group of churches in Carteret County, including the Smyrna, Davis, and Woodville churches. The meeting was quite successful. All of the churches invited reported, and several people came from "up state." There was even a romance between two of the elected officers.

That fall, 1895, Spilman attended his first Baptist state convention. One of the main items of business to come before the convention was a report on a plan to inaugurate a definite Sunday school program for the state. North Carolina Baptists had been doing Sunday school work

since 1810 or earlier, and there had been various attempts to provide a definite plan of work for the state, including the organization of Sunday school conventions which had drawn Spilman into the work as secretary when he was at Wake Forest.

The committee making the report recommended that a board of missions and Sunday schools, of fifteen members, be elected annually, that it be charged with the management of the Supply Store in Raleigh, and that it appoint a Sunday school secretary or secretaries to promote Sunday school work in the state. The board was "to provide for establishing Sunday schools and increasing the efficiency of existing Sunday schools; for holding Sunday school institutes for different associations of the convention; and to organize the Baptist Sunday school work of the state."

Spilman, only recently returned from his experimental meeting with the Carteret County churches and convinced of the great good that planned Sunday school promotion could do, threw himself enthusiastically into the discussion of the report. And on the convention Sunday he was asked to be one of the principal speakers at the Sunday school mass meeting at the First Baptist Church.

Before the convention adjourned, he had been named a member of the Board of Missions and Sunday Schools, for which he had spoken so heartily.

Early in January, 1896, he went to Raleigh to a meeting of the board. As a self-appointed representative of the Atlantic Association (location of the Smyrna churches), he took with him a map of the entire association, showing the location of every church and all the prospective points for missionaries. He had also collected a wealth of data to use in making the application for help for those points. In spite of the many requests for help received by the board, almost his entire program for the Atlantic Association was approved.

When he returned to Kinston after the convention, Spilman began a new emphasis on enlistment and soul-winning in his church. In the first year he had had to get acquainted with his field, had had pneumonia, and there had been the disastrous Kinston fires. Now he looked forward to an advancing program for the church.

On March 1 he received a complete surprise. The Board of Missions and Sunday Schools had appointed a committee of seven to be responsible for the Sunday school program. That committee, which Spilman had helped name, asked him to become "Sunday school missionary for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina." It was understood that the emphasis was to be on the improvement of methods in Sunday schools rather than on increased numbers of schools.

Spilman sincerely believed that teaching was as clearly commanded in the Great Commission as preaching. He knew how great the need was for improved Sunday school work, and he believed he had found a partial plan for teaching Sunday school efficiency in the chautauqua method he had adapted at the Carteret meeting.

But was he the man for this place? Was this the way God had been leading? He thought back over the years, to the Sunday school classes he had taught at Wilson and Wake Forest, the miles he had walked visiting Sunday schools as secretary of the Sunday school convention. And yet, he thought, actually he "knew nothing of Sunday school work beyond what was known by any fairly intelligent pastor."

Having great confidence in the judgment of President Charles E. Taylor at Wake Forest, he wrote him for advice. In reply, Dr. Taylor stated that he believed Spilman admirably fitted for just that kind of work if he "could sing and teach others to sing."

Puzzled, Spilman did not catch the relation between

singing and teaching people how to conduct an efficient Sunday school. Then it occurred to him that what Dr. Taylor had in mind was the type of Sunday school missionary work that had been carried on for about half a century: A man would enter a community, get a number of children together, teach them some songs, then turn them over to some religious leader for instruction.

That was not what Spilman had in mind at all. If even Dr. Taylor thought of Sunday school work in those terms, the need was indeed great.

Spilman resigned his pastorate. Never again was he to be out of Sunday school work.

When he moved from Kinston to Raleigh, his mother and Mr. Brown went back to Weldon. Three years later, in 1899, they moved to Raleigh. There Mr. Brown got a position, but in a few months he became ill. He died in the summer of 1900. Mrs. Brown continued to live in Raleigh until her death in 1912.

3

Beginning in North Carolina

Baptist work in North Carolina in 1896 was in charge of what was called the "Boys' Brigade." John E. White, twenty-seven, was the new corresponding secretary of the convention, having succeeded Dr. Durham. Josiah William Bailey, twenty-two, later Senator Bailey, was the new editor of the *Biblical Recorder*. B. W. Spilman, twenty-five, was the first Sunday school missionary.

White's salary came from the collection for state missions, the total budget of which was about $15,000.00. Bailey's salary was $100.00 a month and was paid by the paper. Spilman's salary was $75.00 a month, to be paid from the profit, if any, of the Supply Store.

The Sunday School Supply Store was a part of Spilman's responsibility, but he was fortunate in having as its manager, Henry L. Watson, who had formerly been treasurer of the state Baptist orphanage. To Watson he left the details of administering the store.

Spilman had in mind a much broader and wider service for the store than simply supplying literature to the Sunday schools, and at his suggestion, the committee changed the name to Baptist Book Store.

Assuming managership of the Baptist Book Store meant the assumption also of debts that the store had accumulated. It was in debt to the Baptist Sunday School Board

in Nashville and to the American Baptist Publication Society. Since Spilman's salary of $900.00 a year was to be paid out of the earnings of the store, the prospects of receiving it were none too good.

Early that summer he went to Philadelphia and secured a promise of $400.00 as a cash contribution from the American Baptist Publication Society, to be used during the next year, 1897. That fall, at the Baptist state convention, he saw Dr. J. M. Frost, secretary of the Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville, and explained the situation to him. Dr. Frost made it a practice to attend the meeting of every state convention, and although the Board was still waging its own fight for survival, it had established the policy of distributing part of its income to the states for Sunday school work. Dr. Frost gave him a promise of $500.00 from the Sunday School Board for the next year.

That put his salary for 1897 on a secure basis, and he thought that if he could just get through the rest of 1896, he would have fair sailing.

The Sunday after his arrival in Raleigh Spilman went to the Tabernacle Baptist Church. There he received such a cordial welcome in both the Sunday school and the preaching service that Tabernacle became his church home. During the preceding week he had received invitations to Tabernacle from M. B. Broughton, from the brother of a college friend, and from the mailman who served the block where his boarding house was located.

Sunday school work of the type that Spilman had in mind was indeed a venture in a new field. Certainly no one in his part of the country had any conception to it. His first move in getting started was to learn what was best in the Sunday school realm. He wrote to all the publishers whose names and addresses he could secure and asked them to advise him about books and periodicals on Sunday school work. For many years he had been familiar

with the *Sunday School Times,* to which his mother subscribed. He had heard of the books by Dr. H. Clay Trumbull—his Yale lectures on *The Sunday School* and his book *Teaching and Teachers.* From all replies that he received, he found nothing beyond the *Times* and the Trumbull books that he considered worthy of consideration.

With a map of North Carolina in hand he studied the minutes of every association in the state.

No adequate statistical reports were available. He sent a call to the churches, asking for information, and learned that about four hundred of the Baptist churches in the state had no Sunday school at all. Of those that did have schools, only six had schools that he considered well organized and adequately equipped.

Even while setting up his office and gathering background information for his work, Spilman began to take to the field, visiting churches and attending associational meetings. The associations were willing enough to make a place for him on their programs. They would schedule him and announce the program in the papers, but often they forgot to consult him. Sometimes he would be booked to appear at five to seven places on the same day without having been consulted about any of them. And when he did not show up, the people, who knew nothing of the circumstances, would assume it was because of lack of interest.

As he began to make contacts with the Baptist churches and their pastors throughout the state, he was amazed to find that a majority of them had practically no interest in missions and did virtually nothing for the spread of the gospel beyond their own area. He discovered, too, that hundreds of pastors felt no concern whatever for the program of the denomination.

Spilman had a good friend, John W. Smith, who was teaching school at Autryville. Smith was in complete sym-

pathy with the new Sunday school program and arranged an all-day meeting at Autryville with Spilman as speaker, to talk about nothing but Sunday school work. Representatives from all of the churches in that area were invited. When Spilman arrived early in the morning, the church was practically filled with people.

As there was no pastor at Autryville at that time, Smith assumed the responsibility of presiding. Just as he was ready to open the meeting, a good brother over in the right-hand corner arose and tapped a tuning fork on the back of the bench in front of him. A group of young women and men arose in their places and sang two selections.

As the last note of the second selection was dying away, a brother in the back of the church arose, gave his tuning fork a tap, and another group arose. The performance was repeated until 12:30 o'clock. Neither Smith nor Spilman had an opportunity to make an announcement or to say anything at all about Sunday School work.

Then it was dinner time. John A. Oates, a Wake Forest friend and editor of the *North Carolina Baptist,* called Spilman aside. "Just as soon as you get a bite to eat," he said, "go in the church, set up that blackboard of yours, and start talking. It doesn't make any difference whether there's anybody in the church or not—you start talking."

Following Oates's suggestion, Spilman monopolized the entire afternoon program and was afraid even to announce a hymn for fear that the "singing professors" would take over the meeting again.

His persistence must have appealed to the people. They not only listened to what he had to say but also determined that they would do something about the program that he advocated. That was Spilman's first Sunday school institute.

The 1896 state convention was held in Morganton as a

gesture of friendliness to the associations in the western part of the state which had withdrawn and formed a separate convention. At that convention Spilman made his first report as Sunday school missionary. He pointed out that there were only two associations with a Sunday school in every church, and announced that his ultimate goal was a well-equipped, well-organized Sunday school, open fifty-two Sundays a year, in every church in every community in North Carolina—a Sunday school within the reach of every living person in the state.

Not only were the delegates at the convention cordial to him personally, but he was encouraged by an indication of a growing interest in Sunday school efficiency. He left the convention elated with the prospects for the next year.

Only a short time later he was speaking one night in the Tabernacle church in Raleigh. The startled audience saw the speaker, nearing the close of his message, put his hand out to the presiding officer and then sink unconscious to the floor. He did not regain consciousness until 10:30 o'clock the next morning.

A doctor was in the audience and administered first aid. Spilman was taken to the home of the pastor, Rev. A. M. Simms, and the next morning Drs. W. I. and Hubert A. Royster were called in. For ten days they worked diligently to bring him back to a degree of health. When he had regained his strength sufficiently, he was moved to his boarding house, and later he went to his mother's home in Weldon.

Near the end of the year, at Spilman's request, the Sunday school committee separated the Baptist Book Store from the regular Sunday school work, thus relieving him of that much responsibility. The committee also offered him a leave of absence until March 1, 1897, and asked that he do no field work during that time. They paid his salary

out of the proceeds of the book store and took the $900.00 that had been donated by the two publishing houses and partially paid the store's debts. Spilman did not know that his physicians had told the committee he could not possibly live more than ninety days.

In February he returned to work. Only there was no work to which to return. Anticipating the death of their missionary, the committee had closed shop.

His friend, N. B. Broughton, whom he had first met at the Red Springs chautauqua, was part owner of the *Biblical Recorder.* He offered Spilman a position as associate editor and field agent for the *Recorder,* with an annual salary of $250.00—provided he could secure that much money on the field. Spilman moved his desk to the *Recorder* offices and about March 1 set out to do field work for the *Recorder.*

Dr. W. I. Royster heard that he was going and hurried to the railway station. Earnestly he pleaded with him not to go. Pointing his finger, he said to Spilman, "It is written across the tablet of your heart that if you take the field again, you will certainly be dead in less than ninety days."

When the train pulled out, Spilman was on it.

After three months, he discontinued his connection with the paper. He knew little about the work, and he had no inclination for it.

Once again he set out to promote better Sunday schools, this time on his own initiative, without the backing of a Sunday school committee. He made arrangements to work out of the state Baptist offices in Raleigh, and for them to handle whatever donations might come in for Sunday school work. A limitation of $250.00 salary was agreed upon, even if, through his efforts on the field, more than that should come in.

One day a stranger came into Raleigh, went to the office of J. D. Boushall, the treasurer of the convention, and

asked for Spilman, who had just gone to the Union depot. The man was very anxious to see him, but had never met him. Boushall told him that if he would go to the depot, he should be able to catch him before the train left. Boushall described Spilman so that the man could recognize him.

When Spilman returned from his trip, he asked Boushall what he had told the man. Boushall had said, "Go to the depot, and the first man you see down there who looks like a whiskey barrel with a full moon on it, that's the man you want."

"Barnstorming" is the only word that describes much of the traveling that Spilman did in the interest of Sunday school work during 1897. Since he had hardly enough money to pay actual traveling expenses, he lived with the people wherever he went to speak. Often he teamed up with O. L. Stringfield, who was traveling in the interest of the Baptist Female University, later Meredith College. They used all sorts of conveyances—trains when available, horses and buggies when they could borrow them—and walked if there was no other way. Together they worked their way westward as far as Mars Hill, where they were guests in the home of the pastor, Rev. T. M. Honeycutt, who was also president of the board of trustees of what is now Mars Hill College, but was then only a high school.

Spilman learned that between 1890 and 1897 six different administrators had headed the school and tried to make a go of it. After a long conference with Honeycutt, Spilman suggested that he get in touch with his friend Robert Lee Moore, who seemed to him to be just the man to head the school. Spilman had only recently seen Moore, a friend of Wake Forest days, in Catawba, where he was the teacher in charge of the local school. A short time afterward Moore came to Mars Hill and began a work that was to last half a century.

In the summer Spilman made a working arrangement with the Hotel Townsend in Red Springs, where the Sunday school chautauqua was to be held again, to provide his board and lodging for a month while he "drummed up" patronage for the chautauqua. Securing a pass on the Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Railroad, he traveled up and down its line in all the territory around Red Springs advertising the chautauqua. The general passenger agent reported that more than two thousand tickets were sold to Red Springs that summer. To Spilman that meant that two thousand people had had an opportunity to see a demonstration of the best methods in Sunday school work.

But the next months were filled with discouragement. There were many times when he did not have enough money in his pocket to buy a railroad ticket to the next station. He had to give up his regular boarding place in Raleigh because he could not afford to pay for it continuously when he was there so little.

Once he came back to Raleigh to discover that there was not a cent in the treasury to the credit of Sunday school work. In his own pocket he had less than a dollar. And he did not want to borrow money when he had no prospect of paying it back.

At the close of the week he was to begin a long string of engagements. He felt confident that if he could only get to the first one, he could get through the rest of the trip. But how he was going to pay his board bill in Raleigh for that week he did not know. About the middle of the week, he received a check from the Baptist Sunday school in Carthage as a contribution to his Sunday school work—enough not only to pay his board bill but to give him a good start on his next trip. It was to be more than thirty years before he ever visited Carthage, but through the years the memory of that check was to remain as a bright spot of those trying days.

In the early fall, he was speaking all over North Carolina trying to create interest in Sunday school work. Then came a letter from Secretary White, a long friendly letter in which White stated that he was fully convinced the Baptist people of North Carolina did not like the kind of Sunday school work Spilman was trying to put across and were not going to support it.

Were he in Spilman's place, White said, he would give up the idea as there was certainly nothing but failure ahead. He further offered his services to help Spilman secure a pastorate where he could be useful and happy.

Spilman recognized the good intentions and the kindly spirit with which White had written, but the letter depressed him greatly. He put the letter into his pocket and went to his next engagement.

A few days later he arrived in Raleigh by train sometime between midnight and dawn, and went immediately to his office. There he pulled out the letter and read it again. On his desk lay a small dictionary, the only one he owned and the one he had used at Wake Forest. He turned the pages to the word "failure." With careful deliberation he inked the word out of the dictionary.

Through the help of John T. Pullen, a prominent banker and a deacon in the Fayetteville Street Baptist Church, Spilman found a happy arrangement as to living quarters. Mr. Pullen provided for his pastor W. C. Barrett, and City Missionary A. L. Betts, and another young man, a large, comfortable room in the two-story brick building known as the Haywood Building. The three invited Spilman to share the room with them and make it his headquarters when he was in Raleigh.

The year before, when he had had charge of the Baptist Book Store, Spilman had realized more than ever before how little he knew about business in general and bookkeeping in particular. Since he was doing the field work on

his own and his time was his to plan, he decided that this might be the best time he would ever have to do something about this blind spot in his education.

Down at Buie's Creek, about thirty miles from Raleigh, Rev. J. A. Campbell was conducting an academy that had a splendid commercial course. Spilman saw Professor Campbell and asked if he might enter the business department in the early fall and remain until the Baptist state convention in November. If he should ever earn any money, Spilman told him, he would pay the academy. Not only did Professor Campbell welcome him to the academy, but he took him into his own home to live as a member of the family. Spilman worked very hard on the commercial course and completed it in about two months.

From Buie's Creek he went to the Baptist State Convention in Oxford. The buttons on the Prince Albert coat he wore when he made his report were supposed to be covered with cloth, but were nothing but pieces of shiny metal. But his report showed that, as an independent field worker, he had conducted six district institutes, attended three associations, one state chautauqua, and one district chautauqua. He had deliver 124 addresses at Sunday school rallies in twenty-eight counties. Twenty-eight associations had Sunday school conventions, and sixteen associations were yet unorganized.

And then he told of his plans for 1898. He would have, if possible, a training class in every Baptist church in the state, an institute in every association, a state Sunday school chautauqua, and five district chautauquas—at Littleton, Mars Hill, Buie's Creek, Fair Bluff, and some point near the Atlantic coast.

Although there was still a great deal of indifference to be overcome, and some hostility, a number of people were thoroughly aroused to the need for a real Sunday school program. Six hundred dollars was appropriated to the Sun-

day school department, and Spilman's salary was fixed at that amount. The members of the board making the appropriations hoped that his incidental expenses could be paid from what came in directly for the work.

Spilman had stuck to his policy of taking no collections for he could not bring himself to ask people for money for his own support. During the preceding nine months, from March 1 to December 1, there had come into the hands of the treasurer $240.37 for Sunday school work, Spilman having turned over all funds that came directly to him. He had spent for postage $23.55, for printing $30.00, for travel $127.27, and had taken $59.55 as his salary.

When he returned to Raleigh from the convention, he had just enough money to buy a ticket to Weldon. There was left in the hands of the convention treasurer, to the credit of Sunday school work, twenty-two cents with which to begin the new year.

Spilman plunged back into his work with greater enthusiasm than ever. The *Biblical Recorder* agreed to include a department on Sunday school work, to be edited by Hight C Moore. Spilman began a similar department in *Charity and Children,* the widely circulated publication of the Thomasville Baptist Orphanage.

Concerned about teacher training, Spilman tried an experiment in his column: setting forth the plans for a teacher training course by correspondence and asking for students. The first, and one of the few, to enroll was his friend R. L. Moore, of Mars Hill. The idea of teacher training was being planted.

Spilman had been trying hard to get the meanings of the two words "institute" and "rally" clear in the minds of the people. An institute was distinctly a school of methods. A rally was a meeting, usually an all-day session, to interest people in Sunday school work. Rallies were usually more largely attended than institutes.

But it was not unusual for the rallies to draw small crowds, particularly in sections where he had not been before. Once he went to Jefferson, stopping three or four miles out at the home of a Mr. Greybeal. The meeting had been well advertised, and a large number of people personally invited to attend. But Mr. Greybeal and his daughter and two elderly men made up the audience. Spilman spoke as earnestly as if to a hundred people, and a year later returned and spoke to a packed house. Often where he spoke to ten or twenty the first time, he had a crowd on the second visit.

Setting out one time for a three-day meeting of the South River Association, he was warned before he went that he would probably get no recognition at all. After his kindliness and persistence, even to the point of bringing his own lunch since he had not been invited to eat with anyone, he was finally recognized as the very last item on the program on Thursday afternoon and allowed to speak a few minutes on Sunday school work. He accepted the opportunity, and spoke as he would have done had he been speaking at the eleven o'clock hour on the second day—always the best spot on the program of a three-day meeting.

In the year that followed, he arranged to go into half a dozen churches in that association and speak on Sunday school work. Then in the fall of 1899 he again attended the meeting of the association. That time he was given the morning period on the second day. When the time came for his speech, the moderator arose and said, "Wait just a minute, Brother Spilman; we want to invite the people outside to come in."

In Princeton he arranged an institute to begin on Friday night and continue through Sunday. Arriving in Princeton, he was met at the station by the Sunday school superintendent, N. D. Wells. While they were talking for a mo-

ment, a man approached and handed them a piece of paper on which was inscribed:

"Be it resolved, That no man advocating Sunday schools, Bible societies, or any other institutions of the day, shall be allowed to travel through our borders."

Wells told Spilman that a group of people had met in Princeton a few days before and adopted the resolution but that he should pay no attention to it. The meeting was held on schedule, and on Sunday in a church well filled with people, Spilman read the resolution and then spoke on "Bible Teaching as a Factor in Kingdom Progress." He pointed out in his sermon the teaching element in both the Old and New Testaments; then he tried to show the marvelous influence the teaching of the Bible had had in winning people for Christ and in building Christian character.

The congregation grasped what he was talking about. That understanding, plus their anger at the resolution, brought action to the community. Both the Methodists and Baptists decided to start a campaign for Sunday school enlargement, and despite strong opposition, groups of workers moved from house to house inviting people to the Sunday schools.

Superintendent Wells wore a cutaway coat, and on one of his visits the "wrathy old gentleman" of the house set a bulldog on him. Not having time to open the gate, Wells went over the fence, leaving half of the coat tail in the mouth of the bulldog.

Interest ran so high that the people invited Rev. J. W. Suttle of near-by Smithfield, to come over and preach for them every night in a revival, and nearly two hundred conversions resulted.

In the summer of 1898 Spilman secured a tent large enough to care easily for five or six people, and in many of his summer meetings he slept in the tent, leaving room for just that many more people in the homes. He shipped

the tent as baggage as he went around the state. One of the most convenient items he possessed was a paper blanket made of the kind of paper on which money is printed. It could be folded and easily packed. Having to sleep in all sorts of places, he found that at times he needed additional cover. Slipping the paper blanket between the sheets and other cover guaranteed warmth under almost any conditions.

In the institutes Spilman often demonstrated his ideas of teacher training. On one occasion, he was conducting a Sunday school institute at White Oak Church, about six miles from Clinton, the home of one of his college mates, John E. Fowler, then congressman from that district. Fowler came in from Washington about noon on Saturday, heard that Spilman was at the church, and immediately drove there.

Spilman was demonstrating how to teach a Sunday school lesson. His "class" was a group of boys on the front seat. He explained to the audience that it was absolutely necessary for the teacher to become a part of the picture he was trying to present. The lesson was on the temptation of Jesus. Spilman explained to the institute audience that the lesson would be more effective if he could make the scene real to the boys. As he began the lesson story, he placed himself "in the wilderness with Jesus," then stepped just in front of one of the aisles. With a look of horror on his face, he pointed down the aisle, and exclaimed, "Just look yonder, boys! There comes the devil!"

At that moment the door opened, and in walked Congressman Fowler: two hundred pounds, six feet high, and red-haired. That was the end of the institute for that day.

On one of his trips to the northwestern corner of the state, at Whitehead in Alleghany County, there came to see him a boy, about seventeen years of age, slim, and almost as ugly as a boy could get to be in that many years.

He had a heavy shock of red hair and as much awkwardness as a youth could possibly carry. He introduced himself as Lloyd Holloway, of Sparta.

Sitting on the floor of the front porch and leaning against a post, the chap explained that he was doing odd jobs to help support a widowed mother. He told Spilman that he had walked over there five or six miles to ask his advice as to what he could do to be of service to the Lord. Upon inquiry, Spilman learned that he could read a little and that he usually cut wood to help earn money.

Not knowing what else to say, Spilman told him that if he would set out immediately to serve God by cutting wood and reading and seek every opportunity for better preparation, he would be of real service. He told him that the Lord did not require anybody to do anything except what he could do; and if his range of ability was limited, he should do just what he could in the name of the Lord, and the Lord would open the way for other services.

Upon his return to Raleigh, Spilman sent, at the request of young Holloway, a dozen Bibles, two dozen New Testaments, and a few songbooks. Then other matters crowded the young man out of his mind.

A year later as he was going over that same trail, the companion who had met him at the train at the foot of the mountain told him that they were to pass close to Lloyd Holloway's Sunday school. About four or five miles from Sparta the man stopped his horse. They went along a mountain trail a short distance from the road and came to a beautiful little cove in which a number of people lived. There, near the edge of the woods, were logs arranged as seats and up at the front was a post driven into the ground with a plank on top of it.

The friend explained that Lloyd Holloway had gone into that cove and asked permission to cut down some trees and arrange logs as seats. He had carefully placed

his Bible and songbooks in a box and kept them at a neighbor's residence. Every Sunday afternoon when the weather permitted, he walked out there, gathered the neighbors together, and led them to study the Bible with him. He was doing literally what Spilman had told him to do, "cut wood and read his Bible for the glory of the Lord."

A little later Spilman heard that Holloway had gathered up his belongings and put them in a bag, and with the bag in one hand and his axe in the other, had walked thirty-five miles over the mountain to present himself at the front door of a private school in North Wilkesboro. The next time he was heard from, he was in Raleigh on his way to Wake Forest College, still with the axe, which helped him earn his way through the college.

Spilman met him later in a student group at Louisville, and for many years saw him in an aggressive and successful ministry.

The 1898 convention met in Greenville. Sunday school work occupied a much larger place on the program than it ever had before. Secretary White, who had written the letter advising Spilman to abandon the work, acknowledged the obligation of the convention to use its state mission funds for Sunday school work. Spilman's title was changed from missionary to secretary, an amount was set for his salary for the next year, and in great detail was stated the type of work that he might do. That statement, however, consisted of just the things that he had been doing all along. And the board further emphasized that he was to "feel free and untrammeled in the formulation and execution of such plans as he may adopt for the accomplishment of the above objectives, and shall be responsible only to the Sunday school committee."

Greenville being "nigh unto Kinston," a young lady from Kinston, Miss Mozelle Pollock, attended all of the sessions of the convention. Important as the convention

was to Spilman, he divided his time between it and seeing Miss Pollock.

At that 1898 convention the western association disbanded their own convention and became a part of the state group. After that Spilman began to direct part of his energies to promoting Sunday schools in the extreme western part of the state.

In those days when there were no paved roads or automobiles, the territory in the mountains between the Blue Ridge and the Great Smokies could be reached only by some kind of animal-drawn vehicle over trails—trails of mud if there had been the least bit of rain. Spilman's customary method of conveyance was a canvas-covered freight wagon, usually drawn by mules. If the road was at all muddy, or if the wagon was loaded, as it generally was, the mules walked the entire distance. At sunset the driver would camp for the night. Spilman spent many nights sleeping in or under such a wagon, often within three to five miles of his destination. There was a fixed rate for such travel: one and a quarter cents for a hundred pounds per mile. Spilman was listed at 250 pounds, his baggage at 50 pounds. That meant that his transportation charge was three and three quarter cents per mile. He was hauled at the same rate as any other "freight."

In the spring of 1899 he was the guest of Pastor Bright, of Murphy, who had arranged a conference with a group of Cherokee Indians regarding Sunday school work. He arrived in Murphy late one afternoon and the next morning the Indians came to see him. Their leader was Armstrong Cornsilk, quite an old man, but perfectly erect on his beautiful horse. The company made an impressive picture as it came down the street of the village, all on horseback and in full regalia.

The conference lasted for several hours, and all attending had dinner together. Spilman learned that there was

no Sunday school work being done among them and that there were very few Bibles on the reservation. Few of the Indians could speak English. The cheapest Scriptures obtainable in the Cherokee language were copies of the New Testament that sold for fifty cents each. No literature was available to help them with Sunday school work. Spilman left the meeting determined to arrange some plan by which a missionary could be sent to live among them and direct their work. A few years later he saw that goal achieved.

That summer Spilman went to the Yellow Hill church in the Blue Ridge Mountains, where he found the people in general very responsive to the idea of Sunday schools, but the community quite hostile in spots. Immediately after dinner the first day he missed the young men who had been leading the singing during the morning. He had scarcely started his lecture when a rifle shot was heard and a bullet hit the church house. Then came another, then a regular fusillade. Spilman stopped, fearing that a civil war had broken out. A member of the church said, "Just go on with your meeting, Brother Spilman. A gang from Low Gap decided to break up our meeting and scare us all off. But the boys have gone out to take care of them."

Soon the shooting died out and all was quiet, and in a little while the boys came trooping in. They had chased the enemies back home and nobody was hurt.

Some years before the Yellow Hill church had taken a collection for the orphanage and liked the idea so well that it had continued the practice ever year since. Out on the church grounds, someone mentioned the proposed collection in the fall. A good brother with a wealth of red beard began to argue strenuously against any such foolish procedure.

Spilman walked up just then, and the people asked him to be a judge in the matter and tell them what to do. He

of the red beard took charge and stated the case, namely, that the whole countryside was full of orphans who needed help, and so far as he and some of his neighbors were concerned, they were going to help those right there at their own doors and not be sending off money, or produce, either, to folks miles from home when there was so much need right at their doors. He asked Spilman if he didn't think that was the right principle.

Spilman told the man that he was exactly right about the whole matter, and said further, "If we do not help those nearest to us, it is probable that they will not be helped." That tickled the old gentleman, and he chuckled his satisfaction and triumph over the crazy folks who had been sending their stuff away with so much need right there.

Then Spilman passed to him a blank envelope and a pencil, and asked him kindly to write the name of one orphan in the community to whom he had ever given five cents or a morsel of food. Spilman insisted that he stand to the rack and come across with the name. The meeting broke up with gales of laughter, and the gentleman of the red beard was not seen around the grounds any more during that meeting. Perhaps, Spilman said later, he had gone to help a local orphan.

In the fall the Baptist Female University, for which O. L. Stringfield had been traveling, was opened. After his strenuous months on the road, Stringfield became suddenly ill with typhoid fever, and Spilman, along with others, stepped in to help with the opening of the school.

A day or two after the formal opening, President Blasingame told him that there was a young lady there whom Mr. Stringfield had promised to provide with the $20.00 fee for entering. Now, because of Stringfield's illness, she did not have the money and did not know what to do.

"Who is she?" asked Spilman.

"Miss Kate Leary," was the reply. Spilman realized at once that she was the daughter of a friend at Morehead City.

"You have come to the right person," he told President Blasingame. "The Lord has entrusted to me $20.00 for Miss Leary."

He went to the bank and got a twenty-dollar gold piece, took it to Blasingame, asked him to hand it to Miss Leary as a present without telling her where it came from. Thus he repaid the money that President Broadus had given him at the seminary when $20.00 was the exact amount he had needed to be able to stay in school.

About this time Spilman introduced in North Carolina the idea of a Sunday school census. He tried it first in Goldsboro, where a week-long Sunday school meeting was being held. It was decided to take a census of the entire town on Saturday. Careful preparation was made, workers were secured, and the city was laid off in districts on a map secured from the city office.

The pastor, W. C. Newton, said that he would be glad to co-operate but that he was dubious about the value of such a census since he knew personally every person in Goldsboro who was a Baptist or inclined toward the Baptists.

Spilman told Pastor Newton that if they did not find a hundred people in Goldsboro who were definitely inclined toward the Baptist faith of whom he, the pastor, had never heard, Spilman would give him a stick of chewing gum.

The first returns that came in were from Miss Minnie Grant and her co-worker. Upon sorting the cards by denominational preference, they discovered more than fifty names of persons entirely new to the pastor who expressed a definite preference for the Baptist church.

The more the pastor looked at those cards, the more serious grew his expression. In a few minutes he and one

of his members were on their way to that section of the city to look it over. It was an eye-opener for both of them. They organized a Sunday school there, which later became the Bryan Street Baptist Church.

When the Baptist state convention was held in Asheville in 1899, Spilman was placed on several committees and his salary raised from $600.00 to $900.00, what it had been the first year that he served as secretary.

Early in 1900, Spilman got two recruits for his work. One of them was W. C. Barrett, one of his three roommates in the Haywood Building in Raleigh, who resigned as pastor of the Fayetteville Street Baptist Church to take the position of assistant Sunday school field secretary with no assured income beyond his actual traveling expenses. He served well in the field for several months and held a total of seventeen Sunday school institutes in eleven different associations. Later Spilman often called on Barrett to assist him in various meetings around the South.

On January 24, of that same year, Spilman enlisted a helper who proved to be far more than just a "recruit." She became his partner for many years in the advancement of Kingdom interests and shared more sacrifices than the records can ever show. Miss Agnes Mozelle Pollock, daughter of Dr. and Mrs. John A. Pollock, of Kinston, became his bride in a quiet ceremony performed by Pastor C. W. Blanchard, with only members of the family and a very few personal friends present. After the marriage at the Pollock home, the young couple went to Raleigh to live.

Mrs. Spilman had attended the Thomasville Female College, entering it when a girl of thirteen. She completed her college work in the Woman's College in Richmond, Virginia, now known as Westhampton College of the University of Richmond, where she specialized in music, both vocal and instrumental.

On their first visit back to Kinston after their marriage, the Spilmans went to call at the home of their friends, Dr. and Mrs. Lewis. Mrs. Spilman wore her beautiful wedding dress. As they walked down the street, Spilman saw on a gatepost a placard advertising a meat market in the city. With his pocketknife he carefully cut out the display statement from the center of the card. When they arrived at the Lewis home, he handed the servant the "card" and asked her to tell Mrs. Lewis that she had two visitors. In just a moment Mrs. Lewis came out with the card in her hand and a puzzled look on her face. When she saw Spilman standing at the door, she dropped the card and shrieked with laughter. On the card was printed "Stall Fed Beef and Dressed Poultry."

By the turn of the century Spilman's work with institutes and rallies had led him to think of his Sunday school work in two distinct departments. One was missionary, or promotional, for increasing the number of Sunday schools; the other was educational, for improving the quality of the schools. His goal was still a Sunday school—a good Sunday school—in every church.

He urged the state missionaries to establish new Sunday schools. The Sunday school committee agreed to furnish Bibles and the first quarter's literature for any new Sunday school. Every association in the state had a Sunday school representative, either elected by the people or appointed by the state committee. In the summer Spilman used college men to help with the work, securing $50.00 from the state mission board to use for their traveling expenses.

He continued to promote the educational side of the work through institutes. The success of his persistent drive in this direction was reflected in the increased attendance at the Sunday school chautauquas and other general meetings. He reached his goal of establishing five chautauquas, distributed over the state. At Mars Hill a tabernacle was

completed, and the name "Mountain Chautauqua" was changed to "Conference for Church Workers." Through the chautauqua at Buie's Creek, he was able to start paying his debt to Professor Campbell. When the academy buildings burned, the chautauqua tabernacle there was bricked in and used by the school.

In all the time Spilman had been in Sunday school work, he had not held an institute or rally in a town with a population of more than two thousand. Later the cities were almost to capture the show, but the beginnings of his Sunday school program were distinctly rural and small town.

4

Reaching the Southland

THE scene is a railroad station in Los Angeles; the time, an evening in the spring of 1901. B. W. Spilman arrives at the station with a ticket to Fresno. But the conductor standing by the train, tells him that it is an all-Pullman train requiring a special ticket. As he starts back to the ticket office to get the Pullman ticket, a genial-looking man steps up to him. "Get in line behind me," he says. "A Pullman ticket is good for two. Lewis is my name."

As the passengers stare at the 240-pound Spilman and the 300-pound Lewis, a ripple of chuckles goes down the line.

Dr. Lewis hands his ticket to the conductor and tells him to punch it for two. Then Spilman presents his ticket, saying that he is the second passenger on Dr. Lewis' ticket. Now the passengers are thoroughly amused. The conductor objects strenuously, but is told that the weight of his passengers is none of his business. "The Pullman Company allows two passengers to each berth. We are the two."

Dr. Lewis retires for the evening, and Spilman enjoys a trip to Fresno in the smoker, going over in his mind the details of an address he is to make in Fresno for the International Sunday School Association.

The background for this episode goes back to the spring of 1899, when Spilman, with a large delegation from North

Carolina, attended a meeting in Atlanta of the International School Association, an interdenominational group that was promoting Sunday schools throughout the nation. The association was well supported by Southern Baptists as well as by the other denominations, and had built up an organization that was very aggressive and very efficient. While Spilman had done most of his work in rural churches and small towns, the association went into the cities and held meetings for the people of a wide area.

At the Atlanta meeting Spilman met B. F. Jacobs, a Baptist layman of Chicago, who had been a factor in building the association, and Marion Lawrance, of Toledo, who, a short time later, was elected general secretary. Spilman was elected a member of the state secretaries' group, and so far as is known, was the only denominational worker ever to belong to that group.

Two years later he received from Mr. Lawrance an invitation to make a nation-wide tour with a group of Sunday school workers. To Spilman it meant not only an opportunity to see the country, but also, and primarily, an opportunity to study Sunday school work in all parts of the United States and to observe the methods used by the experts in the International Sunday School Association.

He laid the invitation before the North Carolina Sunday school committee, and they gave him a leave of absence.

The tour covered eighteen states and territories and stopped in forty-one cities for scheduled visits, with frequent side trips along the thirteen-thousand-mile route. Two types of meetings were held—state conventions of Sunday school workers, and special meetings.

Often when the party stopped for a special meeting on Sunday, they would touch as many as nine churches. Lawrance, Spilman, and H. M. Hamill, the international secretary of the association, were the principal speakers. Each would attend a different Sunday school, then visit

different pulpits during the morning hour, and repeat the performance in the evening services. By careful systematizing, they would have conveyances waiting to take them from one church to another in the city. At the same time Mrs. Hamill would be holding meetings with groups of elementary Sunday school workers.

For the state conventions they had a regular syndicated program, made out by Lawrance before the trip started. A copy of the program in skeleton form was sent to the various states, and there the names of the local speakers were filled in. "Member International Sunday School Party" was printed by the names of the guest speakers.

Lawrance would be the speaker on the first topic at a convention, Spilman on the second, and Hamill on the third. At the next convention the order would be shifted, and again at the next, so that each of them spoke on all three topics from time to time.

What Spilman did not know, as the tour swung through the Southern states, was that in almost every audience there was "planted" someone to listen to him and to report to Dr. J. M. Frost, of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville.

One of the assignments that the Southern Baptist Convention had given the Sunday School Board was to promote Sunday school efficiency, to build better Sunday schools throughout the South.

In 1892, when it was scarcely more than a year old, the Board had appropriated $3,000 of its slim means to the different state organizations for Sunday school and mission work. For ten years the Board had followed this policy. Some of the states had put forth vigorous efforts with gratifying results. Others had done little or nothing.

Looking at the problem as a whole, Dr. Frost faced the fact that this was a more or less hit-or-miss program and that Southern Baptists were actually relying largely on the

International Sunday School Association for the guidance and growth of their Sunday schools.

He pondered the problem long, and other workers of the Board pondered it with him. "Were the states to be left to their own initiative? Was the Southern Baptist Convention to provide no concerted leadership, to offer no general aids as the people struggled to improve the efficiency of their Bible teaching? Were Southern Baptists to rely on an interdenominational agency?" These were the questions they faced.

To Dr. Frost the answer was clear. A new approach must be made to Sunday school work. He knew well that he himself could not be the Sunday school specialist; he would have to find men, young men with ability and vision, who could specialize in the business at hand. And first he must find one man who could be trusted to lead off and make some kind of beginning. Did God have such a man ready for the hour?

He first approached Dr. J. B. Gambrell, of Texas, but Gambrell had no inclination in that direction. The Board then offered the position to Dr. A. J. Barton, an officer of the Foreign Mission Board, and they were so sure that he was going to accept that they equipped an office for him. Barton declined.

And then they turned to Spilman. In Spilman Dr. Frost saw a man who had proved that he had the courage to launch a new program against tremendous odds—and opposition—and carry it through, even at great personal sacrifice. "He had both academic and theological training. He had a background of pastoral experience. He possessed unique platform ability; and his humor often disarmed opposition and opened closed doors."

When the Sunday school party reached Montgomery, Alabama, Dr. Frost was waiting for Spilman. He explained to him that the Sunday School Board wanted him to do for

the South what he had been doing for North Carolina. The way he would have to travel was uncharted; Southern Baptists had no precedents in this field—he would have to build his own program.

After a lengthy exchange of letters with his wife, Spilman wrote Dr. Frost from Dallas on March 25 that he would accept the position, but that he could not begin the new work until June 1.

Hearing what the Baptists had done, the Methodists also decided to enter the field work in Sunday school promotion and contacted Dr. Hamill in Dallas.

On June 1, 1901, Spilman moved to Nashville to begin his work, and on September 1, Hamill began his work for the Methodists. They were often associated in the earlier days of their work, and a few times were invited to appear on the same platform.

Dr. Frost later said that Spilman came to the dingy little office, the only thing the Board had to offer in its small rented building, "decided to open his office on the field and set up his study in railroad trains and along the wayside."

The office offered Spilman was a small back office on the second floor. The building was heated by grates, one in each room. His office equipment consisted of a desk, a desk chair, and two or three odd chairs.

The staff at that time consisted of three secretaries: Dr. Frost, the corresponding secretary; Dr. I. J. Van Ness, the editorial secretary; and Spilman, the new field secretary; M. E. Dunaway, in charge of the distribution of periodicals; two bookkeepers; and two stenographers.

Spilman's approach to his work was very much like the approach he had made in North Carolina. He set out to acquaint himself with the conditions throughout the Convention territory, and to further acquaint himself with what others were doing in the Sunday school field.

Letters went out to every church publishing house in America, asking for all available information, and to all the interdenominational or nondenominational agencies doing Sunday school work. His experiences with the International Sunday School Association were still fresh in his mind.

He wrote to every Baptist state mission secretary in the South to find out what the other states were doing about Sunday school work. He was shocked to learn that the backwardness he had met in North Carolina was not backwardness at all when compared with conditions in some of the other states. A further shock came when he learned that the combined Sunday school enrollment of the nine Baptist churches in the city of Nashville, the seat of the Sunday School Board, was approximately the same as the membership of the Sunday school at the Tabernacle church in Raleigh.

Soon after taking up his work, he requested a meeting of the Committee on Field Work of the Sunday School Board, that he might get from them any suggestions they might have. Dr. Frost was present and went over all the proposed plans carefully. The committee adopted five general policies to guide Spilman in his work:

1. He was to work toward the improvement of Sunday schools in the Southern states.
2. He was to work in co-operation with the person in charge of Sunday school work in each state.
3. He was to accept no compensation, except for his room and meals, in the places where he worked.
4. He was to go into no state except by the invitation of the people of that state.
5. He was to give none of his time to selling Sunday school literature. The field work was to be completely dissociated from the business side of the Board's work.

Dr. Frost wanted it distinctly understood that the work of the Field Department was to be a gift of the Board to the Baptist people. Spilman was not to solicit engagements, but he was, so far as possible, to accept all invitations that came. The only exception to this policy was that he was to be free to visit schools and colleges on his own initiative.

Again, as in North Carolina, Spilman began accepting invitations even while studying the situation in which he was to work. He started in Nashville. The first Sunday he was in town he spoke to the City Sunday School Union and immediately tried to make it the nucleus for a forward Sunday school movement for the city.

In the first seven months that he was with the Board he traveled twelve thousand miles, took part in forty-six meetings, and visited three colleges, preaching the doctrine of Sunday schools and teaching the people how to make them better. Many of the letters he sent out for information about Sunday school work were written by hand on swaying trains or in hotels or homes in towns where he was speaking.

As trains became his office, they also became his "Camp Solitude." Years later he said, "I have tried all my life to keep in the attitude of communion with God and myself day and night. I believe every person ought to have a definite time for prayer—then keep the attitude all the time. I find myself on the railroad train talking to the Lord. No one else knows—but God does."

