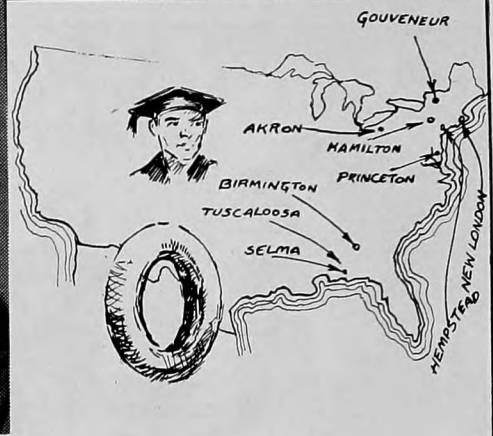




Another



Calvinist, Up-To-Date

I. Bob Skinner, Business Man

On the street, he walks with the quick, confident stride of the successful business man; in the pulpit, in the robes of the church, he looks precisely what he is—a fervent, straight-thinking, persuasive Presbyterian minister. The contrast, in part, explains the man, for Rev. Robert Skinner took a post-graduate course in business and made a success of it before he made a success of the ministry.

He was born in Gouveneur, a little town in upper New York State, a few miles distant from the St. Lawrence River, in March, 1903. During his boyhood and young manhood, he knew of no other home town, for his father proved the exception to the rule of Presbyterian ministers. He came to Gouveneur from the seminary, married one of his congregation and remained there all his life—an honored citizen and spiritual leader of the community for forty-two years.

Country ministers had all they could do to provide essential home comforts for their growing families in that day, and young Bob, one of four children, had to scratch for pin money. In the summer, he worked on the farm of one of the church elders; first as chore boy, then as regular hand. There was little about dairying, cultivating and harvesting that he didn't learn to do in those two perspiring summers. At school, he was a good "all-round man", was on the track and basketball teams, stood well in his studies, won a public speaking prize, was president of his class in his junior and senior years at Dean High.

To be sure, he wanted to be "a college man", even though he fully intended to be a man of business afterwards. Hamilton was near at hand; he went there for a year; then to Princeton, his older brother's alma mater. He was graduated in the class of 1924, a

full-fledged Bachelor of Arts. And, then, for the marts of trade! He was in dead earnest. His grandmother tried tactfully to push him into the ministry, but he wouldn't be pushed. He was bound to be a business man and help his father provide for a rainy day. Privately, he entertained the idea that he could "pay off the Lord by making money and thus serve the church".

After a training course at Akron, Ohio, Robert Skinner entered the employ of the Firestone Tire & Rubber Co. as sales representative in Birmingham, Ala. He made a go of it and, as he thought then, anchored himself to a business career by marrying. His bride was a Georgia girl, a graduate of the state college, who taught kindergarten in a model school in Birmingham. After a year in the southern city, he was moved to Tuscaloosa and Selma, Ala.; thence to New London; thence to Hempstead, L. I. Each move was a promotion; he was getting ahead fast; some day, no doubt, he would be one of the higher-ups in the company.

Yet these were years of promise without fulfillment. The brighter the outlook, the less sure of his course he became. A sense of insecurity, of inadequacy possessed him. Visits home confirmed his doubts about the future. Never could he forget the words of his father: "Think, now, what you are going to do with your life. You are young. I'd like to see you go into the ministry. I think that is where you belong. And I can tell you one thing, my son. Unless I'm wrong, and the Lord has some other place for you, you'll never be happy in anything else."

His father spoke the truth. This was the turning point in his life, the moment of decision. He knew where he belonged now. His wife approved enthusiastically and his father and uncle stood ready to help in case he ran out of funds.