



**R.G. LeTourneau:  
MOVER OF MEN  
AND MOUNTAINS**

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THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF

**R. G. LeTourneau**

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*With deep love and appreciation, I dedicate this book to my beloved partner and wife, Evelyn, who for over four decades has always been by my side to give me love, cooperation, and understanding when others doubted. Through the years she has joined me in mutual devotion and prayer to our Heavenly Father and has helped me keep faith when the vision of others was limited—truly a helpmate given by God.*

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**F**or 25 years or more, I've been traveling this land of ours and a few foreign countries trying to teach and preach by word of mouth and example, that a Christian businessman owes as much to God as a preacher does. The rest of the time I build machinery, almost any kind of machinery as long as it is big, and powerful, and can move around to do things no other machine could do before. Some people think I'm all mixed up—that you can't serve the Lord and business, too, but that's just the point. God needs businessmen as partners as well as preachers. When He created the world and everything in it, He didn't mean for us to stop there and say, "God, You've done it all. There's nothing left for us to build." He wanted us to take off from there and really build for His greater glory.

I speak in churches and auditoriums large and small across the land, usually about six times a week, and most often I start out by saying, "I am just a mechanic whom the Lord has blessed." I'll let that serve as a starter here. As a mechanic, I like my machinery because I learned early that man is worth what man produces, and good machines help him produce more. Had I been born 100 years earlier, I would have been a good blacksmith, as men like me had been since the Bronze Age. But the Lord chose to put me here when electric motors and gasoline engines were just starting to turn, and with His blessings I have been able to take part in and contribute to the development of those great, heavy-construction machines that have helped produce our twentieth century.

Recently I built an eight-wheeled digger that out-produces the work of thousands of men at the time I was born. Instead of pushing a 100-pound

wheelbarrow, the operator pushes a button and picks up the loads of 1,500 wheelbarrows, rolling off with them at 15 mph instead of two. Its rubber-tired wheels are eight feet high by over three feet wide, and inside the hub of each wheel is an electric motor that delivers more power than the giant steam engines of my youth. When it dips its twin buckets into the ground, it scoops up 150 tons of dirt in two minutes, and then lopes off to dump its load at the push of another button. Distance for distance it moves for eight cents a cubic yard what cost a dollar when I started out in business, and dollars were about three times their present size then.

I find a great deal of satisfaction in watching that brute in action, and more in the challenge of finding some better way of getting it to move 200 tons even more efficiently. In my talks, along with the statement that I am just a mechanic whom the Lord has blessed, I frequently add that He uses the weak to confound the mighty. There is no logical explanation in the world to account for my development of that digger. It combines two huge mobile Diesel engines with AC generators and DC generators, and it pours enough electricity to light a small town into a score of AC and DC motors. Yet I never got past the seventh grade in school. At the age of 30 my garage had failed and I was \$5,000 in debt. At the age of 44 I lost so heavily on contracts that my employees, with more faith in me than I had in myself, took up a collection to get me back on my feet. That was me, working on my own.

If there is no logical explanation of my development of the digger, there is a theological one, available to all of us, including the weakest. By accepting God as your partner, no limit can be placed on what can be achieved. But God is no remote partner, satisfied if you go to church on Sunday and drop some religious money—the small change that goes to church—on the platter. He isn't overwhelmed if you read the Bible once in a while and obey the Golden Rule. That isn't active Christianity, but just a half-hearted way of getting along. When you go into partnership with God, you've got a Partner closer and more active than any human partner you can ever get. He participates fully in everything you let Him do, and when you start putting on airs, and thinking you're doing it with your own head of steam, He can set you down quicker and harder than a thunderbolt. There's nothing dull about being in partnership with God.

God has set me down with some terrific jolts from time to time, but when my attitude has improved, and He has seen genuine repentance, He is the only Partner Who can supply total forgiveness. Not that He is easily fooled. As one preacher put it, “God will forgive your sins, all right, but I wouldn’t make a policy of going to Heaven raising Hell on the way.”

But to get back to the weak confounding the mighty, in spite of my limited education, I became, with the help of the Lord, what is known in the heavy-duty equipment field as an industrialist. Among my competitors are such giants as Caterpillar, General Motors, International Harvester, Allis Chalmers and some eight others, all big corporations with high-powered executive staffs and engineering departments. In their midst I am the hick from the backwoods of Duluth, but during World War II it was our organization that built over fifty per cent of the earth-moving equipment used in combat. According to reports, what with the building of highways like the Alcan and the Ledo Road in Burma, the building of airports and artillery emplacements all over the world, and the plowing away of rubble in demolished cities, more earth had to be moved during World War II than during all the combined wars of history.

We are proud of that record, naturally, but we wouldn’t be human if we didn’t find a satisfaction of another sort. The machines that did the job were what my competitors had declared to be some of “that crazy LeTourneau stuff” right up to the outbreak of hostilities. Now, nineteen years later, they are all turning out the same equipment with only minor changes. Maybe we don’t confound them. They seem to be prospering. But we keep them confused. That new digger of mine can lose their biggest load in the rear end of its rear bucket.

When I have talked about this long before an audience, I’ve been known to apologize and say, “I didn’t come here to preach a sermon. Give me time and I’ll say something.”

What I want to say is that what I’ve done, anyone can do with the help of God. Reporters have often asked me, “Did you start from scratch?” My answer to that is, “Every time.” I’ve been financially broke so often and in debt so long that it was a big day for us when my wife and I could move out of a cook shack and into a brand new tent. Spiritually, too, I was a bankrupt even before I lost my first dollar. Yes, I started from scratch, all right, and was still starting from scratch at the age of forty-four. And the One who