By the end of the first year he had clarified in his own mind the program that he believed that the South needed.

First, a large number of men were needed to give themselves definitely to improving Sunday school conditions. This was not a task for one man but for many men. Every state needed at least one man to promote Sunday schools, to do what he had tried to do for North Carolina.

Second, a few men were needed to work with him as

field secretaries in covering the South for the Sunday School Board. Not only could he not go into the states and do the work there; he could not even hope to do the general work alone.

Third, a teacher training course should be provided, to be taken either by correspondence or in class work. The key to better Sunday school teaching was better-prepared Sunday school teachers. His first teacher training experiments through his column in *Charity and Children* had pointed in this direction.

Fourth, a series of State Sunday school assemblies should be started, similar to the Sunday school chautauquas he had promoted in North Carolina, all to be headed up in one general Southern Baptist assembly.

Throughout the remaining fifty years of his active ministry there was to be practically no variance from those original objectives. They marked the four definite paths along which he was to travel with his associates to accomplish the great ends of Sunday school progress.

When he first came to Nashville, Spilman lived in boarding houses, most of them near the Sunday School Board. On September 3, 1901, his son, Raymond Pollock Spilman, was born in Kinston. Joyfully Spilman rented an apartment and began to make plans to bring his family to Nashville. He had a series of engagements, including a tour of Texas at the invitation of the state Sunday school secretary, that would keep him out of Nashville from January 23 to March 2. Returning from his trip, he went to Kinston to bring Mrs. Spilman and the six-month-old child back with him.

They reached Nashville in the early evening of March 19 and went to their apartment. But the baby was ill all night, and none of them slept. The baby continued to be sick. After only six weeks, they decided that Mrs. Spilman should return with the baby to Kinston, where her father

and brother, both physicians, could give him personal attention. Spilman went with them as far as Asheville, then turned back to his work while they went on to Kinston. A few weeks later he received an emergency call to come home. Raymond Pollock Spilman died on June 4.

Since he had to be on the road practically all the time and since Mrs. Spilman was a total stranger in Nashville, more than seven hundred miles from anyone she had ever known, it seemed to Spilman that they could live just as well in Kinston as anywhere else. He had no administrative duties in Nashville. So Kinston became home and headquarters, and Mrs. Spilman became her husband's unofficial secretary, just as she had been when he was state Sunday school secretary in North Carolina.

On the tour of Texas Dr. J. B. Gambrell, then general secretary of the Texas Baptist Convention, traveled with George W. Baines, the state Sunday school secretary, and Spilman for the first part of the trip. At McKinney, where they were participating in an association-wide Sunday school institute, somebody asked when they were going to take a collection. Spilman quickly explained that his services were a gift from the Sunday School Board and that there was no expense except local entertainment. But the people claimed it wouldn't be a Baptist meeting unless they worshiped God with an offering.

There was a unanimous response to the suggestion, and the collection started. Each collector would secure as many one-, five-, or ten-dollar bills as he could hold between his fingers and then walk up to the table and shake them all out and start over again. They collected more than $350.00. Then came the problem as to what to do with it. In the end they sent it to Baylor University to help ministerial students.

While in Texas Spilman had a chance to see at firsthand the work of the American Baptist Publication Society. Be-

fore the founding of the Sunday School Board in 1891 the society had been the chief supplier of books, Sunday school literature, and other publications to the Baptists of the South. The Publication Society, maintaining that no other publication house was needed, had opposed the founding of the Sunday School Board, and after the Board's periodicals began to roll from the press, a natural competition developed between the two. When Spilman had had charge of the Baptist Book Store in Raleigh, the store had stocked material from both publishing houses.

The policy of the Board was to avoid any reference, critical or otherwise, of the work of the Publication Society, and to make its own publications so attractive that they would sell themselves.

Spilman realized that three points of his four-pronged program for promoting Sunday school work would have to be accomplished slowly. The other, the teacher training course, he tackled immediately. He asked his friend Hight C Moore, then pastor at New Bern, North Carolina, to prepare a small volume setting forth in outline the books of the Bible.

Then he set himself to the task of writing a book dealing with Sunday school organization and teaching. The book was called *Normal Studies for Sunday School Workers.* It did not occur to him that there should be any special provision made for a study of the pupil. That was to be introduced later by Landrum P. Leavell when he joined Spilman as a field secretary.

Spilman's small volume, later combined with Moore's book into the *Convention Normal Manual,* in its various revisions, was to be a guide in Sunday school work for Southern Baptists and for their missionaries on foreign fields until 1934.

Spilman's and Moore's two books made up the first teacher training course. Requirements for the completion

of the course were that the student should study the books, pass an examination on them, and certify that he had read certain other books in the realm of religion. One of the "other books" was "any book on Baptist doctrines."

A few days after the literature about the teacher training course went out, letters began to come to Spilman, saying, "Can you give us the name of some good book on Baptist doctrines?" For a while he replied that the student could read any book on Baptist doctrine. Then requests that he name some specific book began to come in.

Searching his own library, he found a number of large volumes written for preachers. But what he wanted was a small, comprehensive book written for laymen. His library contained no such book. He went to Dr. Frost, who knew of no such book. He started the rounds of the Baptist pastors of the city. None knew of such a book. He wrote to the seminary at Louisville. There was no such volume in the library there.

Then he found just what he was looking for. Just about that time the B.Y.P.U. of the North had completed the publication of a series of articles entitled "The Doctrines of Our Faith," by E. C. Dargan, then of the seminary at Louisville, later an editorial secretary for the Sunday School Board. The Sunday School Board arranged to reproduce those articles in book form. And thus Southern Baptists came to have the first volume on Baptist doctrines in their teacher training course.

Spilman began to promote the course wherever he went. He registered students to take the course by correspondence, and he urged pastors to organize classes in their churches. It was a slow process. Finally he tried pump priming, to see if one successful graduate of the course would help. Knowing a fine young lady in Charlotte, who was a stenographer, he wrote and asked her if, as an experiment and a special favor to him, she would take the

course and work it out for him. She did, and mailed the papers to him. This first teacher-training graduate was Miss Carrie Lee McLean, who afterward practiced law in Charlotte and served one term as a representative in the North Carolina General Assembly.

As he traveled throughout the South, Spilman was on the constant lookout for two things—capable, consecrated men who could be brought into Sunday school work, and a place for a Southern Baptist assembly.

The Mississippi Baptist State Convention met at Water Valley, July 10, 1902. Both Spilman and Arthur Flake, a leading Mississippi layman, had previously appeared before the state board of missions and presented the idea of a state Sunday school secretary.

The matter became the main item of discussions at the convention. As soon as Spilman arrived in Water Valley, he went to work selling the idea. Some favored; many opposed. When it became known that Landrum P. Leavell, then a young man teaching at the Jefferson Military Institute, might be available for the job, the atmosphere began to clear. One layman, on hearing that Leavell might be induced to take the Sunday school secretaryship, said, "In that case, I will not only withdraw my opposition, but I will give $100.00 toward the salary."

At the Monday morning session the president of the state mission board, who had been doubtful about having a state secretary, made a speech advocating the election of Leavell. Spilman spoke for a full hour. Going to the rostrum, he said with a merry twinkle in his eye: "I am not sure whether I am taller standing up or lying down; if you cannot see me, I will try lying down." A friend later described the address he made that day:

First, he told of the place of teaching in the ministry of Jesus. He outlined the teaching processes which in the Old

Testament and in the years between the Testaments prepared the way for the coming Messiah. He described the place of teaching in the ministry of Jesus and his disciples. He graphically sketched the place of teaching through the unfolding Christian centuries. He related the rise and progress of the modern Sunday school. He declared that the need of the time was that many gifted preachers of the day should be matched by equally gifted teachers; that laymen who had been denied by Romanists and practically by Baptists the privilege of teaching the Word should be released and trained to teach the Bible; in a word, that preaching should be matched by teaching.

Young Leavell was elected, and his words of acceptance were the high point of the convention. He said that he did not know where the Lord would use him, but only that he was yielded to the will of God. If God and his brethren wanted him to undertake this Sunday school task, he was ready for service. He knew of no qualifications which he possessed for such work. He wished only to know and to do the will of God.

From the Mississippi convention Spilman went on to the Louisiana convention, at Minden, five miles from Sibley. At Sibley he and thirty or more others on their way to the convention found that the train to Minden had been canceled. The town's one hotel could take care of only three. The rest of them, including Spilman, slept on the back porch or out on the grass. The next morning, the only train of the day carried them to Minden, where Spilman was a guest at the Taylor House.

The proprietor gave him a good room with two double beds, just at the head of the stairs. But when he came back from the morning session of the convention, he was advised that his room had been changed.

The proprietor said in a sort of stage whisper: "Mr. Spilman, I beg your pardon for moving you from this

—LAUGH—
—AND—
GROW FAT.

A LECTURE BY

"For producing sidesplitters he excells the world-famed humorist, Josh Billings."—Rev. W. M. Tolmore in *Biblical Recorder*.

"Mr. Spilman's lecture is one of the finest that I ever heard."—Hon. J. L. Fleming, Mayor of Greenville, N. C.

"I heard Mr. Spilman's Lecture, 'Laugh and Grow Fat,' and enjoyed it very much."—Rev. E. M. Haines, Pastor Highland Presbyt'n Church, Louisville, Ky.

"A literary feast."—*Daily Progress*, Suffolk, Va.

"I thought it decidedly interesting and good."—Rev. J. A. Broadus, D.D., LL.D., Pres. of So. Bap. Theol. Seminary

"A very thoughtful and enjoyable lecture."—Rev. E. B. Jobe, P. E. of M. E. Church, So. N. C. Conference

"He combines the rare power both of instructing and entertaining."—Rev. W. D. Hubbard, Va.

B. W. SPILMAN.

Hear the Verdict of the Press and Prominent People who have heard the Lecture:

"'Laugh and Grow Fat,' the Lecture of B. W. Spilman, the Baptist humorist, of North Carolina, has been exceedingly popular wherever delivered."—*N. C. Baptist*, Fayetteville, N. C.

"I heard the lecture with great interest and delight. Mr. Spilman is a natural humorist and pleasant speaker."—Rev. J. S. Tanner, Univ. So. Baptist Theological Seminary.

"A capital lecture, both instructive and entertaining."—Rev. W. I. Masters, A. M.

"His lecture is full of wit, yet psychological and philosophical."—Rev. C. J. Thompson, Louisville, Ky.

"As a lecture Mr. Spilman is both interesting and instructive."—Rev. J. A. Sudduth, Cincinnati, Ohio.

"Mr. Spilman's lecture is equal to that of the famous Eli Perkins."—*Breckenridge News*, Cloverport, Ky.

"Mr. Spilman does more than attempt to entertain: his lecture is designed to systematize the phenomena of laughter, and in my judgment is a very satisfactory, scientific treatment of the subject."—Rev. A. N. Foster, Baltimore, Md.

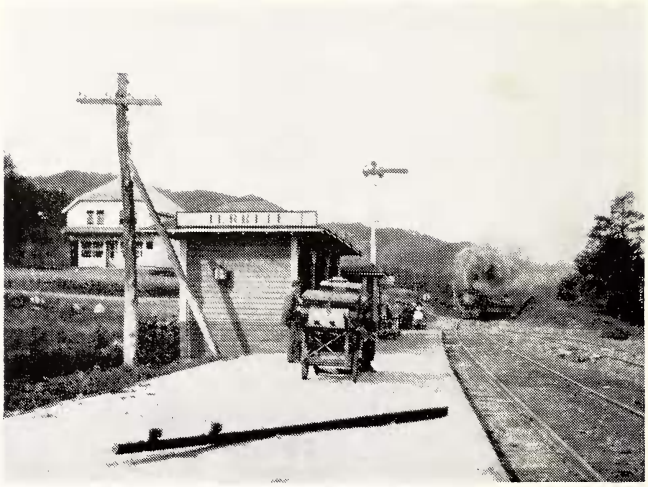
"The lecture by Rev. B. W. Spilman, on 'Laugh and Grow Fat,' is one of the best that I have heard. It is very instructive. It sparkles with humor and flashes with wit. It is a happy combination of the elements that go to make a lecture thoroughly enjoyable. Those who hear it will have an hour of 'good time.'"—Rev. W. L. Pickard, D.D., Pastor Broadway Baptist Church, Louisville, Ky.

Mr. Spilman will Lecture at _____

_____

ADMISSION _____

A handbill that Spilman used to advertise his famous lecture while a student at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville



Some eastbound Ridgecrest visitors at the first railroad station there about 1909, then called "Terrell.". . . Spilman poses with a group of workmen and their team during the early construction days at Ridgecrest.

"If you want to see this man's face, come to the Baptist Church tonight," was the message accompanying this photograph used by Dr. Spilman in newspapers.

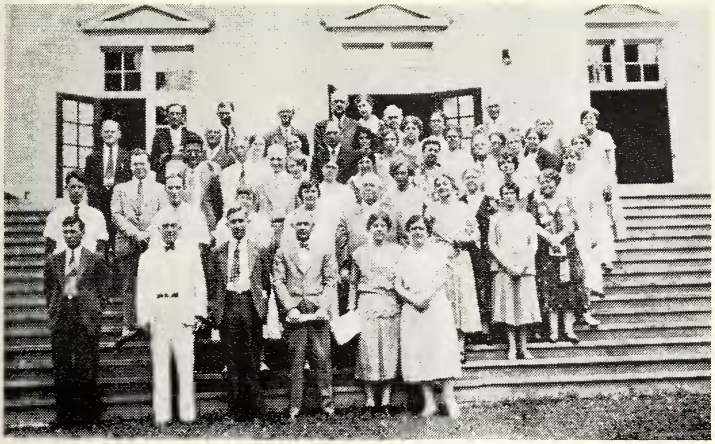
Bernard Washington Spilman about 1910, as field secretary for the Sunday School Board

Spilman repairs his cottage at Ridgecrest, about 1925—a workman unashamed.

"Just for Laughs"—and you can be sure that the man in the barrow enjoyed it as much as the man behind the camera.

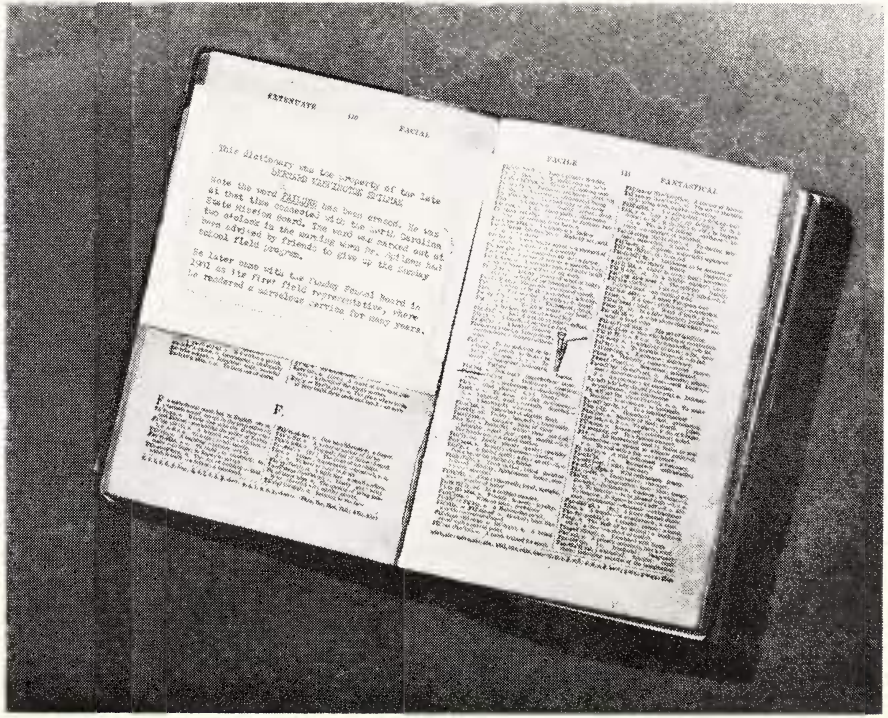
Both man and surrey affect a fringe about 1920 (reason unknown).

Mr. Geniality, himself, in a favorite Ridgecrest snapshot of 1931.



Editors and contributors to Sunday School Board periodicals in conference at Ridgecrest, North Carolina, August, 1931

Staff of "The Teacher," Ridgecrest 1931 —Spilman, Miss Clyde White, Dr. M. T. Andrews; Dr. Hight C Moore, Dr. J. B. Weatherspoon; Dr. J. D. Moore, Mr. Noble Van Ness


EXTENUATE
110
FACIAL
This dictionary was the property of the late
RICHARD THRUSTON BAILEY.
Note the word FACIAL has been erased. He was
at that time connected with the North Carolina
State Mission Board. The word was carried out of
two students in the morning mail. Options had
been advised by friends to give up the Sunday
school field journey.
He later came with the Sunday School Board in
1912 as his first field representative, where
he rendered a wonderful service for many years.
F.
FACILE
111
FANTASTICAL

room. But as you know, this is a large room with two double beds. I have given you that corner room over there, a nice comfortable room. You see, I had completely forgotten that there is a convention of preachers meeting here today, and I have a number of them in the hotel. I moved you to another room so you could be alone. I know you don't care to associate with that gang."

Dr. E. E. Bomar, assistant corresponding secretary of the Foreign Mission Board, was just inside the door of Spilman's former room and heard the conversation. It became the choice story of the convention.

As in Mississippi, Spilman pleaded for a Sunday school secretary for the state. He had many conferences with the Louisiana leaders about it and spoke for it before the convention, but they were not quite ready for it.

Spilman went back into Tennessee and Kentucky for a series of meetings. He was scheduled to appear in Mayfield and was met at the depot by a fine old gentleman, a Mr. Beagle, with silk beaver and Prince Albert coat. He was in charge of the Primary department of the Sunday school and had worked up a real meeting for tthe distinguished visitor.

They went to the church and looked over the equipment for Sunday school work. Mr. Beagle assured Spilman that he was going to have a fine audience and the church would be filled. Beagle peeped into the auditorium, and, his face beaming, reported that he "had them there."

Spilman still had not looked out in the auditorium, but he was sure from Beagle's enthusiasm that he had all the Sunday school teachers of all denominations in the city and a hundred or so more who had drifted in from the surrounding country. He was, as he said later, "all loaded" to talk about teaching and teaching methods.

Spilman and Beagle walked out to the pulpit. They were there, all right. From six years up they were there—several

hundred children with a dozen grown people scattered around. All the schools (not Sunday schools, either) from miles around had turned out.

Mr. Beagle was as happy as Spilman was miserable. Years later Spilman declared that the less said about that meeting the better, for he had no idea what he said. He never had another invitation to speak in Mayfield.

In December he and Marion Lawrance were participating in a Sunday school institute for preachers, held in Louisville under the auspices of the International Sunday School Association of Kentucky.

Spilman was on the program for the night of December 9 with the subject "A Review and a Preview," by which he meant a look back and a look to the future as to the best in Sunday school organization. The next morning, to another crowded house, Lawrance spoke on the topic "The Modern Sunday School." His opening sentence was word for word like Spilman's, and the rest of the speech was almost identical.

The audience thoroughly enjoyed the situation. Lawrance knew something was wrong. He mopped his brow, but kept going. When he had finished, the whole group broke into laughter and looked at Spilman.

On the transcontinental tour Lawrance and Spilman had worked so closely together on their conference speeches that actually this particular speech was half Lawrance's and half Spilman's. Spilman had first shot at it in Louisville. They had never been booked for the same meeting before.

At the suggestion of Dr. Frost, Spilman arranged a city-wide training school for Birmingham, Alabama, in March, 1903. It was also Dr. Frost's suggestion that he use Landrum Leavell in the school. A short time later, on Spilman's personal recommendation, the Sunday School Board elected Leavell as its second field secretary.

In the same year R. M. Inlow also came to the Board as a field secretary.

The rest of the year Spilman spent holding Sunday school institutes and attending meetings in Texas, Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Virginia, and South Carolina.

At one of his stops in Kentucky he spoke to a little girl dressed all in red. "You look just like a redbird," he said. She looked straight at him. "You look 'zactly like a man I saw once what had the mumps," she replied.

Not long after his trip to Texas that year, Spilman received an interesting piece of mail. Postmarked in Dallas, it had gone first to Nashville and then had been forwarded to him in Kinston. It was addressed simply, "B. W. Spilman, The Sunday School Man."

He found the work in Maryland, Virginia, and South Carolina making progress. In Virginia, under the leadership of Dr. Pilcher, the man who had first impressed the sixteen-year-old Spilman with the importance of Sunday school work, a great deal of colportage work was being conducted successfully. Spilman always felt that Dr. C. C. Brown, one of the moving spirits in Baptist life in South Carolina and a strong supporter of the American Baptist Publication Society, never quite became reconciled to Southern Baptists going into the publishing field. In spite of that, he always received Spilman cordially when he visited the state.

In 1904 the Sunday School Board bought a large dwelling to use as an office building and the Southern Baptist Convention met in Nashville in observance of the event.

Spilman knew that Dr. Lansing Burrows, the recording secretary of the Convention, prided himself on getting out the minutes of the Convention quickly after the adjournment. The Convention adjourned about ten-thirty one night. The next morning, about seven or seven-thirty, Spilman looked out of his room window in the Tulane Hotel

and saw Dr. Burrows sitting on the front porch of the Sunday School Board building next door. He was serenely smoking a long-stemmed pipe and seemed to be at peace with himself and all the world.

Spilman decided to twit him a bit about not being at the printing house getting out his minutes. Dressing hurriedly, he went immediately and greeted Dr. Burrows. "I had an idea you'd be in the printing house pushing the printers to get out the minutes."

