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THE THEBAN LEGION.

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CHAPTER II.

THE ANXIETIES OF MAURICE.

“ONE hour with Victor might settle my doubts,” said Maurice, the Centurion, as he gazed from a high mountain on the western border of Persia. He had learned the Gospel from Victor, and looked to him as a guide in matters of Christian duty. And now he was far away from his best earthly adviser. Around him were the tents of the Roman legions, covering the mountain. Almost in his view were the desolations made on a rapid march across the native land of Abraham. His backward gaze brought up the vision of cities pillaged, towns on fire, churches in ruins, