Chapter 1

a fighting heritage

IN 1066 WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR invaded England, and his forces defeated those of Harold the Saxon. In a few years he overran England. But in the rugged country of Wales he met with stiffer opposition. In 1081 a scouting party of Normans, advancing through a narrow defile in the hills, was challenged by a company of Welshmen armed with spears and crossbows.

"Who are you, and what do you want?" demanded the Welsh chieftain.

"I come to you in the name of William the Norman," replied the leader of the invading forces.

"And why do you come?"

"To make you swear allegiance to the Conqueror."

"That we will never do," answered the leader of the Welsh. "The Welsh have always been independent, and always will be."

"But I warn you that if you do not submit, you will be forced to do so by the arms of the mighty William."

The Norman party withdrew, but in a few days returned in greater strength. In the battle that followed they were roundly defeated by the men of Rhys, the Welsh prince. Welsh independence, though often threatened after that, remained unquelled for several centuries.

In 1093 Rhys ap'Tew, also Prince of Wales, was slain in an encounter with the British. His grandson, Gruffydd ap'Rhys, later took up the struggle and held off the British penetration. In 1163 he met a large force near Cardigan and routed them. When he died in 1197, he was lamented as "the light and strength and the gentleness of the men of the south."

Incidentally, we refer here only to South Wales, as the northern part of the peninsula had already been settled by the Irish. The Welsh prefix "ap" is equivalent to the Scottish "Mc," the Irish "O," and the German "von." Obviously ap'Rhys means of Rhys, and indicates descendants of the prominent Rhys family. The English pronounced it Price.

The Rhys family continued to rule South Wales during the twelfth century, although the British had forced some concessions from them, limiting their authority. But in the thirteenth century, the clan led a

successful revolt against these encroachments, and Wales remained free for another 300 years. When in the sixteenth century it was finally incorporated into England, the Welsh "squires," or landholders, still remained independent, holding their large estates. Later on, however, in the nineteenth century, a great migration of English took place, and the estates were broken up. With this take-over the English established complete sovereignty over the country and have maintained it ever since.

In the colonial days of America, members of the Price family emigrated to Virginia and New York. At the time of the American Revolution the northern group remained loyal to the British crown and became identified with the United Empire Loyalists. For this the victorious colonists confiscated their lands. The British government, however, compensated them by offering land in Canada, where some settled in Ontario, others in Quebec, and still others in Nova Scotia. To the latter province the Prices went. Later the northern portion of Nova Scotia was set apart as the province of New Brunswick. There, near Saint John, the Price family lived just across the Bay of Fundy from the land of Acadia, made famous by Longfellow in his poem Evangeline.

George Marshall Price was born there in 1808. When he became a man, he went farther north and east to higher land about twenty-five miles west of Moncton, establishing his home at Havelock, in the hill country amid hardwood forests. He called his homestead Butternut Ridge, naming it for the trees that surrounded the house.

Farming in that rugged country, newly carved out of the forest, demanded determination and ingenuity. An apple orchard and a grove of trees, typical of Canadian homes in the area, supplemented the family income. George Marshall Price also ran a gristmill and a sawmill, sold logs down the river, and kept livestock. He built a house of hewn oak, cleared fields, and planted crops. So engrossed was he in all these activities that he paid scant attention to religion, though he was a nominal Anglican.

By his first wife he had nine children. After she died, he married Susan McCready, a small woman weighing less than 100 pounds. The McCreadys had migrated to Nova Scotia from Massachusetts. To this couple were born two sons: George Edward in 1870, and Charles Luther in 1872.

The father, though not a churchgoer, always had Susan read a chapter from the Bible before they left the breakfast table for the day's

work. Then she would pray, and the family would join in the Lord's Prayer.

The McCreadys were a literary family. Some were editors of newspapers at Saint John and Fredericton. One of them developed a perpetual calendar. Even the farmers among them read classic literature; in those days little else was available to read. Susan read classics to her children and grandchildren for bedtime stories. Portia, her grandchild, learned to read Gray's Elegy at the age of eight. Perhaps the fact that their family could trace relationship to Gray may have influenced her choice of this bit of classic poetry. Apparently this background of literature played an important part in the future development of young George, because his writings show rich and facile acquaintance with the best of English literature.