The old "Doctor" removed his pipe and said, "The minutes, addressed to the delegates at their homes, have been in the Post Office for several hours."

About that time it seemed wise for the field force of the Sunday School Board to meet each year in Nashville, usually the last week in August or the first week in September, and lay plans for the next calendar year. They assigned various states to each of the secretaries, and each secretary was at liberty to call the others to his help or to exchange work with the others. By doing that, they could avoid conflicts in their engagements and together cover a large part of the territory of the convention.

Instead of specializing in one subject, each field secretary informed himself about every phase of Sunday school work, so that he might be in a position to be of help in any direction. When they discovered that they knew very little about Primary and Beginner work, they began to look for some well-prepared woman to handle it.

As Spilman had gone about the South, he had encouraged each state to hold some kind of state assembly. The idea caught on readily in Texas, and with R. H. Coleman leading, the Texans established an assembly called "The Encampment" at La Porte on the Gulf of Mexico.

Spilman visited this assembly in the summer of 1904. Although the morning of his arrival was a bright, sunshiny one, the preceding night had witnessed a terrific down-

pour of rain following a severe electrical storm. The people lived in tents, and that morning every tent was flat. The people were busily engaged in re-establishing themselves after several hours of wind and rain in the darkness. But they all seemed happy, and everybody stayed in spite of the physical discomfort.

In addition to preaching by Dr. George W. Truett, the program included discussions of every phase of Baptist work, with the Sunday school holding first place.

About the time that the Field Department of the Sunday School Board was established, Dr. E. Y. Mullins, president of the Seminary in Louisville, requested the Board to establish at the seminary an annual lectureship on the Sunday school. The Board agreed to do so, and to care for the expense of the lectureship. A Sunday school institute for preachers was held in Louisville in connection with the lectures.

Then Dr. Mullins decided that he would further experiment by having Sunday school work taught as a part of the curriculum. He wrote Spilman and asked if he would be kind enough to come to Louisville and actually teach in the seminary a series of lessons in "Sunday School Pedagogy," as it was called then. Spilman found himself a temporary member of the faculty of the seminary from which he had never received his degree because of the two exams he had missed back in 1894.

So pleased was Dr. Mullins with the experiment that he decided to establish a chair of Sunday School Pedagogy. Dr. B. H. DeMent, who later became the first president of the Baptist Bible Institute in New Orleans, was elected to the position.

As Spilman continued going up and down the Southland preaching the doctrine of efficient Sunday schools and stressing the need for a Sunday school secretary and a state Sunday school assembly in every state, he never re-

laxed his emphasis on teacher training. In 1906 he tried teaching the *Convention Normal Manual* in a college. He went to Monroe College, now called Bessie Tift, at Forsyth, Georgia. The president and every member of the faculty gave their hearty co-operation. For two hours each day Spilman had the entire student body in the chapel, and drilled them in the first section of the *Manual,* the part that he had written about the organization and operation of the Sunday school. Later, under the direction of the faculty, they studied the second section of the *Manual,* and all but five or six of them received diplomas.

Spilman always enjoyed getting outside of Southern Baptist territory and seeing how Sunday school work was done by other groups and in other parts of the country. His reputation spread far beyond the South, and he was frequently invited to speak in other states and to other denominational groups.

In June he went to Indiana to speak at the state Sunday school convention at Marion. Stopping in Indianapolis, he was a guest in the home of Bishop John H. Vincent, one of the originators of the International Sunday School Lesson system and the founder of Chautauqua, New York. Spilman spent an entire day with a notebook and pen, securing an amazing amount of information on the Sunday school movements of earlier days. Bishop Vincent also told him of many books, long out of print, that threw light on the early period of Sunday school history, and personally presented him with a large number of these old books.

After studying the books carefully, Spilman shipped about forty of them to John R. Sampey who was preparing a Sunday School Board lecture for the seminary on "The Lesson System." Later he donated the books to the department of religious education at the Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth.

Instead of one man's preparing all of the Sunday School

Board series of lectures for the seminary in 1907, five lecturers were chosen, Spilman spoke on "Baptists in Sunday School History." In May he was asked to repeat the lecture at the Southern Baptist Convention. Then the Sunday School Board issued it in pamphlet form for world-wide distribution. When the *Convention Normal Manual* was revised, the lecture was inserted in it that it might get still wider reading; and when later the *Manual* was translated into Spanish, Chinese, and Portuguese, the lecture was also translated.

The summer before, Leavell and Spilman discovered another state worker. Attending the first session of the Tennessee Baptist Summer Encampment at Estill Springs, they met a young merchant-farmer who was doing a wonderful job as the local manager of the encampment. W. D. Hudgins became state Sunday school secretary for Tennessee.

The Board's field force had now grown to five, Harvey Beauchamp and W. E. Brittain having joined them in 1905. It occurred to Spilman that it might attract great attention if all five of the field secretaries should speak in succession in a number of cities in the South. Getting the consent of each secretary, he wrote to representatives in five cities selected for the tour, and prepared an abundance of literature emphasizing Sunday school work and advertising the meeting. The itinerary included Memphis, Montgomery, Atlanta, Greenwood, and Raleigh.

Spilman spoke first on the program each evening, and was followed by Beauchamp, Inlow, Leavell, and Brittain. The publicity in both the secular and the religious press put the work of the field secretaries in a new light before the denomination.

In the summer of 1906, Ridgecrest, North Carolina, was selected as the location for a Southern Baptist assembly,

and the next year the board of directors elected Spilman general manager of the assembly.

He felt that developing the assembly would require all his time and that he should resign as field secretary. Dr. Frost preferred a compromise plan. He foresaw the assembly as a great asset to Southern Baptists, and that through it all the programs of the denomination could be promoted. Here was another opportunity for the Board to make a gift to the Baptist people and at the same time keep Spilman on its staff as an experienced field man. He asked Spilman to remain as field secretary under his own direct appointment. "You will work as you please for the Board when you are not giving your time to the assembly," he said.

For a long time Spilman had felt keenly the great need of work with schools and colleges. In them were the leaders of the future—the Sunday school teachers and workers, the ministers, and other Christian leaders. For a long range program for Sunday school development someone needed to be working with the educational institutions. Spilman did not feel, as some educators did, that it was enough to have a Christian faculty. He believed that Christianity should be taught in the schools as a part of the regular curriculum.

He had found that the churches in the towns where colleges were located often did little or nothing for the students. Their church buildings were inadequate, and they had no program to interest them. It was not unusual for students from fine Christian homes to have little relation with any church during their four years at college. Here was an opportunity too great to be neglected.

Dr. Frost saw the significance and the possibilities, and it was decided that Spilman should major on the colleges and other educational institutions. He would, however, be available to help with institutes and conventions from

time to time. The work with the schools and colleges would fit in perfectly with his working for the assembly. After the first intensive concentration on the assembly, he could work with the assembly during the summer months and spend September through May visiting the colleges. He began his new work on April 1, 1908. His approach was to be through the president of the college and other academic officials, in co-operation with the pastor of the church or churches located near the school.

Spilman had already made so many engagements for institutes and training classes in the fall that he found only a scattered opportunity for direct contact with the educational institutions that year. At Christmas, however, he and Leavell and T. B. Ray worked together in an experiment in using a college campus for a special week of teacher training. They selected the Christmas holidays and arranged to use the campus of the Tennessee College for Women at Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Many leaders from several states gathered there from December 28, 1908, to January 3, 1909. The use of the school's facilities set a pattern that Spilman was to follow on many other occasions.

Among the schools he visited in the spring were Simmons, Decatur, Howard-Payne colleges in Texas; Tennessee College in Tennessee; A & M College (now N. C. State), Wake Forest College, and Baptist Female University (now Meredith College) in North Carolina; Virginia Union University (Negro) in Richmond; and the seminary in Louisville. In addition he appeared in the chapels of many high schools and otherwise expanded his acquaintance with college and high school people all through the South. Each year was to see him visiting more and more of the schools as gradually a big approach to the student problem began taking shape in his mind.

In 1907, with the expanding work of the Board,

Hight C Moore had been elected field secretary in charge of teacher training. He had barely begun the work and had not changed his residence from North Carolina to Nashville when he was elected editor of the *Biblical Recorder* under emergency circumstances and decided to stay in North Carolina. Later, with ten years of editorial experience in North Carolina behind him, he was to join the editorial staff at the Sunday School Board.

Spilman and the other field secretaries continued to carry the teacher training work until 1910, when P. E. Burroughs came from the pastorate of the Broadway Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas, to serve as educational secretary in charge of teacher training. Dr. Burroughs was to institute a system of Sunday school records and to enlarge the study course for teacher training. Although teacher training would always be a part of Spilman's work, the direct responsibility no longer rested on his shoulders.

In 1910 Spilman was asked by Dr. M. N. McCall, head of Baptist work in Cuba, to come to Cuba to help set up a program of teacher training and field work in Cuba.

He timed the trip to coincide with the Cuban Baptist Convention. Dr. McCall called all the missionaries on the island to Havana for a conference, and Spilman spent several days in conference with them on methods of teacher training and ways of promoting better Sunday schools. They made plans to have the *Convention Manual* translated into Spanish.

While attending a meeting at the Baptist Temple, Spilman suddenly became ill and asked a little boy to go out and get a doctor. He soon returned with a man who told Spilman that his name was Francisco Agromonte. The doctor diagnosed his case, and not only told him what medicine to take, but went out and secured it for him. Then he came back and gave him the medicine, and within an hour Spilman was feeling much better.

The doctor would not accept any compensation for his services and insisted on staying with him for many hours. Spilman thanked him for his prompt response to the call and for his splendid services, and then suggested that perhaps his other patients needed him. In perfectly good English, the doctor replied, "Patients? Why, you must think I am a medical doctor. I am a lawyer and a member of our Baptist church here."

For the rest of Spilman's stay in Cuba, "Dr." Agromonte served as his interpreter.

Two years later, with Mrs. Spilman, he returned to Cuba to speak at the first graduating exercises for a teacher training class.

In June, 1910, Spilman took time out from Ridgecrest to go to Baltimore with Dr. Frost and others to discuss a proposed Sunday School Council of Evangelical Denominations. For three years a breach between Southern Baptists and the International Sunday School Association had been growing wider. In 1907 the association had become incorporated, abandoning its democratic form of organization. In the 1908 meeting, Baptist representation on the lesson committee had been reduced without any explanation, an act that brought forth protest from editors of Baptist papers throughout the South.

Spilman, when asked for a statement, had said:

> There was no reason why we should have had our representation on the Committee cut down.
>
> There were all sorts of rumors about radical changes in the system of lessons. Our people were watching with anxiety the results . . .
>
> You ask, What are we going to do about it? Just do nothing. We have nothing to do with it as a denomination. Every individual man can do just as he pleases—just what he did before.

What am I going to do? I am going to push the work of the Sunday School Board with all the power that I possess.

When the lessons appeared, the Sunday School Board reported that "the International Graded System of Lessons, . . . is almost entirely devoid of the redemptive element in the lessons, practically reduces the word of God to a story book, and both in the selection and treatment of the lessons is based on the theory that the child by natural birth is in the kingdom and needs not to be made a new creature in Christ Jesus. . . ."

The outcome was the appointment of a permanent Southern Baptist Lesson Committee, nominated by the Convention, to serve with the editors of the Sunday School Board, and, in 1910, the joining together with other denominations who objected to the Sunday School Association's autocratic methods, to form a new Sunday school organization.

After the preliminary meeting in June, Drs. Frost, Van Ness, Spilman, and Burroughs went to Philadelphia to participate in the actual forming of the Sunday School Council of Evangelical Denominations. Later, in 1922, the Council was merged with another group into the International Council of Religious Education.

Southern Baptists were to part company with the International Council of Religious Education on the point of teacher training. The Council offered extended courses in leadership training, and wanted to require that no one could teach a training class in his Sunday school or community unless he was officially accredited to teach like a public school teacher. The Sunday School Board preferred to follow the line of teacher training that Spilman and Burroughs had set up—an elastic plan better adapted to the independence of Baptist churches.

When the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

moved from Waco to Fort Worth, Texas, Spilman was very anxious to see the new campus. Early in April, 1911, he arranged a trip that would take in the seminary and several other schools in the same general area. He had been elected professor of Sunday school pedagogy, but had not seen his way clear to accept. However, he did promise President Lee R. Scarborough that he would return in March of the next year and help launch the department by teaching a short course in Sunday school work.

In 1911 John B. Stetson University at Deland, Florida, conferred on Spilman the degree of doctor of divinity. The citation called attention to his pioneering in educational work in Baptist circles, his genial personality, his clear thinking, and his deep spirituality.

That summer the president of Baylor University wired Spilman at Ridgecrest that he had been elected professor of psychology and education. In declining the offer, Spilman told President Brooks that he had never taken any university work in either subject, did not have a Ph.D. degree, and would not think of going into that kind of work. Brooks wrote back that he had thoroughly investigated all of that before making the offer, and that they had still wanted him. They wanted a man, not just a professor.

In 1912, keeping his promise to President Scarborough, Dr. Spilman returned to Southwestern Seminary in March to teach the course in Sunday school pedagogy. In preparing to teach the course, he had decided to try an experiment. He taught fifteen lessons to a class of seventy-seven students. At the beginning of the course, he divided the class into six groups with twelve to a group and selected a leader for each group. He spent forty minutes lecturing and then had the groups meet and go over carefully the work that he had done during those forty minutes. He drilled the six leaders very carefully and then wrote out their quiz questions and asked them to start

back at the first each time and bring the work up to date.

When he came to the final testing, he simply had the six leaders take a written examination and he asked each to take his group and quiz them very carefully and report the names of those who had mastered the work. That special class work helped greatly in the establishment of the Department of Religious Education at Southwestern, just as the experimental course in the seminary at Louisville had pointed to the establishment of a similar department there.

The idea of state assemblies was growing. The Baptists of Virginia held their Summer Seaside Assembly in a large auditorium at Virginia Beach. After they had finished their program, the auditorium was rented by the Christian Church for a similar purpose. This group invited Dr. Spilman to have a part on the program in July, 1914. A storm came from the capes late that afternoon and grew worse every moment. Lightning flashed and thunder roared like worlds crashing together.

Spilman had just started to speak when a blinding flash hit the wires and knocked out all the lights. He was standing by the post to which the light fixtures were attached. A puff of fire hit him full in the face and stunned him for a moment. Before he could recover from the knockout of the lights, a terrible crash came as lightning hit the dome of the building. Its great, heavy timbers came crashing down. He was sure that many people had been killed.

Someone started a song, and the congregation joined in while neighbors came hurrying with lanterns and flashlights. They began to hunt for those who were hurt. They discovered that only a few had been bruised. The heavy timbers had crashed amid the people, missing all of them. Spilman finished his address, but was so unnerved when the evening was over that he decided the best thing for him to do was to go home immediately. Upon his arrival,

Mrs. Spilman called her father, Dr. Pollock. As soon as he came, he asked Dr. Spilman, "How did you burn your face?" He had not even noticed that his face had been scorched by the lightning.

In 1914 he recovered from a serious illness in time to attend the meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville, and there it was his pleasure on behalf of many friends to present to Dr. Frost in the Ryman Auditorium, a loving cup as a testimonial of the esteem of his co-workers and in appreciation of the great work he had done as executive secretary of the Sunday School Board.

Two years later Spilman was saddened by the death of Dr. Frost. The end came on Monday, October 30, while Spilman was attending a meeting of the board of directors at Ridgecrest. He went immediately to Nashville and joined the funeral party to Louisville, where interment was made in Cave Hill Cemetery.

Dr. Frost was succeeded as executive secretary of the Sunday School Board by Dr. I. J. Van Ness.

Dr. Frost had led the Board through its pioneering days. Gradually the field force had expanded. In 1909 E. E. Lee, Arthur Flake, and Miss Annie L. Williams had come to the Board; in 1910 P. E. Burroughs had taken the teacher training, and W. S. Wiley and Miss Margaret A. Frost had joined the field force. One by one leaders had been called into the work in the states until nearly every state had its own staff of field workers.

Spilman continued his work with Ridgecrest and with the colleges, but with the enlarged and specialized organization he became somewhat of an ambassador-at-large from the Sunday School Board to the Southern Baptist people.

In the industrial world Dr. Spilman might have been a great success as an "efficiency expert." He was a natural expediter.

His Sunday School Board letterhead had provision for his name to appear at the top of the first page. The complimentary close read, "Sincerely yours as signed above." He gave two reasons for that. First, when one receives a letter the first thing he wishes to know is who wrote it. Second, the greatest letter writer of all time always signed his letter at the beginning, "Paul, the apostle."

Being on the road constantly and having mail forwarded every day, he had to devise some system to keep track of the letters. He bought an automatic numbering machine and left it in his office. Mrs. Spilman always cared for his mail, and as she forwarded letters to him, she numbered them with the machine, recording the numbers in a little notebook. If he arrived at a place and the last letter was number 58, and the first one at the new place was 67, he knew some letters were missing. Always careful to leave a forwarding address, with that double check, he rarely missed a letter.

As he traveled over the country, he had frequent requests to have the Board send samples, or there was some inquiry, or something he must look after when he returned to his office. For these occasions he always carried in his pocket some postal cards, addressed to himself or the Board, wrote the request on the card, and dropped it in the first available mail box. At times people would ask to be remembered to friends in other places. Spilman would write that on a card and drop it in the mail box right then.

Frequently some request would come that could be attended to only after he had reached home. Those requests he would also write on a card, making a memorandum at the top, "Do not forward."

The extent of his travels and the number of his contacts were reflected in the combination Christmas and New Year's greetings that he would send to his many friends each year. With his usual original approach to situations

that often became hackneyed in other hands he wrote his own greetings. The one he sent in 1908 was typical:

To My pastor and his Family, true friends in sunshine and in shadow,
The Faithful Officers and Teachers of the Kinston Baptist Sunday-school, whose help made possible the work of the past year,
The Secretaries of the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention and to all of the Sunday-school Secretaries throughout our Southland,
The State Secretaries of all our Mission Boards,
The Editors of our Denominational papers, whose weekly messages come to me bringing a broader vision,
The Presidents, Professors, and Students in our Educational Institutions among whom I work,
The Scattered Members of the Skyland Tribe whose thoughts turn now and then to Blue Mont,
Many an Host and Hostess whose hospitality has cheered me on the way,
Some of the Friends of the long ago, not often seen but oft in mind,
I send this little token of affectionate remembrance this

HOLIDAY SEASON OF 1908 and 1909

5

Ridgecrest Comes into Being

As early as 1902 Spilman thought that he had found the place for a general assembly for Southern Baptists—Fountain City, just outside of Knoxville. It had good railway facilities and was near the center of the territory of the Southern Baptist Convention east of the Mississippi. There was a school plant there that could be used for the assembly, and the University of Tennessee's summer school at Knoxville drew students to that area from all over the country.

After the Southern Baptist Convention in Asheville, Spilman met with the pastors of Knoxville and asked for their support. There was little enthusiasm for the project. A trial assembly meeting was set for a week in July, and a special train was provided from Knoxville to Fountain City. The first night the train carried two people, the second night no one, and after that it didn't run any more.

Spilman began a quiet search for another location.

When he attended the Southern Baptist Convention in Chattanooga in 1906, he checked the section around Chattanooga, but saw nothing both suitable and available. Later in the summer he went to Waynesville, North Carolina, and then on to Hendersonville. Still he had not found the site he wanted.

In July a group of Baptist leaders from western North

Carolina met Spilman and Leavell at Mars Hill to discuss the possibilities there, including "Little Mountain," where two dormitories were later built.

Spilman had always loved Mars Hill, and he had never forgotten the time he had had to walk to a chautauqua there from the train at Marshall. Not enough conveyances met the train. Because of the poor transportation facilities —no paved roads, no public transportation, and a scarcity of automobiles—the group could not see its way clear to recommend Mars Hill as the location for the assembly.

J. H. Tucker, a leading Baptist layman of Asheville, had suggested to the group a place in Montreat, which was then an interdenominational assembly known as "The Mountain Retreat Association." The Association, he told them, would sell the property to the Baptists for a very nominal sum; in fact they could have it for the payment of the debts on it. But the group reached no decision on the proposition, and adjourned on August 3.

They moved on to Asheville, still discussing the matter. There Mr. Tucker proposed another location. He believed he could secure a large tract of land at Swannanoa Gap, about seventeen miles from Asheville, at the point where the Southern Railway reached the crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

There was no railroad station at that point, but all trains stopped for orders at a little telegraph point known as Terrell—so called for the engineer who ran the "pusher" engine up the mountain from Old Fort.

Tucker, who was attorney for the Southern Railway, secured "stop" orders for several trains to allow the group to go out to Terrell and look over that land. On Saturday morning August 4, Spilman, Leavell, Tucker, Rev. William Lunsford, who was pastor of the First Baptist Church of Asheville, and his little son Gordon, and Dr. Henry W. Battle went to Terrell.

They spent the afternoon roaming through the thick forest and over a few mountain trails. They hunted for mountain springs, and found the little stream that now supplies Lake Dew with water, near Pritchell Hall. Dr. Battle took off his hat and delivered an address, announcing that they had found the exact spot where they should locate the center of the assembly.

In spite of the enthusiasm on that August 4, the progress of the assembly idea was slow. All of the men were busy with their routine work. It was not until December, when the North Carolina Baptist State Convention met in Greensboro, that Spilman was able to do anything further. Then he stood before the convention and told of his idea for an assembly and asked the people of North Carolina to take the lead. He introduced a resolution that the North Carolina convention name an organizing committee to select an assembly ground "somewhere in North Carolina" and then invite people of other states to co-operate with them in establishing an assembly for the Baptist people of the Southern states.

