

'My 'Goodly heritage,' you mean? I can't see that now. Uncle Rupert is in front of it. I thought you put him there. Only he's out of his frame, and---it's very old!  
'What's odd, my darling?'  
'Some one has wiped away all the tears from his eyes.'

\* \* \* \* \*  
'Hymn two hundred and sixty-three: 'Fight the good fight of faith.' The third Collect was just ended, and a prolonged and somewhat irregular Amen was dying away among the choir, who were beginning to feel for their hymn-books.

The lack of precision, the 'dropping shots' style in which that Amen was delivered, would have been more exasperating to the Kapellmeister, if his own attention had not been for the moment diverted by anxiety to know if the V. C. remembered that the time had come.

As the Chaplain gave out the hymn, the Kapellmeister gave one glance of an eye, as searching as it was sombre, round the corner of that old little curtain which it is the custom to hang behind an organist; and this sufficing to tell him that the V. C. had not forgotten, he drew out certain very vocal stops, and bending himself to manual and pedal, gave forth the popular melody of the 'Tug-of-War' hymn with a precision indicative of a resolution to have it sung in strict time, or know the reason why.

And as nine hundred and odd men rose to their feet with some clatter of heavy boots and accoutrements the V. C. turned quietly out of the crowded church, and stood outside upon the steps, bare headed in the sunshine of St. Martin's Little Summer, and with the tiniest of hymn-books between his fingers and thumb.

Circumstances had made a soldier of the V. C., but by nature he was a student. When he brought the little hymn-book to his eyes to get a mental grasp of the hymn before he began to sing it, he committed the first four lines to an intelligence sufficiently trained to hold them in remembrance for the brief time that it would take to sing them. Involuntarily his active brain did more, and was crossed by a critical sense of the crude, barbaric taste of childhood, and a wonder what consolation the suffering boy could find in these gaudy lines:—

"The Son of God goes forth to war,  
A kingly crown to gain;  
His blood red banner streams afar,  
Who follows in His train?"

But when he brought the little hymn-book to his eyes to take in the next four lines, they startled him with the revulsion of a sudden sympathy; and lifting his face towards the Barrack Master's hut, he sang—as he rarely sang in drawing-rooms, even words of the most felicitous to melodies the most sweet—sang not only to the delight of dying ears, but so that the Kapellmeister himself heard him, and smiled as he heard:—

"Who best can drink His cup of woe,  
Triumphant over pain!  
Who patient bears His cross below,  
He follow in His train."

On each side of Leonard's bed, like guardian angels, knelt his father and mother. At his foot lay the Sweep, who now and then lifted a long, melancholy nose and anxious eyes.

At the foot of the bed stood the Barrack Master. He had taken up this position at the request of the Master of the House, who had avoided any further allusion to Leonard's fancy that their Nasoby Ancestor had come to Asholt Camp, but had begged his big brother-in-law to stand there and blot out Uncle Rupert's Ghost with his substantial body.

But whether Leonard perceived the ruse, forgot Uncle Rupert, or saw him all the same, by no word or sign did he ever betray.

Near the window sat Aunt Adelaide, with her Prayer-book, following the service in her own orderly and pious fashion, sometimes saying a prayer aloud at Leonard's bidding, and anon replying to his oft-repeated inquiry; 'It is the third Collect yet, Aunt dear?'

She had turned her head, more quickly than usual, to speak, when, clear and strenuous on vocal stops, came the melody of the 'Tug-of-War' hymn.

'There! There it is! Oh, good Kapellmeister! Mother dear, please go to the window and see if V. C. is there, and wave your hand to him, Father dear, lift up a little please. Ah, now I hear him! Good V. C. I don't believe you'll sing better than that when you're promoted to be an angel. Are the men singing pretty loud? May I have a little of that stuff to keep me from coughing. Mother dear? You know I am not impatient; but I do hope, please God, I shant die till I've just heard them tug that verse once more!

\* \* \* \* \*  
The sight of Lady Jane had distracted the V. C.'s thoughts from the hymn. He was singing mechanically, when he became conscious of some increasing pressure and irregularity in the time. Then he remembered what it was. The soldiers were beginning to tug.

In a moment more the organ stopped, and the V. C. found himself, with over three hundred men at his back, singing without accompaniment, and in unison—

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"A noble army—men and boys,  
The matron and the maid,  
Around their Saviour's throne rejoice  
In robes of white arrayed."

The Kapellmeister conceded that verse to the shouts of the congregation; but he invariably reclaimed control over the last.

Even now, as the men paused to take breath after their 'tug,' the organ spoke again softly, but seraphically, and clearer and sweeter above the voices behind him rose the voice of the V. C., singing to his little friend—

"They climbed the steep ascent of Heaven,  
Through peril, toil, and pain"

The men sang on; but the V. C. stopped, as if he had been shot. For a man's hand had come to the Barrack Master's window and pulled the white blind down.

(To be continued.)

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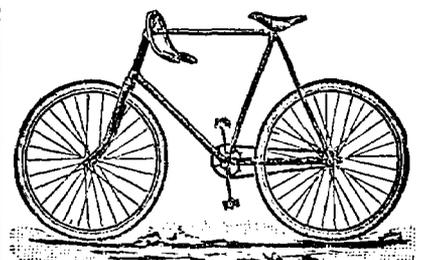
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