George Marshall Price owned seven 100-acre tracts. He gave three of these to three of his sons. At his death, when his son George Edward was only twelve, he still had 400 acres left. But the executors allotted only one half of one tract to young George and his brother Charles Luther, on which they were expected to make a living for themselves and their mother. George, early interested in education, had already graduated from grammar school at the age of eleven. But when his father died, George felt it his duty to stay by the farm. The following statement from Charles Luther, who is still alive as I write, throws an interesting personal sidelight on the situation:

"When father died in 1882,1 was ten and George was twelve. We did not try to work the farm that year: our half brother Sidney worked it for us. The next year we undertook to work it. When plowing some heavy sod, after going a few rods, pieces of the sod would fall back into the furrow and we would have to lift the sod out again. Brother George did most of the lifting. After this had taken place a few times, I began to laugh.

"Poor George! 'I don't see how you can laugh,' he said, 'with every hope of a living cut off.'

"But I was only eleven and did not see that the plowing was very important, only as a bit of work. But George, who was thirteen, considering himself the head of the house, felt the responsibility."

Charles Luther also recalls the many maple trees which he, with a servant to help, tapped in the spring. In March or early April they made delicious maple sugar and maple cream from the sap obtained from them.

The farming project soon fizzled out. George then started selling religious books. About this time his mother, who had been a Seventh Day Baptist, accepted the Adventist doctrines; thus George became interested in Adventist publications.

He achieved success almost from the start, selling as many as 100 books a week, at $50 profit. By this means he was able to continue his schooling, finishing high school at the age of fifteen. Included in his studies were some higher mathematics, Latin, and a look at Greek. However, not until many years later did he become proficient in reading Greek.

Soon after young George finished high school, Amelia Nason, a young woman of Scottish and Huguenot ancestry, came to stay at their home. She had recently attended South Lancaster Academy in Massachusetts and was now selling religious books. She had coal-black hair and kindly blue eyes, and George became attracted to her.

Heavy responsibility resulting from his father's untimely death had ripened George prematurely in adulthood. So at seventeen he felt capable of assuming the obligations of marriage. The fact that Amelia was twelve years his senior made no difference. As the fairy tales say, "They lived happily ever after." In fact, they spent sixty-seven years together, and those who knew them in their old age often remarked about their devotion to each other.

After their marriage, George and Amelia continued to sell books in the cities of New Brunswick.

In 1891, as George turned twenty-one, he decided to enroll as a student in Battle Creek College, Michigan. He was cordially received by the management, especially when he paid down his entire fee for board and room for the year - a walloping $150!

His wife had to remain behind in Canada with their little son Ernest and baby Portia, but later in the year they were able to join him. The following summer the family traveled to Colorado, where George continued to sell books.

In the fall he returned to Battle Creek College for another year in school. He wanted to continue the next year as well but could not find the money. In the meantime he had also sold the New Brunswick homestead; so he and his wife resumed their book work, this time with meager success. However, they did make enough so that George could enter a teachers' college. This he did reluctantly because he really aspired to a literary career. But as a means to that end he decided to take up teaching.

After finishing teacher's training, he taught a small country school for some time, later advancing to the principalship of a public high school in the little town of Tracadie, on the Gulf of the Saint Lawrence.

French-Canadian villages dotted the coasts of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. The people, who had descended from the early French colonists, lived mainly by fishing and farming. They commonly spoke the French language, which was used in all the lower grades. One teacher taught these grades, while Price taught the upper grades in English.

In one respect Tracadie differed from the other French villages; it had a government hospital for lepers. Just why these French-Canadian people were afflicted with this terrible disease would be hard to say. The Canadian government supported the institution, which cared for patients from all eastern Canada, Newfoundland, and Ireland.

When Price took charge of the school at Tracadie, he was alone, having left his family with relatives in the southern part of the province, where Amelia taught the first three grades of a primary school.

In a few days, after getting settled in his boarding place, he received a call from a Dr. Smith, the medical superintendent of the hospital. Smith was somewhat past middle life and quite heavy; he was addicted to liquor and tobacco, and was a heavy eater. When asked about his habits of life, he would jest that when he got tired of living, he had this easy way of dropping out of the picture.

Dr. Smith, who held degrees from Harvard, McGill, and Edinburgh, was an ardent advocate of the evolutionary theory. He repudiated any idea of divine providence in human affairs and took a rather pessimistic attitude toward life.

Since fewer than half a dozen English-speaking families lived in the entire area, the doctor took advantage of the first opportunity to become acquainted with the new teacher. During the ensuing conversation he asked Price a few questions. When he discovered that the young man was religious, he wasted no time in declaring himself an evolutionist. This meant nothing to the teacher, for he knew as little about evolution as the doctor did about religion.