The resolution was adopted, and the committee named consisted of J. H. Tucker, N. B. Broughton, Dr. Henry W. Battle, Hight C Moore, and Spilman. Most of the delegates, when voting for the resolution, did not know that so far as Spilman and others were concerned, the site had already been selected. So the committee skipped the step of looking for a location, and set about to secure a charter, which they received the following March. They selected an executive committee and a board of directors.

Spilman had visited Winona Lake in Indiana and Chautauqua, New York, to study the operations of large assemblies. With his keen interest in the project, it was only natural that the board of directors should elect him general secretary and general manager.

After making the arrangement with Dr. Frost by which

he was to divide his time between the assembly and field work, he set up an office in September, 1907. He was to be thankful many times for the business course he had taken at Buie's Creek. His invaluable aid and ally was Tucker.

The board of directors had already bought the land and had it surveyed and a scheme of landscaping supplied by the engineer who had planned the Vanderbilt estate. The engineer's map showed also the elevation of every spot on the grounds. Using that map, Spilman planned the roads and laid out lots of approximately half an acre each. He planned the roads so that an automobile could be driven over any of them, although the elevation varied as much in some places as five hundred feet.

The whole project was launched without one dollar in capital stock. The assembly originally borrowed $3,000.00 from a bank in Asheville. In a few months after he had opened his office, Spilman had sold for cash 140 lots at $100.00 each, which gave him a working capital of $14,-000.00.

In June, 1908, after a series of speaking engagements, he reported to Terrell ready to get into the work up to his elbows. In Black Mountain he had secured some cots, a cook stove, and some dishes. He took possession of an old camp that had been used by the engineers who built the railway tunnel at Swannanoa Gap, and there he, and the group with him, set up housekeeping. They named their home "Dew Drop Inn."

On June 11 actual development of the grounds began.

The eight occupants of the three rooms of Dew Drop Inn were the road construction man, the contractor erecting some cottages, the Terrell telegraph operator, a foreman, three carpenters, and Spilman. Household duties were divided, and every man took his turn at cooking, washing dishes, and doing other necessary chores. When it came Spilman's time to cook dinner, they said that he

usually put everything he could get his hands on in one pot and made them like it. The coffee pot had a thorough washing only twice a week—he just put in fresh grounds for each meal.

One night they had a delicious supper on the table, and Spilman was called out to show some people some lots. The others all waited outside for him to return. When they went back into the cabin, there was not a mouthful of food on the table. The mystery remained unsolved for many days. Then they learned that a group of girls from a nearby private camp had passed along that way and appropriated their supper.

Spilman's joy in the materializing of the assembly was broken by a second great personal sorrow—the death of his little daughter, Agnes Mozelle, only a few weeks old. Except for the trip to Kinston, he left the assembly grounds only one other time that summer—to attend a meeting of the International Sunday School Association in Wisconsin in late August.

While the assembly was still mostly on paper, the Baptists named it Blue Mont. The railroad was asked to change the name of its station from Terrell to Blue Mont, and did—for three days. Black Mountain was only two miles west, and the frequent necessity of abbreviation in railroad orders was too confusing. "Bl Mt" was already the railroad shorthand for Black Mountain.

Now and then a new name was suggested, but none seemed the right one. One night Spilman, mulling over names, thought of calling it "Ridgecrest," for it was just that—the crest of a high ridge, and the railway station was one of the highest east of the Rockies. The very next morning he met Hight C Moore.

"Good morning," said Dr. Moore. "Mrs. Moore has just thought of a name for the assembly. What do you think of calling it Ridgecrest?"

The board of directors voted to change the name of the assembly to Ridgecrest. Terrell was still the name of the telegraph station and the railroad station. The post office was still Blue Mont. The Southern Railway readily changed the station name to Ridgecrest. But to get action out of the Post Office Department and the telegraph company seemed next to impossible.

Spilman went to Washington, insisted on seeing the third assistant postmaster general, the authority in such matters. At last he was called into the office. Whom should he find there but a personal friend from Asheville, who was himself a member of the assembly's board of directors! The name was changed almost immediately.

Then he went to Atlanta to try to get the telegraph company to change the name of the telegraph office. While in the city, he was to stay in the home of Ed Ward, who had been a visitor at Ridgecrest. He went to the telegraph company and waited to see the "head man" personally. He was Ed Ward. Spilman had never bothered to learn what business he was in. In less than thirty minutes, the name Terrell was stricken from the records.

The assembly opened for the first time in the summer of 1909. The programs were carefully planned, but there were only a few speakers and no effort was made to cover a broad range of subjects.

The next year E. L. Hon, of Florida, was elected general manager of the assembly, and Spilman was freed of that responsibility. By the end of that summer there were forty-two buildings on the assembly grounds, all of them on the south side of the railroad, opposite the section that was to be developed later.

The first full program was held in 1910. The order of the five conferences held set something of a pattern for the order of conferences in the years to come—the first was on Sunday schools and B.Y.P.U., the second on the

layman's movement, the third on education, the fourth on music and athletics. And the fifth was a Bible conference. On July 11, in connection with the conference on Sunday schools and B.Y.P.U., the leaders began their first School of Religious Education. The title was almost as large as the number of people present. There were only six besides the teachers. The program proceeded as if there had been six hundred. Classes were held in the morning for two periods, and platform addresses delivered at eleven o'clock in the morning and at eight in the evening.

The education conference in late July fared better, with representatives from thirty-one different colleges present. There Spilman was able to talk over with them some of his plans for Christian education and Sunday school emphasis in the colleges.

The total operating cost for the summer was $400.00. Although the attendance had been small, a start had been made, and Spilman and the others were dreaming dreams and seeing visions of the day when the hills would swarm with people.

In the summer of 1912 Dr. Burroughs, L. P. Leavell, and Spilman sat around a table in the back room of the administration building near the depot revising the *Normal Manual.* The year before Spilman had attended a Sunday school class in Green Cove Springs, Florida, taught by Luke Palmore. Palmore was section master for the railway company there. He had never been to high school, but was a student of the Bible and knew it as few men knew it.

He told Leavell and Burroughs that he would like to hold the manual a bit ahead of the thinking of the ordinary Sunday school worker and build it, not for college people, but for men like his good friend Luke Palmore. It became a kind of byword with them all the way through the revision: "Will Luke get this all right?"

In 1913 Fidelis Hall was built. General meetings were

held in the large, open-air auditorium, but there were two Sunday school classes needing special rooms—a class of girls and a class of boys. Mrs. Spilman taught the class of girls, known as the Fidelis Class. One Sunday Spilman went before them.

"How would you like a classroom of your own?" he asked.

The answer came from Ellen Brewer, the daughter of Dr. Charles E. Brewer, president of Meredith College, who, when at Wake Forest, had advised Spilman to change the name of his commencement oration.

"Yes, sir," she said. "We want such a room, and we can build it." Opening her pocketbook, she handed Dr. Spilman fifty cents as the first contribution. The eight or ten girls in the class decided to visit every cottage on the grounds and canvass for the fund. In a remarkably short time they had enough money to begin the building.

Fidelis Hall was completed late in November. Some time later, when the big auditorium was blown to pieces, it served as the only meeting place for several summers. It was later used as a dining room, social center, and kitchen for the boys' camp.

In the summer of 1914 the hotel at Ridgecrest was completed, and other work was done on the grounds. The assembly had borrowed from the Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Company $10,000.00 and had floating debts of about $20,000.00.

Judge Jeter C. Pritchard of Asheville, then chairman of the board of directors, went to Richmond and negotiated with the Old Dominion Trust Company for the sale of a bond issue of $20,000.00 to take care of the indebtedness. But along came the World War in August, and the bank refused to take the bonds, which were later burned in the furnace of the bank.

The summer of 1915 was a precarious time for the as-

sembly. Dr. Spilman was sick a large part of the summer and under the care of a doctor.

In August there appeared in Dr. Spilman's office a young man who introduced himself as C. W. Tillett, Jr., attorney for the Parker-Gardner Company, to which the assembly owed approximately two thousand dollars for furniture in the hotel. Mr. Tillett announced that unless the bill was paid, he would immediately enter suit against the assembly.

Spilman called a meeting of the directors, who held a conference with Mr. Tillett. He was offered a note signed personally by the directors, whose combined wealth was several million dollars, the note payable in full in November. Mr. Tillett flatly refused it and said that he intended to enter suit.

Those who knew the financial circumstances of the assembly were certain that a suit would produce very little for Mr. Tillett. It would only further complicate the indebtedness, which the assembly expected to pay off as soon as possible. The conference adjourned when Mr. Tillett announced that he was going to Asheville immediately to file his suit against the board of directors of the assembly.

The assembly owed Dr. Spilman more than $1400.00. Many of the directors felt that he certainly should not suffer this personal loss and that if anybody was going to get any asset of the assembly, it ought to be Dr. Spilman instead of a commercial firm.

J. D. Moore called the clerk of court in Asheville and asked him to hold his office open until Dr. Spilman could get there. Then the directors sold to Dr. Spilman, without reservation, all of the central part of Ridgecrest. The deed was made and duly signed by the officers of the board.

Automobiles were rare in those days, but Dr. Spilman knew that there was one on the grounds. He paid George

Ennett, of New Bern, $4.50 to take him over the dirt road eighteen miles to Asheville, while Mr. Tillett was quietly sitting under a chestnut tree at Ridgecrest waiting for a train.

In the meantime N. B. Josey, one of the directors, had left on the afternoon train for Charlotte with the note for the Parker-Gardner Company.

When Mr. Tillett went around the next morning to sue the assembly, the clerk of court told him that the assembly did not own enough for him to bother about a suit—all of the property was owned by B. W. Spilman. Spilman was in no way indebted to the Parker-Gardner Company.

For four years Dr. Spilman owned most of Ridgecrest. When every dollar of indebtedness against the assembly had been paid, he re-deeded the land to the assembly.

Almost at the beginning of the work at Ridgecrest, Dr. B. H. DeMent had suggested that a summer school of theology be held there. It should be of such quality that all of the seminaries would give credit for the work done. In the summer of 1916 the school was launched to run simultaneously with the other Ridgecrest programs.

While the teachers were on their way to Ridgecrest, one of the worst storms ever to strike western North Carolina had its center just above Ridgecrest. The Southern Railway tracks from Ridgecrest to Old Fort were washed out; much of the highway from Ridgecrest to Old Fort was destroyed, and the highway from Ridgecrest to Asheville was washed out. It cost the Southern Railway more than two million dollars to put its tracks in good condition again.

The big auditorium was demolished by the high winds. Isolated on the mountaintop were a large number of people. Supplies at the assembly store had to be rationed but no one suffered materially.

Only one of the teachers for the school of theology was

successful in getting through to Ridgecrest. He was Dr. C. B. Williams, who walked about forty miles over the mountains carrying his own suitcase.

At the end of the summer Dr. Spilman sat at his desk, utterly depressed. The storm had not only wrecked the auditorium; it had wrecked the summer program. On his desk lay the pages of figures that told the sad story of the assembly's finances. Old debts were still unpaid, and there was not even money to meet the operating expenses of the season.

In walked Dr. DeMent, his face wreathed in smiles, to make an announcement. The people at Ridgecrest had met in Fidelis Hall and raised $1,000.00 to care for the incidental expenses of the assembly. The following Sunday Dr. Spilman preached in Fidelis Hall with a heart filled with gratitude.

The next summer the seminaries at Louisville, Fort Worth, and Macon, Georgia (operated in connection with Mercer University) gave full credit to the work of the school of theology. Spilman could envision a great future for the school, serving the 2,275 ordained Baptist ministers living within a radius of a hundred miles, as well as the thousands who lived farther away.

In 1919 L. T. Mays, who was then business manager of the assembly, was everywhere securing money and pledges to put the assembly on the map. When the Seventy-Five Million Campaign was launched, Spilman felt that if the assembly were not included in the objects of the campaign, it would have to continue its independent campaign at a time when all Southern Baptist forces were concentrating on the one big drive.

Arriving in Nashville on the day the committee was to meet, he sought a conference with the campaign director, Dr. L. R. Scarborough. Dr. Scarborough objected to the inclusion of Ridgecrest on the basis that it was located on

the Atlantic coast. He did not think that anybody west of the Mississippi River would ever be interested in it. Dr. Scarborough's opinion prevailed at the committee meeting, and Ridgecrest was not included.

About the same time, however, the Baptist general board of North Carolina voted the Ridgecrest assembly $20,000.00, to be paid in three installments, in return for the assembly's cancelling $40,000.00 worth of good subscriptions it had received.

Never one to hold grudges and always ready to co-operate with his denomination's program, Dr. Spilman spent the latter part of 1919 speaking in behalf of the Seventy-Five Million Campaign in western North Carolina.

By 1920 Ridgecrest was on such a solid foundation that it no longer needed Spilman's services as executive secretary, and he gave up that position to devote more of his time to his work for the Sunday School Board.

The stockholders transferred all the Ridgecrest property to the executive committee of the Southern Baptist Convention. They themselves continued the corporation, with Spilman as president, an office he held for thirteen years. Retaining the corporation simply meant that the board of directors could do business in North Carolina. They held the charter intact so that, if it should ever be necessary to make new arrangements, they could again take charge of the affairs of the assembly.

Spilman's work with Ridgecrest was now completed. But the pioneering work was done, and as with the Sunday school field work, other men had been raised up to carry on the expanded work. No one individual, perhaps, would ever be as essential to it as in its beginning.

It now belonged to the people of the Southern Baptist Convention, and it was what Spilman had envisioned back in 1901 and 1902—a general assembly for the Southern Baptist people.

6

Student Work Realized

Spilman's work with the colleges had been primarily to see that religion was put into the curriculum of the colleges and accepted as a regular part of the college program. He also endeavored to develop the local church to the point where it would assume responsibility for the religious life of the students in the adjacent institution.

Typical of the schedule he followed in visting colleges were trips he made in 1919 to Virginia and to Kentucky.

In Virginia contacts were made with the work at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, and from there he moved on to the University of Richmond, and then to the University of Virginia. A stop in Staunton resulted in plans to enlist some Baptist students of that city in general religious work. From there he went to the state teachers college at Harrisonburg for a conference with J. C. Staples, Sr., Dr. E. R. Miller, and Miss Elizabeth Cleveland, of the faculty. That conference resulted in the college's allowing the *Convention Normal Manual* to be taught on the side and college credit given for it.

Washington and Lee University at Lexington was the next stop, and there a conference of Baptist students had been called in the home of Pastor W. O. Beasley. He also visited Virginia Military Institute.

In Kentucky he stopped at Berea College, at the state

normal college in Richmond, at Cumberland College, at the University of Kentucky in Lexington, and at Georgetown College. Then he went to Louisville for a conference with the state secretary, O. E. Bryan. They discussed at length plans that would touch the religious life of students in all the state-supported schools. A stop at Bowling Green completed the Kentucky tour.

Spilman usually found that in state schools, the president would have nothing whatever to do with any denominational group. An exception was the University of Florida, which he visited in 1917 after attending a meeting of the Lesson Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention in Jacksonville. President A. A. Murphree and many members of the faculty were most co-operative, and the Y.M.C.A. made it possible for him to meet all the Baptist students on the campus.

On that same trip he spoke at Stetson University in DeLand, and at Tallahassee, where he visited the state college for women and also the normal and industrial school for Negroes. Whenever he stopped where a Negro school was located, to visit the school, meet its leaders, and if possible, talk to the students.

At the Florida State College for Women a group of students asked for a special conference with him. They explained that they were taking classes under the direction of the Y.W.C.A. and at their local churches. They were going to Sunday school and to young people's meetings and listening to ministers preach. But they wished to do something of genuine Christian service. Could he tell what they might do?

He suggested that they make a survey of Tallahassee and the surrounding section to discover actual religious needs and then, under some experienced leader, set out to meet the needs they discovered.

Spilman's approach to the schools was always through

the president, the dean, and other academic officials. As he conferred with them, he was usually invited to speak to the student body in chapel or at some other gathering. His combination of humor and seriousness made him popular with the students, both in the colleges and in the high schools where he spoke.

Once when he arrived at Abilene, Texas, for a visit to Simmons University, he received a telephone call saying that a Simmons student, a Mr. Dillard, was in the City Hospital and wanted to see him. Dillard had lost a leg in an automobile accident.

The young man said to Dr. Spilman: "Of course, I want you to read to me and pray with me and for me, but not yet. You have been on our campus several times, and I have been with you a good deal. I wish you would sit there near the foot of my bed for a while and just smile."

Spilman told him that any fellow with that much sense didn't need but one leg. Then he told him how many things a one-legged man could do just as well as any man with two legs, or four for that matter. For if he could keep his sense of humor, nothing would ever keep him down.

In speaking in high schools, he was sometimes warned that the crowds were really rowdy; if the speaker could not hold them, it was no use to try persuasion.

The principal of the high school in Oklahoma City was quite nervous over Spilman's speaking to the students, all fifteen hundred of them. He explained to him that he need not be surprised if the boys broke up the meeting. He said they were often like a herd of wild cattle.

While waiting in the principal's office, Spilman read the latest issue of the school paper, which contained jokes about the "cafeteria sandwich," and mentioned the ham in them as being so thin it could not be seen.

On the platform Dr. Spilman sat between the principal and the state Sunday school secretary, Rev. J. B. Rounds.

Each of those worthies looked like the geometrical definition of a straight line, "extension without breadth or thickness." As he rose to speak, he drawled, "Say, fellows, how would you like to find a cafeteria sandwich like the one on the platform, with a big chunk of meat in the middle." It caught the boys; they howled and applauded, and then they listened. When he sat down at the end of ten minutes, they gave him a great ovation.

As he became better known in educational circles, he received frequent invitations to deliver commencement addresses and baccalaureate sermons.

In 1911 he had shared the commencement program at Buie's Creek Academy with Dr. T. W. O'Kelley, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Raleigh. Spilman delivered the address Sunday afternoon to 141 graduates of the Convention Normal Course, speaking on the subject "The Trained Leader on the Battle Line." Just as Dr. O'Kelley began his sermon, President Campbell whispered to Spilman: "The girl on the right end of the second row is not a Christian. She is the only one in the graduating class who is not. Will you join me in prayer while O'Kelley preaches, that Christ may save her today?"

At the close of the sermon, President Campbell rose and asked, "Is there anyone in this audience who will surrender to Christ now? If so, please come and give me your hand."

The young lady for whom Campbell and Spilman had been praying rose and came to the front of the platform and presented herself.

With all the offers of teaching positions he had received, the nearest he came to being a member of a faculty was in 1918. The Sunday School Board released him to go to New Orleans for a while to help get the department of Sunday school pedagogy started in the new Baptist Bible Institute, and in September the Spilmans set out for New Orleans.

The institute formally opened on October 1. The members of the faculty signed the articles of faith and heard President B. H. DeMent deliver his inaugural address. Classes began the next day, with sixty-seven students enrolled. Thirty-four of them registered for Dr. Spilman's class, and the next day several more joined it.

Two days later influenza broke out in the city. For a week the administration held on, hoping that the situation would improve. Then on October 8, the city Board of Health ordered all schools in the city closed. At noon the next day officers of the health department came into Spilman's classroom with President DeMent and served the order closing the institute.

Spilman would have returned to New Orleans to continue his work after the epidemic subsided, but the buildings were taken over by the government for use as a hospital during the war.

As the advocate of the teaching of religion in the colleges, he was often asked by the colleges to take the position of professor of Bible, in addition to the offers he had from the seminaries.

Simmons College at Abilene, Texas, made a strong plea for him to accept its chair of Bible. Chowan College in North Carolina and Carson-Newman College in Tennessee discussed with him the possibility of taking a college presidency. The Moody Bible Institute invited him to come to Chicago as its teacher of Sunday school pedagogy.

He was named a member of the board of trustees of the Baptist Bible Institute, and in April, 1921, served on the trustees' committee on curriculum. After a similar committee appointed by the faculty had met, the two committees jointly discussed the curriculum of the seminary.

His educational interest took him to Chowan College in North Carolina for a conference with President Preston S. Vann. President Vann realized that Chowan was not doing

the standard of work to warrant its conferring the degree of Bachelor of Arts. They agreed that with the present equipment and endowment of the college it would be impossible to meet accreditation requirements, and recommended that the college become a junior college.

Although his work was not primarily with students themselves, Spilman developed a deep concern for the whole student approach.

He was convinced that the multiplicity of work he saw being done among them was not good. The Home Mission Board had selected Rev. J. C. Owen as its secretary to students. Rev. Frank M. Purser did a similar type of work for the Foreign Mission Board, and Miss Mary Faison Dixon was young people's secretary for the Woman's Missionary Union. Often a B.Y.P.U. representative also visited the colleges.

The state-supported universities and colleges, he found, particularly objected to having as many as four people representing one denomination come to the campus in a single year. And the duplication of work seemed unwise even in the Baptist schools. On a few occasions, as many as three of the secretaries happened to be at the same school at the same time.

Surely some kind of correlation could be worked out. In 1917 he discussed the possibility with Dr. J. F. Love, secretary of the Foreign Mission Board, but Dr. Love thought all of the others should turn over their work to the Foreign Mission Board, since, to his mind, it was the only agency that could make a definite call on students for religious service. Spilman then argued that the training given by the other groups would be helpful in any kind of religious service.

Spilman had been interested in the work of the Baptist Student Missionary Movement, which had held conferences at Ridgecrest. In 1918, he was chosen a member of

the board of directors, to represent the Sunday School Board. He planned to attend a meeting of the directors in St. Louis early in November.

En route, he went by Nashville for a conference with Dr. Van Ness, and learned that the Sunday School Board had decided not to become officially affiliated with the movement. There was no opposition to the idea—it was simply thought best for the Board not to become a part of it.

Since Spilman had been chosen a director by virtue of his connection with the Board, he suggested that he stay away from the meeting. Dr. Van Ness, however, insisted that he go on to the meeting, but not as a representative of the Board.

