

"Mis' Prency was talkin' to me the other day about dad," said Billy, "an' she asked me whether he wasn't workin' awful hard at home after he left the shop an' I said 'Yes,' an' she said, 'I hope you all do all you can to help him?' an' I kind o' felt ashamed, an' all I could say was that I didn't see nothin' I could help him about, an' she said she guessed if I'd think a little while I could find out. Say, Tom, let's go to work a-thinkin' an' see if there ain't some way to give dad a lift. Seems to me he's doin' everythin' for us all the whole time, an' we ain't doin' nothin' at all for him."

"Oh, now, quit your preachin'," said the elder brother, contemptuously. "If you don't I'll lamm you."

The younger brother prudently lapsed into entire silence, and the couple soon reached home. Tom strolled about the room, his lower lip hanging down, bestowing glares of different intensity upon every individual and object present, and even making a threatening motion with his foot towards the baby, who had crawled about the floor until it was weary and fretful and was uttering plaintive cries from time to time. His mother was out of the house somewhere, and the baby continued to protest against its physical discomforts until Tom indulged in a violent expletive, which had the effect of temporarily silencing the child and causing it to look up at him with wondering eyes. Tom returned the infant's stare for a moment or two, and then, moved by some spirit which he was not able to identify, he stooped and picked up the infant and sat down on a chair. When his mother returned, she was so astonished at what she saw that she hurried out of the house, down to the shop, and dragged her husband away back to his home. When the door was opened, Sam Kimper was almost paralyzed to see his big son rocking the youngest member of the family to and fro over the rough floor, and singing, in a hoarse and apparently ecstatic voice,—

"I'm Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines."

CHAPTER XIV.

"WELL, doctor," said Deacon Quickset to his pastor one morning, "I hope you have persuaded that wretched shoemaker to come into the ark of safety and lay hold of the horns of the altar."

"My dear sir," said Dr. Guide to his deacon, "the conversation I had with that rather unusual character has led me to believe that he is quite as safe at present as any of the members of my own congregation."

"Oh, doctor, doctor!" groaned the deacon, "that will never do! What is the church to come to if everybody is to be allowed to believe just what he wants to, and stop just when he gets ready, and

not go any further unless he understands everything before him? I don't need to tell you, a minister of the gospel and a doctor of divinity, that we have to live by faith and not by sight. I don't have to go over all the points of belief to a man of your character to show you what a mistake you are making, thinking that way about a poor common fellow that's only got one idea in his head, — one that might be shaken out of it very easily.

"Deacon," said the minister, "I am strongly of the impression that any belief of any member of my congregation could be as easily shaken as the one article of faith to which that poor fellow has bound himself. I don't propose to disturb his mind any further. 'Milk for babes,' you know the apostle says, 'and strong meat for men.' After he has proved himself to be equal to meat there will be ample time to experiment with some of the dry bones which you seem anxious that I should force upon him."

"Dr. Guide," said the deacon, with considerable dignity, "I didn't expect this kind of talk from you. I have been sitting under your ministrations a good many years, and, though sometimes I didn't think you were as sharp-set as you ought to be, still I knew you were a man of level head and good education and knew everything that was essential to salvation, otherwise why did the best college of our own denomination make you a doctor of divinity? But I've got to let out what is in my heart, doctor, and it is this, that there is no stopping-place for any one that begins to walk the strait and narrow way; he has got to keep on as long as he lives, and if he don't he is going to be crowded off to one side."

"You are quite right, deacon," said the minister; "and therefore I object to putting any stumbling-blocks in any such persons' way."

"Do you mean to say, Dr. Guide," asked the deacon, earnestly, "that all articles of faith that you have always taught us were essential to salvation are to be looked at as stumbling-blocks when they are offered to somebody like the poor dying sinner?"

"I mean exactly that, deacon," said the minister; "and I mean still more, and I propose to preach earnestly on the subject in a short time, and at considerable length, that they have been stumbling-blocks to a great many members of my congregation who should by this time be better men and women than they are. For instance, deacon," said the minister, suddenly looking very stern and judicial, "Mrs. Poynter has been to me several times to explain that the reason that she does not pay her subscription to the last collection for the Missionary Association is that she cannot get the interest on the mortgage that you have been holding for her a long time, and which she says you have collected."