The conversation served at least to make the two men acquainted with each other. But it did more: It introduced Price to a new subject. When the doctor asked him if he would do some reading on evolution, he readily agreed. Later Price called at the Smith home and picked up

three small books that the doctor wanted him to read. The books were a graded course in the principles of evolutionism as then taught.

In a few days Price went through the three volumes and returned them to the doctor, who in turn asked him if he was convinced. On receiving a negative reply, he asked if the teacher wanted to read more. He was quite surprised to hear Price say Yes, as most people thus unconvinced about evolution did not care to investigate further. But Price was not built that way. A new field of study was opening before him in a strange and seemingly providential way. He pushed eagerly into it, sensing the profound influence the evolutionary theory would have on both science and religion.

As a government official, Dr. Smith received many geological publications from Ottawa. These as well as his whole library he made available to Price for research. Being largely free from duty outside school hours, the young principal spent long hours there, taking careful notes on what he read, as was his habit. By the time he left Tracadie two and a half years later, he had amassed a large amount of information and had begun to prepare some of his material for publication.

More important than the notes he took or the manuscripts he prepared, was the discovery of his mission in life. Fully convinced that he was called to be a "crusader for creation," he set his future course to challenge the evolutionary theory.

He subscribed to the English journal Nature, then as now one of the foremost scientific journals in the world. In spite of its high cost, he continued to subscribe to it for nearly thirty years, or induced the schools where he taught to place it in their libraries.

Always a student of history, he now determined to learn about the beginnings of geology and related sciences, and to become acquainted with leading men connected with their development. He purchased Zittell's History of Geology, a translation of a well-known German work, and later Sir Archibald Geikie's Founders of Geology and other smaller works. In addition to these, he ultimately became familiar with the official biographies of dozens of outstanding scientists.

He devoted all his spare time to study, and took little time for recreation. In those days radio did not exist, and telephones and automobiles were few. Largely free from distractions, he read incessantly, often far into the night. As for exercise, he managed to get enough by walking to and from school.

When Professor Price left the small village of Tracadie, he had a trunk full of manuscripts. One, called Outlines of Modern Science and Modern Christianity, was published later in 1902, as his first book. On the title page the author's name appeared as George E. McCready Price. He adopted his mother's maiden name as his middle name. In all later writings he dropped Edward altogether, and thus became widely known by the by-line George McCready Price.

This book attempted to cover all aspects of evolution-philosophical, biological, and geological. Like many a writer's first attempt at publication, it contained flaws in style and some scientific errors, but it earned distinction as the beginning of the author's long crusade in behalf of creationism.

When Sir Charles Lyell published his Principles of Geology in 1830, he placed before the world an interpretation of geology based entirely on the theory of uniformitarianism. This is the hypothesis that had been proposed a few years before by James Hutton, that there is "no vestige of a beginning - no prospect of an end," but rather that "amid all the revolutions of the globe, the economy of nature has been uniform."

When Charles Darwin, in 1859, published his Origin of Species, the way seemed open for the full acceptance of evolutionary philosophy. Many, however, who believed in God as the Creator tried to hold to the Biblical doctrine of creation by seeking to harmonize it with some kind of evolutionary process. They thus established what is known as theistic evolution, that is, evolution as the means whereby God accomplished His creative work.

Price's Outlines of Modern Science, in contrast with all this, was an effort, as he put it, to get back to primitive Christian principles without any compromise. He said: "A reform and a return to these primitive principles is the next thing in order for everyone who wishes to get his bearings toward the present-day problems of either politics or science."

He argued for divine immanence. By this he meant God's direct intervention in creation and in every event and phenomenon of nature. The earth must have originated by one of two ways, he insisted - either by natural processes from a molten state or by divine command. And the latter, he contended, is the only explanation a Christian can accept.

In the chapter entitled "Geological Guessing" he developed the point that geology does not prove there has been a succession of life. The arrangement of the fossils in the rocks is merely a taxonomic, or classification series, a cross section, if you will, of the life of the

antediluvian world. It is important for us to remember this point, as it continued to be his "theme song" the rest of his life.

"It is a question of energy versus time," he declared, and he cited Professor Nicholson, who said: "We may on the one hand suppose the geological phenomena to be the result of some very powerful cause acting through a short period of time or may suppose them to be caused by a much weaker force operating through a proportionally prolonged period."

Another chapter, devoted to problems of "Biblical Geology," attempted to deal with the facts of geology from the viewpoint of the Genesis record of the Flood.

Because of a limited circulation, the book did not make the impact upon the field of science and religion that its contents deserved. It was, nevertheless, the beginning of a long series of publications that issued from Professor Price's fertile brain for a period of more than sixty years.