Not caring to do that, Spilman turned back east, leaving Nashville on the afternoon of November 3 and planning to spend the night at Chattanooga. But it was wartime and Saturday night, and every hotel in Chattanooga was filled and had a long waiting list. About ten o'clock that night Spilman went to the Southern Railway depot and inquired of the agent if he had a lower berth on any Pullman car leaving between that time and midnight.

"Which way are you going?" asked the agent.

"I'm going the way the car is going," he replied.

"I have a lower going to Knoxville, if that is the way you want to go," said the agent.

"That is exactly where I want to go," Spilman replied.

"Well, why didn't you tell me that in the first place?" the agent asked him.

"Because I didn't know which way the Pullman car was going that had an available lower berth until you told me," he said. "I just want a place to sleep. It doesn't make any special difference which way the train is going." Spilman showed him his Southern annual pass; the agent laughed heartily and sold him the space.

In 1917 the Southern Baptist Convention met in New Orleans; Spilman and the three student secretaries representing the other divisions of Baptist work conferred about their work. A little later Spilman went to Atlanta and spent several hours with Secretary B. D. Gray of the Home Mission Board. He suggested to all of those to whom he talked that it should be possible to launch a real student movement, in which the students would have religious activities on their campuses as well as in the churches near them.

The idea of establishing some kind of organized student work became almost an obsession with him.

He appealed to Dr. Van Ness for an expense account with which to open an office for promoting this idea. After careful consideration, the Board granted him an annual appropriation of $600.00.

Six hundred dollars with which to pay rent, secure a stenographer, lay in supplies, buy postage, and pay other operating expenses! And he had a list of more than six hundred colleges and universities—Baptist, state, and independent—in the Southern Baptist territory. That meant an average of one dollar for each school per year.

Since he was also responsible for Ridgecrest and would be gone much of the time, he decided to divide time in his office. He rented two rooms downtown in Kinston, and granted his new secretary the privilege of serving as a public stenographer, using his equipment, to supplement her income.

He wrote to leaders in the denomination. He held meetings with college faculties, local pastors, and leaders of all the missionary work. Gradually he saw his enthusiasm spreading.

In May, 1920, the three boards of the Southern Baptist Convention—the Sunday School Board, the Home Mission Board, and the Foreign Mission Board—brought to the

Southern Baptist Convention a proposal that they be authorized to engage in a joint ministry to the Baptist students in the colleges of the South.

On January 1, 1922, Frank H. Leavell was appointed Southwide student secretary. It was the day for which Spilman had been praying and working for many years. He had not been alone in recognizing the need—but few contributed more toward making it possible for the need to be met.

Though he would continue to visit schools and colleges, a phase of his work was ended—passed into other hands in the expanding program of Baptist work.

7

Touching Home Base

In spite of the fact that he had to be away from home so much, Spilman managed to take an active part in the civic and religious life of Kinston and in the denominational life of his home state.

For a while after the Spilmans moved back to Kinston in 1902 they lived in the home of Mrs. Spilman's parents. All through the years, Dr. Spilman said, "If anybody ever had a better father-in-law and mother-in-law, I have not seen nor heard of them. They were all that any mother and father could have been." Mrs. Pollock lived until 1914, Dr. Pollock until 1932.

For a while the Spilmans lived in a home on Peyton Avenue, but soon bought a residence at 604 N. Queen Street—"home" for Dr. Spilman from then on.

Shortly after they moved into the Peyton Avenue home, the Spilmans wanted a telephone. After many promises on the part of the telephone company, still no telephone had been installed. Sometime in July Spilman asked the manager please to set a definite date for the installation of the phone and let him sign a contract. The manager set August 1. Then Spilman said, "Fill out the contract form and write in it 'September 1 or earlier.' "

When September 1 came, there was still no phone. He waited two days longer, and then went downtown, en-

tered a store on one side of the street, and asked the proprietor to do him a personal favor as early that day as he could find an opportunity. He told him that he had a definite contract to have a phone put in his home by September 1. Then he told the proprietor to call him on the phone and insist on a connection. If any question was raised, he should tell the operator that Spilman had told him positively that he would have a phone in his house by September 1.

Down one side of the street and up the other he went with his request. By the middle of the afternoon, the phone was in the house, and he had a perfectly good number assigned. He learned a few days later that the operator had announced to the manager that a phone was going to the Spilman house that day if she had to take it on her back and carry it up there.

At their Peyton Avenue home, the Spilmans had a large lot, and decided to raise poultry to supply their table with eggs. Spilman built modern poultry houses, fenced the yard, secured the very best poultry wire, and bought the very best chicken feed. Then he stocked a supply of high-grade hens and roosters. An accurate record was made of all expenditures, and an exact count of the number of eggs produced. At the end of several months, when he went out of the poultry business, he discovered that the eggs had cost them nine cents each.

A good friend of Spilman's was Lewis Grady, an old Confederate soldier, who operated a small fruit stand and grocery store and cultivated one acre of ground as a garden. The Spilmans frequently fell heir to some of the products of the garden. Knowing Spilman's penchant for keeping statistical records, Grady asked him to keep track of the financial side of his garden. Spilman's records showed that Grady produced vegetables enough to care for the needs of his own family of six, give the Spilmans vegeta-

bles occasionally, and then sell about $200.00 worth each year.

This was such a feat of gardening that Spilman had him pose in the middle of his garden for a photograph, and then wrote a brief story about the garden for the Raleigh *News and Observer* and the *Progressive Farmer.*

Then it occurred to him that he might help the old man further. So he sent a copy of the photograph to the State Department of Agriculture and wrote the story of what eastern North Carolina soil could do. The Department of Agriculture had a large transparency made of it and placed it on exhibition at the Charleston, South Carolina, exposition. For many years since it has been on display in the state museum.

Knowing that Mr. Grady used the seed from a Philadelphia seed house, he wrote the concern and sent a photograph and a brief description of what had been done on one acre of land. He suggested that the company send the old man enough seed to plant his garden for a year. The concern gladly did that and printed the picture and a short description in its catalogue for about five years.

Spilman then wrote to the concern from which Grady bought fertilizer, and sent the photograph, with the suggestion that Grady be given a ton of fertilizer. He soon had the fertilizer.

The title of the article as it appeared in the *News and Observer* and the *Progressive Farmer* was "A Unique Truck Garden." Quite struck with the title, Mr. Grady painted and erected a large sign over his front gate. On the sign was "GRADY'S UNICK TRUCK GARDEN."

When Spilman bought his residence on North Queen Street, he had already spent about fourteen years on the road. He knew what it was to be a guest in many homes, and he decided to arrange a guest room in his house that would be as near ideal as possible. The sitting room of the

house was the southeast corner room on the first floor, and the front porch extended down the east side of the house. The room just behind the sitting room was designated as the guest room. In a large closet back of the room was placed a private bath. He had a door cut from the guest room into the hall and another door leading to the east porch.

That room became the guest room for a large number of wandering denominational workers through the years. And there a guest had complete freedom of movement. He could go through into the sitting room, or in and out of his room on the east porch to the street, or into the hall and across to the dining room.

At Mars Hill President A. E. Booth had attempted to erect a dormitory for girls. About half of it had been completed, and the builders had taken a lien on it. After it had passed out of the hands of the college people, and while he was North Carolina secretary, Dr. Spilman bought the property for a mountain home. He completed it at a cost of $600.00 and rented it during the school year for $10.00 a month to the college for its original purpose.

On Christmas, 1902, they deeded it to the college, naming it the Raymond Pollock Spilman Home for Girls in honor of the son they lost. That was the beginning of a series of small but sincere philanthropies to Mars Hill.

As much as Spilman had to be away from home, he managed to get back to Kinston often enough to take an active part in the work of the church. The people there held him in high esteem, not only for his reputation away from home, but for the fine leadership he had given the church as its pastor.

In the church there was a class of girls fourteen to sixteen years old that did not have a teacher. The class had twenty on the roll, but only about five attended regularly. The church asked Dr. Spilman to teach the class on the

Sundays he happened to be at home. He agreed to do that, and beginning January, 1907, taught the class for six years.

Since he could not be present every Sunday he used the angle method of teaching, giving assignments to the members of the class quite a while in advance. The girl who had assignment number one would lead the class the first Sunday, and the girl with the next assignment would lead it the next Sunday. The girls developed into a splendid group of teachers.

Like most of the churches in that day, the Kinston church took a special collection for every object to which it contributed. As chairman of the finance committee, Spilman suggested that the church make an every-member canvass and ask the members to indicate how much they would give weekly, and also to designate how they wanted it distributed. The contributions increased greatly.

In a short time, the finance committee succeeded also in almost doubling the contributions to the orphanage. The orphanage depended on a once-a-month collection in the Sunday schools and an annual offering at Thanksgiving. Spilman's committee arranged to have a large number of copies of the orphanage paper, *Charity and Children,* sent to Kinston. They distributed them in the Sunday school and church. Then they asked each member of the Sunday school to pledge to give whatever amount he felt he could give each month to the orphanage. After that they solicited others for contributions.

In 1908, when Dr. H. W. Battle was pastor at Kinston, Spilman was elected superintendent of the Sunday school. He accepted but asked the church to elect two associate superintendents. Together the three outlined their work far in advance. Spilman did not preside a single Sunday during his whole term of office.

One of the first things the Sunday school did during Spilman's superintendency was to make a careful survey

of the church membership. From a city engineer's map, they made their map of white oilcloth, and on it they pasted a red sticker for every house in which a Baptist lived or from which someone attended the Baptist Sunday school.

The teachers' and officers' council met each month, and at that time heard reports from each department and each teacher. One of the most difficult problems with which the leaders had to deal was getting the officers and teachers to report when they felt that nothing had been done. Spilman felt that it was just as necessary to know when the machinery broke down, and where, as it was to know that it was functioning well.

Occasional visitors at the worship services of the First Baptist Church in Kinston were Mr. and Mrs. William Lafayette Kennedy, who owned Cedar Dell Farm a few miles from Kinston. Mrs. Kennedy, an aunt of Mrs. Spilman, was a graduate of Chowan College and a person of broad cultural interests. Mr. Kennedy was a very successful farmer and a man of wide intelligence and ability.

At Cedar Dell they had a handsome four-story residence, beautifully furnished and surrounded by twelve hundred acres of fine farm land.

While visiting the First Baptist Church in Kinston, they became interested in reading *Charity and Children.* After that, they never missed a copy, and read eagerly of the work of the orphanage at Thomasville.

As they approached the sunset years of their life, they talked often between themselves and with their friends about what they should do with Cedar Dell.

In February, 1912, just as the Spilmans were leaving for Cuba, Mr. Kennedy telephoned and asked them to come out to Cedar Dell. The Spilmans could not go then, but immediately on their return to the States, they rode out to Cedar Dell.

Mr. Kennedy was waiting to tell them that he and Mrs. Kennedy had decided to offer their property to the Thomasville Baptist Orphanage for use in its great work. They had in mind leaving the farm to the orphanage through a will. Then suggestion was made that they might deed the estate to the orphanage so that they themselves might see it in use while they were living. The more they thought of the idea, the more it appealed to them.

On May 14 they deeded the entire property to the orphanage, reserving the use of the house and fifty acres for as long as they should live. Two years later buildings were erected, and they saw Cedar Dell become Kennedy Home, a unit of the orphanage, with children playing on its broad acres.

Early in 1914 Dr. Spilman spent a month in Kinston recovering from an illness aggravated by exposure on one of his trips. His next public appearance was on Sunday, April 26, when, although hardly able to stand alone, he preached the last sermon ever preached in the old brick church in Kinston. The building was torn down to give place to a new and more modern structure. That was years after he had begun talking a new church for Kinston.

In April, 1915, Dr. Spilman was instrumental in starting a great revival that swept the city. All of the churches of the city were taking a religious census under his direction. As a result of the census almost all of the churches of all the denominations, both white and Negro, held special meetings. The Episcopalians held a series of meetings in a large hall and Dr. Spilman helped them by speaking during the entire series.

The Baptist church had not been completed, so the Baptists met either in a downtown hall or in the chapel of one of the city schools. Meetings continued in one church or another through the middle of July. The Baptists almost doubled their membership, and two new Baptist churches

were constituted. Years later people were still referring to the great revival that grew out of Dr. Spilman's Sunday school census.

In 1915 the Kinston church elected a live wide-awake man as Sunday school superintendent. He called on Dr. Spilman and asked him to tell him where he could get some information on how to run a Sunday school. Spilman told him he knew exactly where he could get the best in the market, and gave him the address of the Sunday School Board in Nashville. The man had to ask again the name of the city in which the Board was located.

Very soon a reply came from Nashville: "Go to 604 North Queen Street in your city and ask for Dr. B. W. Spilman. He knows more about Sunday school work than the men who wrote the books."

In June that year he was elected a trustee of the Thomasville Baptist Orphanage. That summer he and Mrs. Spilman moved their church membership to the church at Ridgecrest.

Always he tried to plan his engagements so that he could be back in his home state at the time of the meeting of the North Carolina Baptist Convention. For years he served as a member of the Board of Missions and Sunday Schools of the state, the same board under which he had worked as state Sunday school secretary. In 1917 he was re-elected to the board, but that was to be the last year he would serve in that capacity.

The 1918 session was not held in November as scheduled because of the epidemic of influenza. When it met in January, 1919, two men were nominated for the presidency. E. F. Aydlett, a prominent and deeply spiritual layman, received fifty-five votes. B. W. Spilman received ninety. He served the convention as president for seven years, through 1924.

Shortly after the convention, just as he was starting on a

journey to fill numerous engagements, he was stricken with influenza. He was ill for more than a month, and during the same time his wife and other relatives were ill. No nurses were available, and neighbors helped them by supplying food and fuel.

In the latter part of the year he was one of about forty Baptists in the state called together to perfect a plan for the North Carolina Baptist Foundation through which prospective donors might contribute to all Baptist objects in the state through wills and trust funds.

In March, 1920, he was again ill. After he felt that he was entirely well, the doctor told him that he must not go to the office for an additional ten days. He obeyed those instructions by setting up a table, obtaining fountain pen, paper and typewriter, and establishing himself in an upstairs room. At the end of the ten days he had mailed to the Fleming H. Revell Company in New York a manuscript he had titled "The Woman at the Well." Through a study of Jesus' approach to the woman at the well, he attempted to point out the techniques of religious education used by Jesus. The publishers thought that a better selling title would be *A Study in Religious Pedagogy,* and under that name the book was issued in December.

In July he went back to the old Elam church to preach the dedicatory sermon for a new building. It was the church where his great-grandfather had been pastor for many years, where his grandfather had been clerk, and where his mother had been baptized. And there he had gone many times while visiting on his Grandfather Barham's farm.

His relatives were scattered throughout North Carolina and Virginia, and whenever he was near the home of one, he always tried to find time for a visit even if it could be for only a few minutes. The cousins kept up with one another through a constantly circulating "Roving Robin"

letter. His brother John was treasurer of the East Carolina Teachers' College in Greenville, North Carolina, and a frequent visitor at Ridgecrest with him. Many of the photographs used in Ridgecrest publicity were made by John.

That same year Lee McBride White became pastor of the church at Kinston. He was the son of Jacob Lee White, who as a Wake Forest sophomore had preached in the little mission church at Weldon and brought conviction to a twelve-year-old schoolboy named Bernard Spilman. Dr. Spilman arranged to be in Kinston for White's first sermon, and said that he "saw" Dr. White preach a sermon that morning, but that he did not recall a word he said. So much was the minister like his father, that Spilman's memory slipped back through the years while White preached.

In the postwar period of the early twenties, there were many demands for worldwide relief. One of these was the Famine Relief Fund for China, which was being pushed very vigorously in this country. Several of the classes at East Carolina Teachers' College agreed to put on entertainments and secure funds for that purpose.

One of the classes invited Dr. Spilman to deliver a lecture in the college chapel early in 1921. He agreed to do that and selected as his topic, "The Man Who Made Uncle Remus Famous." The young ladies in charge of the program charged twenty-five cents admission, and Dr. Spilman gave his services, including his expenses, with the result that the class made a net clearance of $125.00 from the evening's entertainment.

He always chuckled over the fact that one of the other classes of the college had said a good many things to the effect that it was not possible to draw a crowd for a lecture any more. That class had secured a name band from Raleigh for its entertainment. They collected among themselves quite a healthy sum to pay the deficit on their evening's expense.

Once following a long and tedious illness he recalled all the good things done by others to make his sick days brighter. He was impressed as to how much it had meant to him to have people "say it." He wrote a little statement, "Say It." It was published first in *Charity and Children,* and immediately copied in newspapers and magazines throughout the nation, and still reappears frequently. He had so many personal requests for it that a plate was made and five thousand copies made at one printing. These he distributed in any quantity desired to individuals, business firms, schools, and churches. It has been translated into several foreign languages.

It summarized his relation with his friends and neighbors at the home base in Kinston and North Carolina and with his friends throughout the South.

SAY IT

You have a friend—a man, a woman, a boy or a girl. For some reason you love him very much. Have you ever told him so? Perhaps he would like to have you
SAY IT.

Your friend has helped you along the way in the days gone by. Gratitude is in your heart. Do not let it lie buried there—
SAY IT.

Some joy comes his way. You rejoice with him. But he will never know it unless you
SAY IT.

An honor comes to him. He wins in the game of life, and you are glad—
SAY IT.

Your friend succeeds in some task which he has undertaken. You feel a grateful pride that he has done it—
SAY IT.

A sorrow comes his way. He may have lost his property. Some of his loved ones may have gone wrong. Disease may have laid its hand on him, taking away the glow of health. You would share the sorrow with him—

SAY IT.

Old age, or perhaps a breakdown in the human machinery, may shut in your friend so that he can no longer fare forth among his fellows. Perhaps the end draws near. In your heart you wish him bon voyage as he nears the sunset gate. A word of kindly sympathy would brighten the way—

SAY IT.

The messenger of death may have knocked at his door and borne away into the unseen world some loved one. A word of sympathy would help to lighten the load and brighten the way—

SAY IT.

A personal word, a telephone call, a postcard, a letter, a telegram, and only a few minutes of time! Silent sympathy. Your own life may be better because of it; but your friend may go to the end of the journey and never know. You may add to the joy; you may lighten the load; you may brighten the way if you only take time to

SAY IT.

8

Helping the World with His Pen

In 1921, in spite of the fact that some people in other sections of the country might have wanted to dispute their priority, the people in North Carolina decided to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the "beginning of the modern Baptist Sunday school movement."

Twenty-five years before, in 1896, the Baptist state convention had voted to employ its first Sunday school secretary and "to provide for establishing Sunday schools and increasing the efficiency of existing Sunday schools." It was hard for Dr. Spilman to believe, that only a quarter of a century before he had started out on a road that was uncharted in Sunday school work and that some of those present for the celebration—and manifesting such enthusiasm now—had believed then that nothing but failure could possibly lie ahead.

The celebration was held, June 3–5. About this time, Wake Forest, the college that had conferred on him the Bachelor of Science degree in mathematics, conferred on him a doctor of divinity degree—his third—in recognition of his accomplishments in Sunday school work

On March 14, 1922, Dr. Spilman turned back to Kinston from an engagement in Winston-Salem, too sick to continue his work. For more than twenty-six years he had been driving himself day and night—speaking, writing,

holding conferences. The human machine which had so nearly failed him at the beginning of his work had been overtaxed. Now he was "just naturally played out." "Hitting the road" without a letup had brought him to a point of complete exhaustion. His father-in-law ordered a long rest.

With Mrs. Spilman he thought about it and prayed about it, and on March 20 he wrote to Dr. Van Ness a difficult letter. He would have to drop out of the work for a while, perhaps permanently. Perhaps his work was finished anyway; other men had been raised up to do the work that he had begun.

Then he and Mrs. Spilman began to plan how they could live when his salary was no longer coming in each month. The Sunday before Dr. Spilman became ill, he and Mrs. Spilman had moved their church membership from the Ridgecrest Baptist Church to the little Cedar Dell Baptist Church on the grounds of the Kennedy Home. Hearing that he was giving up his work with the Sunday School Board, the little church asked him to become its pastor. He told the people that he would try to supply for them two Sundays each month for a while. The church would pay him $5.00 a month for his services. He could count on $85.00 a year from dividends on governments bonds and $45.00 a year from dividends on other stocks, making a total of $190.00 a year. To this he might add rent from their property in Kinston.

At the Kennedy Home there was a little abandoned cabin with a large cedar tree in front of it. Through the superintendent of the orphanage he made arrangements to use the cabin.

The day after he sent his letter to Dr. Van Ness, he and Mrs. Spilman began work on the cabin, which they named "Lone Cedar Lodge." They began extensive repairs on the cabin itself. They planted a garden and built a chicken

yard and installed "John Henry," their big Plymouth Rock rooster, in the yard. They even planted an asparagus bed in the garden and were making plans to move on April 1.

But Lone Cedar Lodge was not to be their home. When the reply came from the Sunday School Board, it directed him to cancel all the engagements he had ahead of him and to take the complete rest he needed. His salary would go on for the time being.

When March 31 came, he did not think of the significance of the date until a messenger brought a telegram, sent from Nashville.

> We offer our heartiest congratulations upon your completion today of twenty-six years of distinguished service in behalf of the teaching work of our churches. Your work of faith and labor of love and patience and of hope as Sunday school specialist, pioneer, and prophet constitute a radiant page in our denominational annals. We thank God upon every remembrance of you and pray that his grace may abound yet more and more unto you.
>
> Everybody at Headquarters

He was a little homesick for the active life, the wide contacts, but his energy was gone, and gradually he succumbed to the resting that had been ordered. He and Mrs. Spilman did think that perhaps a stay at Ridgecrest might be beneficial, and so they opened up their cottage there, but after eighteen days they were back in Kinston. The mountain air was refreshing, and he loved seeing old friends—his humble neighbors from the little mountain cabins and great men from the great cities of the land. But conducting a day-long reception from his front porch, where he sat wrapped in a blanket like an Indian of the western plains, did not improve his health.

Late that summer the cottage people at Ridgecrest met and organized the Spilman Association for the purpose of

raising $100,000 with which to build an auditorium in his honor. They collected a small amount, then had a pile of rocks hauled to the open space in front of his residence and there erected a small stone monument with his name on it. But they designated no one to head the drive, and it soon lagged.

In September he again sat down to write the Sunday School Board. Surely, he had thought, he would have been better by now, but it was obvious that the rest would have to be still longer. The Board's response was to give him a six-month leave of absence. The Board would pay his salary on a curtailed basis, and if he should become able to do any traveling in that time, they would pay him $20.00 a day for each day beyond ten days a month that he was on the road. His regular arrangement was that he should receive the extra travel pay for each day he traveled beyond fifteen days a month.

It was not given to Dr. Spilman to be completely idle. It made no difference how much his health prohibited his doing many things that ordinarily he would have done. There were many things that he could do, and he kept busy with them.

He invited all the ministers in the vicinity of Kinston to meet him and organize the Monday Morning Club. He assisted in organizing the Lenoir County Historical Society. In October he filled one engagement, preaching the dedicatory sermon for a Baptist church fifteen miles south of Kinston.

In November the Baptist state convention met in Winston-Salem and Spilman presided. That was the year in which the attacks on President William Louis Poteat of Wake Forest College, for his alleged belief in and teaching of "evolution," were at their height. The night that Christian Education was a special order, the house was packed to the limit. Dr. Poteat was the speaker.

The great college president spoke for nearly an hour. He told the story of his own conversion, his religious experience, and his utter dependence on Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour. He told what Wake Forest had stood for through the years and sketched its influence in the Kingdom those many years.

Rumors had been rampant that condemnatory resolutions would be presented to the convention accusing Dr. Poteat and Wake Forest College of "everything in the books."

But after his address, those resolutions disappeared and in their stead the convention adopted a highly commendatory appraisal of both Dr. Poteat and the college.

In spite of the seriousness and the tenseness of the hour there were some in the audience that night who could not suppress a grin, seeing Dr. Spilman and Dr. Poteat on the platform together, at the memory of another occasion.

Spilman had gone by Wake Forest College one afternoon to join President Poteat, who was to go with him to Weldon for the funeral of a mutual friend. Arriving a few minutes early, he dropped into Dr. Poteat's class in biology. He eased in the door, unnoticed by Dr. Poteat, and stood just in front of a life-size chart of a human skeleton.

In a few minutes Dr. Poteat, addressing the class, said, "May I call your attention again to this skeleton here." He pointed to Spilman, close enough to be touched by the teacher's finger. The class broke up five minutes early in a riot of laughter.

Although he had been supposed to cancel all engagements, he felt that Scotland Neck, North Carolina, was so close that he ought to be able to make the training school there for which he was scheduled in January. While he was there, he called to see his old friend, Claude Kitchen, who had been a representative in Congress from that district for a number of years. Spilman knew that Kitchen's

life habit had been to push with vigor whatever he touched. He was a Christian, but took no part in the activities of any church except to attend services as an interested listener.

Kitchen talked to his friend Spilman about this and told him that he had come to the realization that he had made a great mistake. He had taken no active part in church life because he was afraid people would judge that he was an active Christian for political reasons. "That is the only thing in my life in which I have actually played the coward," Kitchen told Spilman.

Dr. Archibald Johnson, editor of *Charity and Children,* had been asked to write a history of the orphanage movement among Baptists in North Carolina. When Johnson's health broke, the task fell to Spilman. Now he began to gather material for the book reading the minutes of the trustees, looking up files of the *Biblical Recorder* and other material at Wake Forest College, reading back issues of *Charity and Children,* and interviewing eyewitnesses of events connected with the orphanage. It was to take him ten years to finish the work, for it was to be done in scraps of time, but he made his start during that enforced period of "rest."

When the book was published in 1932, it was called *The Mills Home—A History of the Baptist Orphanage Movement in North Carolina.* During the time that Spilman was preparing the book, the name of the Thomasville orphanage was changed to the Mills Home.

For many years he had held a week's course for all the Sunday school workers in Kinston, and in 1923, he was there as usual. In the class were 157 people from all the denominations in the town.

He had been writing lessons for the Sunday school quarterly for young people and adults several years, and he continued with his writing assignments.

In October of 1924 he seemed to be getting weaker, and would be up a few days and then down a few days. But in December he rallied enough to preside at the meeting of the Baptist state convention in Raleigh. He was urged to accept the presidency for an eighth term, but he felt that seven years was long enough for any one man to serve and that he should relinquish the post to someone with better health.

His return to active duty seemed to be receding, farther and farther away. Yet, as he thought back over the years, there had always been something for him to do, and always a way out of his problems.

On February 12 he wrote in his journal:

"Today I got on my knees at my desk and asked God to help me be a writer. It seems that my travel days are over. I wish to help the world with my pen."

He had written the Sunday School Board's first study course book on Sunday school methods. He had written a manuscript, *The Preparation and Teaching of a Sunday School Lesson,* which the Sunday School Board had chosen not to publish in book form. He had written the book *A Study in Religious Pedagogy*. He had been a regular contributor to the literature published by the Sunday School Board.

That writing had been only incidental to his other work. Now his concentration would be on writing, for it was a work he could do a few hours each day and do even while confined at home.

If he were to write for periodicals, he would need to be familiar with those to which he would be sending material. When he checked to see how many periodicals he already had coming to him regularly, he was somewhat surprised to find that he was receiving more than fifty, published in sixteen states.

An entry in his journal described his reading habits:

I rarely read books of fiction at home. I am too busy with more serious reading and writing. So when I was traveling constantly I had two methods of reading, especially the late popular volumes.

My first method: I joined the Tabard Inn Library. A membership cost $1.50. It was good as long as life and the library plan lasted. With the membership came a good cloth-bound book, often worth more than the price paid for the membership. The book had a red cloth bound around it indicating that it was a Tabard Inn book and was of course stamped inside to indicate it. The book was my property with no strings to it. Throughout the country in many cities were Tabard Inn libraries, located usually in a department or drug store. A list of the locations was available to every member. When I read my book, I dropped into any Tabard Inn Library and swapped my book and five cents and secured a new book. No other record. That book belonged to me. If I wished to turn in my book but could not find one to suit me, I turned in my book and was given a card of membership. This and five cents provided me a book at the first library where I found a book which I wished to read.

My second method: I was often in homes or in a city with libraries. The best sellers, new books, were often found in the homes in which I was entertained. In a little book in my pocket I listed a number of books on different pages. In the home I would read, say, the first hundred pages of the new book. I made a note of it and the page on which I stopped. The next time I saw that book I read on in it. Often I was reading six or eight books at the time. I have read many volumes these ways.

With the same careful precision that had marked his studying at Wake Forest, when the boys claimed they could set their watches by the sound of his flute, he made out a schedule and began his writing. At the end of 1925 he checked on his writing record for the year and found that in a little over ten months he had written eighty-seven different articles—more than a hundred thousand words.

His work had appeared in eight different publications.

And thus, though the voice of B. W. Spilman was seldom heard in gatherings in the South, his message continued to go out, not only to the South but to the whole nation, to many more people and places than he could ever have reached in person.

On his visits to the Kennedy Home he saw the need of a library for the boys and girls and began to plan for building one, with a reading room and possibly a social hall. But he found no successful means of raising the money for the building.

One of the new friendships he made as a result of being at home in Kinston so much of the time was that of Dr. C. Banks McNairy, superintendent of the Caswell Training School, for the feeble-minded. He visited Dr. McNairy at the school often, and frequently he spoke to the children. Dr. McNairy liked to tease him by saying, "You please those children more than anybody who ever speaks to them, because you talk just like they do." Spilman always took it as a great compliment.

One day the old Negro cook at the training school was in the front of the building as Dr. Spilman turned his car into the drive. She called out, "Dr. McNairy, yonder come prayer meetin'."

When the American Association for the Study of Mental Deficiency was to meet at Caswell, Dr. McNairy asked Spilman to prepare a paper on the topic, "A Curriculum of Religious Education for Schools for the Feeble-minded."

Spilman undertook the job with his usual thoroughness. He studied the various types of mental deficiency at the Caswell school, where he already knew many of the children and adult inmates personally. He borrowed books from Dr. McNairy's library, and studied the whole field carefully. Then he wrote to several religious publishing houses asking them to send him copies of their lessons for

Beginners. The paper created wide discussion, and was included in full in the annual proceedings of the association.

In 1925 Spilman found himself taking issue, through the columns of the *Biblical Recorder,* with his old friend W. C. Barrett. Barrett, one of Spilman's three roommates in Raleigh when he was state Sunday school secretary, was then pastor of the First Baptist Church in Gastonia and the North Carolina member of the Sunday School Board.

Barrett was advocating, through the *Recorder,* such changes in the charters of the Baptist institutions of the state that the trustees of all of them should be elected directly by the convention. Spilman understood him to advocate that the trustees should be elected as a result of nominations from the floor of the convention. That, he was sure, was not a wise policy, and so he answered Barrett. Their controversy extended through several weeks.

Barrett served notice that he would introduce a resolution at the convention in Charlotte in 1925, and the committee on order of business set aside a full hour for the discussion of the resolution. Many of the institutions were afraid that a move was being made to put a stranglehold on their administrations.

Soon after his arrival in Charlotte, Spilman sought out his friend Barrett. They sat down together and talked over the resolution that he planned to present. Spilman soon discovered that all that Barrett wanted was simply to bring the institutions under the direct control of the Baptist State Convention. With that Spilman was in hearty agreement. Together they went over the resolution, changing it in a few places, and then agreed that it should be referred to a committee for a year of study and a report made at the next session.

When the time came for the resolution to be presented, the president recognized Barrett, who walked to the plat-

form on one side. Spilman rose from his place in the audience and walked up on the other side. The church auditorium was crowded to the limit, and the convention expected a battle royal.

Barrett quietly read the resolution and moved its adoption. Spilman, slipping his arm over Barrett's shoulder, seconded the motion.

As soon as the president announced that the resolution was before the house, Spilman moved that it be referred to a special committee, and Barrett seconded that motion. The motion was then adopted, and the convention had fifty-five minutes left on its hands to use as it pleased.

The only "row" in connection with the resolution resulted over the appointment of the committee chairman. Spilman wanted Barrett as chairman, and Barrett wanted Spilman. Barrett out-talked Spilman, and it was he who brought the report the next year and saw the resolution adopted by the convention.

As Dr. Spilman made his frequent visits to the Kennedy Home, he would pass the cottage of a family named Hardison. A little five-year-old girl was usually playing in the yard. He would blow his horn, "one long and two shorts," as he passed, and wave to her. He did not know her name, but somehow she learned that he was a preacher. When she heard the horn, she would wave and call out, "Hey, preacher man." It became quite a game with them.

One day when he was a long distance away, he saw her run out to the road. Standing on the edge of the highway, she called at the top of her voice, "Stop, preacher man! Stop!" She had two large watermelons for him, and with them a note expressing her pleasure that he had noticed her as he passed by.

For two years after that, until she moved away, they exchanged all sorts of presents. Sometimes he would bring a doll, at other times a package of chewing gum or a bag

of candy. Frequently she had a bunch of vegetables for the Spilmans.

One day Spilman stopped his car and picked up an old Negro man who was walking along the highway. "Is you a preacher?" the old man asked.

Spilman told him that he was.

"I sho' would lack to hear you preach a sermon," the old man replied.

"All right," Dr. Spilman said. "I'll preach you one right now. You just keep your eyes and ears open."

Then he drove four miles beyond his destination to take the old man to his cabin, saying, "One of the best ways I know to preach is to give a helping lift to somebody who needs it."

With profuse thanks, the old man left the car and said, "Dis here sho' is 'bout de bes' sermon dat I ever heard preached."

But not all his days were as bright as the ones when he was able to drive by the home of little Nannie Hardison or give a ride to an old Negro man.

For many years he had suffered occasional attacks of bronchitis. An attack of unusual violence came in early December, 1926. On December 22 he wrote in his journal:

> My bronchial trouble is better, but I am weak and feel bad all over. I have an idea that the human machinery has about given out. I am nearing my fifty-sixth birthday—next January 22. I am grateful to my Heavenly Father that I have lived so long and have been able to do some good. But from the human point of view, I am about at the end of my journey. Some miracle may be performed by my Heavenly Father, and I may be strong and well again, but I am not expecting it. I am in His hands. He will work it out all right.

The Spilmans had made plans to build a new home farther away from the encroaching business district of

Kinston, but the rising costs and Dr. Spilman's curtailed salary caused them to put aside the architect's drawings and their dreams of a new home. In 1927 Spilman expressed in his journal a wish for three things:

First, the new *International Encyclopedia,* latest edition in thirteen volumes, selling for $99.75. The only encyclopedia he had at that time was Johnson's, which he had secured in 1893.

Second, a new *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary,* which was selling for $60.00 in the binding he wanted.

Third, a new typewriter. The one that he owned had been in constant use since 1912.

He took a look at the taxes to be paid, and bought none of the articles.

Not for seven years had Dr. Spilman been to Nashville, the headquarters of the Sunday School Board. He decided to attempt the trip in October of 1927, and spent a week there.

For quite a while he had been writing the lessons for *The Young People and Adults Quarterly,* first called *The Organized Class Magazine.* On this visit he conferred with the editor about writing lessons for *The Teacher,* and it was decided that he should begin them as of July 1, 1928. It was agreed he would gradually retire from field work, giving more time to writing for *The Teacher* and other periodicals. However, because of the death of the lesson writer, Dr. C. L. Greaves, his contributions to *The Teacher* began with the lessons for the second quarter of 1928.

9

"You Next"

The North Carolina Baptist State Convention met in 1928 in High Point, and for the first time Dr. Spilman was absent. Mrs. Spilman had become desperately ill in June. Several trips had been made to a hospital in Richmond, and in the early fall it had become apparent that she would not recover. Throughout those long weeks, Dr. Spilman remained a patient and troubled observer at her bedside, providing her with every possible comfort.

The convention in High Point recognized his absence and sent him a telegram conveying beautiful sentiments of friendship. The board of trustees of the Thomasville Baptist Orphanage, meeting during the same period, voted in his absence to name a new building at the Kennedy Home "The Spilman Building."

At two o'clock on the morning of November 16, the nurse who was with Mrs. Spilman called Dr. Spilman to her bedside. There he found that she had brightened up a bit. In a very feeble voice she whispered, "I wish I could talk so that I could tell you how devotedly I love you."

He answered that she had been telling him of her love in a thousand ways through all the twenty-eight years of their married life. She dropped off to sleep, and at ten o'clock that morning she died.

During most of her life in Kinston, Mrs. Spilman had

directed a children's choir at the Baptist church. She also taught a Sunday school class and was active in every phase of the church's work, both at Kinston and during the years they lived in Raleigh and attended Tabernacle church. She knew personally as many people in Kinston as any resident in the city. Always cordial and friendly, she took a special delight in inviting people into her home and in visiting those who were sick and shut in.

She had always visited the children at the Thomasville Baptist Orphanage, and after the branch orphanage was built at Cedar Dell, she spent much of her time on its grounds mingling with the children. For several years she and Dr. Spilman kept one girl from the orphanage in their home.

She had many times quietly helped girls through college at Mars Hill. Some of them even her husband did not know about until after her death.

When Mrs. Spilman had been nearing the end of her journey, she had said several times to her husband, "I left something out of my will that I meant to put in."

Whenever she mentioned it, he would insist that she not bother about it then but wait until she got well; then she could put it in. Finally she said to him, "I want to leave something to help girls get an education at Mars Hill." She wanted to establish a loan fund there to help some girl who needed financial assistance.

Most of her liquid assets had gone in the collapse of a syndicate of textile mills in Kinston and Virginia a few years before. Not wanting to bother the real estate holdings in her estate, in November Dr. Spilman borrowed $1,000.00 on his personal note, and in the college chapel presented a check for that amount to President R. L. Moore.

With his natural love for children and his special interest in the Kennedy Home, Spilman had come to love

every brick and stone, every path and field, and every child and chick at the home.

In March after Mrs. Spilman's death he went out to the Kennedy Home for a week end visit, and was given a room in the Moore Infirmary. He was so delighted with Miss Lizzie Strickland's administration of the building and with the group of fifteen girls who lived there, that he spent practically every week end possible there. The life and joy in the home helped fill the emptiness he felt alone in his apartment in Kinston. Unwilling to be a burden on the facilities of the orphanage, he erected a small addition to the infirmary building for his personal use.

Neither the Moore Infirmary nor the Spilman Building had been dedicated, and services were set for April 21. A great crowd of people attended.

Arrangements had been made to hold the ceremonies in front of each building. Portraits of both Mr. and Mrs. William Croom Moore were to be unveiled before the Moore Building, and one of Dr. Spilman before the Spilman Building.

A few minutes before the service was to begin, a slight rain came, and the entire group moved into the chapel. The Moore Building was dedicated, and the portraits unveiled. Then the Spilman Building, which was the home of the smallest girls there, was about to be dedicated. Some of the little girls from the home were to have sung a song on the front porch. When everything was transferred to the chapel, they did not know just what it all meant.

When the call was made for them to sing, the entire group of twenty-eight marched up on the platform. Confused by the move into the chapel but knowing that it all had something to do with Dr. Spilman, instead of singing the song selected for them, they broke loose with the jingle:

Skinnering-a-ding-ding, skinnering-a-do,
Dr. Spilman, we love you!
Skinnering-a-ding-ding, skinnering-a-do,
Dr. Spilman, we love you!

We love you in the morning,
And we love you in the night;
We love you when we're with you,
And we love you out of sight.

Skinnering-a-ding-ding, skinnering-a-do,
Dr. Spilman, we love you!

There was no possibility of flagging them down until they had finished the song. Then they marched off the stage in triumph, amid hilarious laughter on the part of the audience. The portrait was not unveiled until the next day.

In July Dr. Spilman came from Ridgecrest to find Mr. Kennedy seriously ill, and a few days later he conducted the funeral services for him. Mrs. Kennedy had died several years earlier.

In the fall of 1929 he went on a speaking tour that took him to South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, and Tennessee, and then back into North Carolina. When Dr. George W. Truett learned that he was to be in Texas, he asked him to preach for him in the First Baptist Church in Dallas the first Sunday evening in November.

Spilman arrived in Dallas on Sunday morning in time to hear Robert H. Coleman, the pastor's assistant, tell the folks who was going to preach that night. Coleman had no idea that Spilman was in the audience, and Spilman, listening, felt as if he had just heard his own funeral eulogy delivered.

The Baptist state convention held its centennial celebra-

tion in Charlotte in March 1930. Dr. Spilman spoke on the progress of Sunday school work during the one hundred years and pointed to the promise that Sunday schools held for the future in the advancing of the Kingdom.

After the meeting he and Hight C Moore left for Morehead City to greet old friends. They were not supposed to have any preaching or speaking engagements, but Dr. Moore spoke to a packed house on Sunday night, and after the service there was an informal reception.

The next morning two carloads of people, including the two guests, went down the coast into the territory where Spilman had served twenty-nine years before. They drove over a hard-surfaced highway where there had been no roads and no public transportation of any kind when Spilman was there before. Sailboats had been the only means of transportation in some of the places they passed through.

At Smyrna the people had anticipated their coming. On the very spot where Spilman had stepped off the boat twenty-nine years before, most of the population had gathered for an oyster roast. A long stretch of wire fence set on iron posts held bushels of oysters, under which, from one end to the other, a fire had been kindled. Speeches of reminiscence had to be made, and at the end of the speeches Linwood L. Simpson, in whose father's house Spilman had lived at Smyrna, announced that Dr. Moore and Dr. Spilman and all their Morehead City friends were to go immediately to his home for dinner. His wife, he said, had prepared four big fat hens for an old-fashioned dinner. Much as they hated to disappoint Mrs. Simpson, the prospect of more food at that moment was appalling, and they were almost glad that Dr. Moore was scheduled to speak at a banquet at the Kennedy Home that night so that they could not possibly accept the gracious invitation.

In November, 1931, the daily papers announced that eight banks in western North Carolina had been drawn into a whirlpool of failure by the closing of a big bank in Asheville. Included in that group was the Black Mountain bank in which Dr. Spilman owned a block of stock and had a deposit. He suffered a further loss when one of the Kinston banks failed.

On December 5 he received an order from the business manager of the Sunday School Board to stay close in for three months "and do your work as close to your base as possible." The whole program of the Sunday School Board began to mark time because of the financial conditions throughout the country.

Dr. Spilman was sixty years old on January 22, 1931. Sometime before he had asked President Brewer at Meredith College if he might come to the college and give some of his friends an opportunity to meet him there. The college began to make ready for a real reception, the very thing he did not want.

A few days before his birthday he became ill and notified Dr. Brewer that he would not be able to attend. On the afternoon of January 21, President Brewer went in his car from Meredith to Kinston, to take tokens of friendship from the people at Meredith. With him were his daughter, Miss Ellen Brewer, who had started the drive to build Fidelis Hall at Ridgecrest, and two students, Miss Ann McCanless and Miss Madeline Elliott.

On March 12 he arrived at the college and was made "a sort of honorary chaplain." He remained a month and spoke an average of more than once a day during his entire stay. For the next two years he spent a great deal of time at Meredith.

The next spring he delivered the Holland Lectures at the Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth. His general theme was "Religious Education: A History of the Curric-

ulum." The first night his lecture drew an audience of thirty-four, eight of whom were professors. The next afternoon he told Uncle Remus stories to a packed auditorium. That night he wrote in his journal: "I never have thought much of lecture foundations, and now my thought is a notch below where it was. A great crowd came to hear dialect stories, and thirty-four people came to hear what I had studied two years to prepare."

The Seminary, hard hit by the depression, was at that time operating only four days a week, Tuesday through Friday. All of the professors except one were serving churches to supplement their income. Students held pastorates as far away as Louisiana, Arkansas, and Oklahoma as well as in distant Texas towns. The railroads provided annual passes for all students and professors who were serving churches.

When Dr. Scarborough handed Spilman a check for the lectures—a large amount representing the annual interest on the Holland endowment—he promptly endorsed it and handed it back, saying, "Please take this and use it where it is needed the most."

Preparing the lessons for *The Teacher* had not been an unmitigated joy for Spilman. He had received more letters of adverse criticism in five years of writing for *The Teacher* than in all the many years he had written for other Sunday School Board periodicals and for numerous religious papers.

While he was in Fort Worth for the Holland Lectures, he received a telephone call from Hight C Moore at headquarters in Nashville. The Board, Dr. Moore said, had received a positive avalanche of criticism of Spilman's lesson for April 3. The lesson for that Sunday was from the book of Genesis. Dr. Moore asked him to send him a night letter, without regard to expense, setting forth his personal beliefs about creation. Spilman replied by wire:

"Man was created from the dust of the earth as stated on page 21. I believe the account in Genesis exactly as it is stated in Genesis 2:7. God created man in his own way."

Over the phone he had told Dr. Moore that he would be in Nashville at nine o'clock on Monday morning, April 11. He also told him that if he wished additional criticisms, he could furnish him with stacks of letters that had come to him in Kinston.

After attending a state Sunday school convention at Pine Bluff, Arkansas, and stopping for a series of addresses at Union University, Jackson, Tennessee, he arrived in Nashville at the appointed time. He and Dr. Moore and Dr. Van Ness had a long conference and examined the criticisms carefully. At length they concluded that the attack might have grown out of resentment of the fact that Spilman had been associated with Dr. William Louis Poteat at Wake Forest, who had fought so valiantly to "keep science and religion together."

But Spilman told Dr. Van Ness and Dr. Moore that he certainly did not want to embarrass the Sunday School Board in any way and that if any sentence he had ever written contained anything not in complete harmony with the plain teaching of the Word of God, he would gladly retract it.

Mindful of the constant stream of criticism that had come to him not just from this lesson but from others, he came to the conclusion that there must be a better way for him to serve. He offered his resignation and asked that his lesson writing end with the last lesson in September, 1932. "Reluctantly and regretfully" the resignation was accepted. For the first time since 1907 he had no connection with the Editorial Department of the Sunday School Board.

Several months later an old Negro by the name of Fred Nunn came to the Spilman residence early one morning.

Stopping in the walkway, he took off his hat and said to Dr. Spilman: "I sho' is sorry you done quit writin' for da *Teacher.* You 'splain de Bible so's I understand what de Lord is a-sayin' to me. And I sho' was set back when I see you done quit."

Back in 1924 Spilman had received a letter from an elderly minister named S. J. Rogers who lived in the country near Adairsville, Georgia. Mr. Rogers told how much he had enjoyed Spilman's letters in *The Teacher,* and expressed a desire to meet Dr. Spilman. During the spring they exchanged letters, and then the correspondence ceased.

From Nashville and the conference with Dr. Van Ness and Dr. Moore, Spilman went to Cartersville, Georgia, for the North Georgia Baptist Sunday School Convention. The congregation proved so large that no church in the town could hold it, and it was moved to an open-air auditorium.

On the second day of the convention, Spilman spoke at the eleven o'clock hour. At the close of the service there came down the aisle an elderly man with a long white beard. He was assisted by a friend who helped him as he walked. He came directly to the platform and took Dr. Spilman's hand and looked into his face, expressing genuine joy that it was his privilege to see him at last.

The elderly gentleman told Dr. Spilman that his pastor had brought him in an automobile many miles that he might be present that day.

"Of course, you do not know me," he said, "since you have never seen me before—"

Suddenly there flashed through Spilman's mind the letters he had exchanged with a man from Adairsville eight years before.

Even before the visitor was through speaking, he said, "You are Brother S. J. Rogers from Adairsville. I can tell it by the light of heaven in your eyes."

Tears came in the old man's eyes, and he said: "I'm starting for home in a few minutes, and I shall never see you on this earth again, but I'll be looking for you. Will you mind if I kiss you good-by?"

Then the old man reached up his arms, put them around Dr. Spilman's neck, kissed him first on one cheek and then on the other, clasped his hands, turned, and walked away.

When Dr. C. E. Maddry was elected executive secretary of the Promotion Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, Spilman was asked to become general secretary for the North Carolina Baptist State Convention, but declined.

An occurrence that summer, 1932, hastened his decision to cease telling Uncle Remus stories. Whatever city he might be in, calls would come for those stories—from schools and clubs and groups of bright-faced children. More than once a note was sent to the pastor of a church where he was to speak, requesting that he tell "Uncle Remus" stories before he delivered his address.

When he received an invitation to attend the annual picnic and reunion of a well-known eastern North Carolina family, his father-in-law said: "Those people are not interested in having you as a guest at their reunion. They want to hear some Uncle Remus stories."

Dr. Spilman assured him that no mention had been made of Uncle Remus stories, and that he was sure that was not the reason for the invitation. On the day of the picnic, dinner was hardly finished when the chief of the clan announced, "We will now be entertained with some Uncle Remus stories by Dr. Spilman."

Not only was the storytelling becoming burdensome and a strain on his physical vitality; he was afraid they might become the one thing for which he was known. His work was building Sunday schools, not perpetuating Negro folk tales.

On April 18, 1933 a big truck and a force of boys from the Kennedy Home arrived in Kinston and began moving Dr. Spilman's books and office furniture to "Brokenhurst," the office he had built at the home and named for a Spilman estate in England. He had built it four times as large as it needed to be for an office, for he wanted the children to use it as a playroom in bad weather, and because he hoped that someday it might be converted into a library for the home.

He provided the playroom equipment himself—rubber horseshoes for pitching, a canvas pony race, parchesi, Pollyanna, checkers, carroms, pick-up-sticks.

He brought in stereopticon viewers and a whole library of colored slides from all over the United States. He had visited many of the places shown on the slides and delighted to tell the children about them. When he found that the boys did not use the playroom much, he bought footballs, baseballs, and other outdoor play equipment.

Not long after the office building was completed, he was speaking at Campbell College, telling the students about the Kennedy Home. He asked the students, "Why do you think I built that office so large?" Thinking that he sincerely wanted an answer, a student replied quickly, "Sir, I expect you built it big like that so you could turn around without hitting something."

Later he built a lake and recreation center for the children. As his gifts to the orphanage became known, requests for contributions began to come to him frequently —for help on church buildings, from widows wanting him to help educate their daughters, and for many other causes. Few people realized that he had made his gifts from a modest salary.

Once on a visit to Ovoca, Dr. Spilman was sitting by a mountain lake watching four little girls in a row boat. They brought the boat to the spot where he was sitting,

and one of them spoke. "Dr. Spilman, do you have any grandchildren?" Being assured that there were no grandchildren in his family, the little girl said, "We were talking about it, and all four of us hoped that you did, and we wished that they were us."

That wish was almost true for the children of the Kennedy Home, for they were all his children.

He owned a light brown suit that he liked to wear. One day Miss Callie Jearnegan, who was nearsighted, spotted a brown figure with a white top coming up the lane and decided immediately that the orphanage's fine Hereford bull was loose. She ran for her life to the nearest fence and was greatly disturbed when the children refused to join her. They had recognized their harmless and lovable Dr. Spilman waddling calmly up the lane.

The boys particularly liked the story that Dr. Kyle M. Yates told on "their" Dr. Spilman. It was about a weighing machine in front of a department store. Instead of being a silent machine, that one happened to be a "talkie." When the customer stepped up and dropped in the penny, the machine would say, "One hundred fifteen pounds," or whatever the weight happened to be. When Dr. Spilman stepped on it, according to Dr. Yates, it said, "One at a time, please."

On August 16, 1933, the last meeting of the board of directors of the Southern Baptist Assembly was held at Ridgecrest. Arrangements had already been completed whereby the charter would be surrendered. At that meeting the certificate of dissolution was voted upon and signed by all the members of the board of directors. Some time later the charter was delivered to the secretary of state, and the Southern Baptist Assembly as a corporation was out of business. During its life history, Dr. Spilman had served as its general secretary for thirteen years and as president of the stockholders for thirteen additional years.

In the spring of 1934 he gave $4,000.00 to Wake Forest College to start a library for the Department of Philosophy. His contacts with colleges and universities through the years had convinced him that it was not the natural sciences in the colleges where danger may be detected, but in the departments of philosophy, where false teachings may creep in with disastrous results.

At Ridgecrest on July 19 a banquet was given in honor of Dr. and Mrs. Van Ness. Dr. Van Ness had reached the age to retire from the Sunday School Board and the date for his retirement had been set for June, 1935. But since 1934 would be his last summer at Ridgecrest as executive secretary of the Board, it was decided to honor him with a farewell banquet.

Dr. Spilman sat with him and Mrs. Van Ness at that banquet and delivered a short address near its close. The going of Dr. Van Ness would leave him the oldest secretary, in point of service, connected with the Board's work. Van Ness had gone with the Board eighteen months ahead of Spilman.

As they walked out of the hotel together, Dr. Spilman shook hands with him and said, "Good-by." Van Ness held Spilman's hand tight for almost a full minute, then said simply, "You next."

Spilman never lost his understanding for the Negro. In late August, while he was visiting relatives in Virginia, he was walking down the road one afternoon when he saw a small Negro boy coming along behind him. He waited for the boy, and when he caught up, turned to him and said, "Sonny, where do you live?"

"Jes' up de road here a little piece; cross de railroad track and de fus house on de right—dat where I live."

"Do you go to Sunday school?" Spilman asked.

"Yas, suh. I goes every Sunday," said he of small stature.

"I have an idea you go to Zion. Do you?" he asked, merely taking a shot at the name Zion.

"Yas, suh. Dat where I go."

Dr. Spilman asked about the singing, and the two talked on for a minute or two. They arrived at the store of Willie Short and started in. The little boy said, "Mister, you don' live nowhere close around here, does you?"

"No, I live down in North Carolina."

With a broad grin came the question, "Well den, you ain't colored, is you?"

Inquiring further about Zion, he found that many of the members were Negroes he had known for years. Before he left they invited him to preach for them.

Spilman was scheduled to be one of the speakers for the great Southwide Sunday school conference January 1–4, 1935. A short time before the conference he suffered a severe attack of influenza, and it seemed obvious that he would not be able to make the trip. But a few days before he was to speak, he began to improve, and his good friend Mr. Brogden, of the Kennedy Home, drove the car for him to the Raleigh Memorial Auditorium, where the conference was in session.

Word had already circulated that Dr. Spilman would not be present, when, from the wings, he walked on the stage and took his chair with the other speakers just before he was to be introduced.

The Raleigh *News and Observer* carried the story the next morning under the headline "Dr. Spilman Given Thunderous Ovation." The reporter described the surprised audience's reaction:

Rising spontaneously in such a manner as to remind those present of the spirit in which the sainted Moses must have

removed his shoes before the burning bush on the desert's rim, the huge aggregation of people stood as one man when the great Dr. B. W. Spilman, who for thirty years has led Southern Baptists in the field of Sunday school development, walked onto the platform a few hours after having left his sick bed to address the people he loved so much.

10

Living in Retirement—Almost

In 1936 Dr. Spilman built the Mozelle Pollock Home for Girls on the campus of the Kennedy Home. Named for Mrs. Spilman, the building was to be the home of the fifteen girls who lived in the Moore Infirmary.

Dr. Spilman bought and paid for all of the material, and the Kennedy Home force erected the building, a brick building of fourteen rooms that looks nothing at all like a dormitory.

The building was originally intended for twelve girls, but as it neared completion, the fifteen girls with whom Dr. Spilman lived at the Moore Infirmary sat and talked of who was to be left there when the new building was finished. At times, as the girls would wonder who was to go and who was to be left, several of the youngest of the group would quietly begin to cry and get up and leave the room.

Dr. Spilman said that he could not stand to leave any one of the girls. A conference with Superintendent Hough resulted in their making the two front corner rooms a bit larger and cutting off one end of a hall for a small room. All fifteen girls moved into the new building when it was finished. In addition to rooms for the girls and their supervisor, Dr. Spilman had a four-room apartment for himself.

The Duke Foundation representatives inspected the

building and said that it was one of the best of any orphan home in the world. And the experiment of providing a real home instead of a dormitory proved so successful that the trustees decided to erect a similar building for boys.

Dr. Spilman always observed a very strict schedule. Even when he was on the road more than half of the time, he tried to hold to some kind of systematic arrangement of the day so that he could get his work done.

On January 1, 1937, he wrote in his journal his schedule for that day:

5:30–6:00—Shave and dress
6:00–7:00—Devotional reading of the Bible, breakfast
7:00–11:30—Write and study
11:30–1:30—Exercise, rest, dinner, read
1:30–5:30—Routine office work:
(1) Answer letters
(2) Emergency calendar
(3) General calendar
5:30–7:30—Recreation, supper, social
7:30–9:30—Read, attend meetings, social visits
9:30—Retire

Each summer he returned to Ridgecrest for a few days at a time, and his figure on the grounds was always symbolic of the beginnings of Ridgecrest. Young people liked to hear him tell of the early days of Ridgecrest, to repeat the stories of his experiences at Dew Drop Inn. They liked to point to the easy rises of the stairs in the hotel and tell that they were built that way to accommodate Dr. Spilman's slow gait, and to tell about his car that had to have a special steering wheel built in it.

They liked especially to repeat the story of the time he was en route from Wilmington to Kinston and feared that because of the lateness of his train he would miss his connection at New Bern. Remembering a stunt attributed to

President Taft, he decided to try the same thing on the conductor of the Kinston train. He wired him: "Hold train for large party for Kinston." The train was held for more than half an hour. As Spilman transferred to the other train, he thanked the conductor graciously. "But where is the large party?" the conductor inquired.

"How much larger would you want?" asked Spilman as he climbed sidewise into the train.

In 1938 he went to Nashville for a city-wide training school. At the end of the school the group staged in his honor a big banquet with Dr. John R. Sampey as the speaker. They referred to him as the man who started the whole teacher training business with Southern Baptists and who launched the first real city training school that Nashville had ever had—back in 1906, with Landrum Leavell and Dr. Sampey as teachers.

At the banquet were prominent men from all walks of educational, religious, and political life in the city, among them Wake Forest friends Hight C Moore, President S. C. Garrison of Peabody College, and W. F. Powell, pastor of the First Baptist Church and president of the Sunday School Board.

After hospitalization for a serious attack of bronchitis in April, 1939, Dr. Spilman returned to the Kennedy Home, where he was given excellent attention by the girls who lived in the Mozelle Pollock Home and by the house supervisor, Miss Esther Harrell Ward.

Then on Saturday, August 12, at 11:00 A.M., much to the surprise of his many friends throughout the Southern Baptist territory and to their equal pleasure at his happiness, Dr. Spilman was married to Miss Ward. Her educational and religious background assured a congeniality that made their subsequent ten years of married life happy in every respect.

In December, 1939, Dr. and Mrs. Spilman went to Nash-

ville to attend a great "appreciation banquet" given by the Sunday School Board. In some respects it was a farewell banquet because at the end of 1940, he was to retire. As he listened to the words of tribute from the friends with whom he had worked for so many years, he remembered Dr. Van Ness's simple farewell at Ridgecrest, "You next."

At the meeting of the North Carolina Baptist State Convention in 1941, he offered his resignation as a member of the board of trustees of the orphanage.

His seventy-fourth birthday on January 22, 1945, was celebrated as a great occasion in Kinston. The *Kinston Press* carried pictures of him and a series of biographical sketches. Hosts of callers came to pay their respects and extend birthday greetings. He was featured on a fifteen-minute radio program by the local station. A feature-write-up of him and his work appeared in the Sunday edition of the *News and Observer*. A union service was held in the Baptist church in his honor.

There was presented to him on behalf of more than 150 friends a bound volume of testimonial letters which had been collected from all parts of the United States.

He was entering his seventy-fifth year, but when that seventy-fifth birthday came around, his doctor absolutely forbade any "fireworks," and so it was celebrated very quietly.

11

"Sunshine Corner"

Sunshine streaming through a dozen windows, a blue bowl of yellow daffodils, a rare old mahogany desk, a white-haired smiling man in a black alpaca suit—that was my first swift picture of Sunshine Corner. Before that day in early March, 1945, "Spilman" and "Kinston" and "Sunshine Corner" had been little more than names to me—honored names. Now they had come alive in such vivid colors that I wished myself a photographer instead of an interviewer.

At seventy-four, Bernard Washington Spilman is young. He has a round ruddy face with laughing eyes and a mouth so well turned up at the corners that it spills forth chuckles with every sentence. Sunshine Corner is an integral part of his personality. It is his own idea. This cozy corner, enclosed on three sides by windows, is a small offset to the living room.

In addition to the desk, above which hang the pictures of Dr. Truett and Dr. Frost, there are rows of well-worn books, a bright-colored rug, and a big comfortable looking chair. Here Dr. Spilman sits and thinks and reads and writes and chuckles. In the background is always his gracious, modest, solicitous wife, Esther Ward Spilman.

"In Sunshine Corner the sun always shines," explained Dr. Spilman. "If it doesn't come from the outside, I get it from here." He pointed to his heart. And I believed him!

As I left Sunshine Corner in the rambling, friendly looking house on Queen Street, I knew I had been in the presence of a great man.

In those paragraphs Mrs. J. E. Lambdin, writing in the *Training Union Magazine*, described Dr. Spilman's later years. He called those days, "Looking toward the sunset," but from them came a glow so resplendent time seemed obliterated.

Through the years he had collected a library of more than five thousand volumes. Of them only a few hundred remained to the end. The others were on the shelves of libraries at seminaries and colleges throughout the South. Sunshine Corner held a choice few of them.

Nine to eleven and three to five were the hours he spent in Sunshine Corner. There he read daily two newspapers and numerous denominational papers from all over the South. Every morning he read from one to a dozen poems "to give wings to my soul for the day." And then came the mailman, bringing papers, circulars, and letters, often a small flood of them, from the "boys and girls" who through the years have been at the Kennedy Home, and from neighbors and friends of many states and many years.

Dinner for the Spilmans was a midday meal. Before and after dinner Dr. Spilman spent some time in bed. But at three o'clock he was up again and back to Sunshine Corner —there to write letters, brief but friendly notes in his own handwriting.

Any hour of the day was likely to be punctuated with cheery presences who dropped in literally from everywhere, to cheer and be cheered. Dr. Spilman considered that his ministry in those days as he "lingered in the twilight." He once wrote:

> God has not called us all to the same ministry. During the long years I have heard men preach, and down in my soul I have wondered if I could ever preach. I heard William Louis Poteat, John A. Broadus, and many others teach and wished that the Lord might give to me the ability to teach. From coast to coast I have heard them, men and women sing the glorious

gospel of the Son of God, and wondered why the Lord never gave me the power to sing. And on and on it has gone.

Perhaps I can smile, maybe I can write a note of good cheer, or say a word of comfort to someone, and thus make some contribution to the people with whom I come in contact. Perhaps I can live in "Sunshine Corner" and send out some sunshine. I receive much of it; I hope to share it with others.

The details of many happy experiences of other years seemed as fresh to him as if they had happened only yesterday. Names, places, dates, conversation flowed back in amazing completeness those days as he sat in Sunshine Corner, finding so many things to remind him of days that were gone. Old men are supposed to dream dreams and young men to see visions, but he did both. It took only a cue to tap that never-ending well called "That Reminds Me." The stories never grew old. He had not dozens but hundreds.

Many stories related to his size: chest 58; waist 62; weight 290; height 5 feet 6 inches. There was the time when an exasperated haberdasher could not supply a size 19 stiff collar and sent him to an address several blocks away. There he found only horse collars for sale. Or he might recall that day years ago when in the Murphy Hotel in Richmond, Virginia, he was mistaken for President Taft, and managed to disappear just as newspaper reporters and photographers arrived on their "false lead." Many others related to travel experiences, to the many years almost constantly "on the road."

During the years he had in his ledger a page headed "Experience." When he made a foolish investment or expenditure, he noted it on that page.

Another book he kept for many years was titled, "Back Pay." Now and then he would hear of something he had done years ago and had never known the result. When he got the story of how he had influenced someone's life, he

entered a brief note in that book. During his last years the entries were too numerous to make. Day after day he was reminded of things done in little known places that helped others. He smiled and humbly replied, while inwardly breathing a prayer of thanksgiving to his God.

On a Sunday he was born, and on a Sunday his mortal life ended. From the day of his retirement in January, 1941, he had grown gradually weaker, less able to get around, more bedridden, but amazingly alert mentally. Always he was expressively grateful for the loyalty and devotion of the wife of his later years. Along with expert medical attention, it was her care of him that prolonged his life far beyond its normal expectancy.

A brief but fitting memorial service was held in the First Baptist Church in Kinston on Tuesday, March 28, 1950, following his death on Sunday, March 26. Hundreds went to Kinston that day to call him blessed, and editors of the secular and denominational press for months afterward wrote tributes to him and his work. They were right—he has his immortality.

And the "back pay" still comes in for B. W. Spilman, the Sunday school man, while a simple plaque at Ridgecrest unostentatiously proclaims his accomplishments:

BERNARD WASHINGTON SPILMAN
Founder of Ridgecrest Baptist Assembly
Eminent Bible Teacher and Expositor
Pioneer Sunday School Field Secretary
Father of Southern Baptist Study Courses
CHRISTIAN SEER AND STATESMAN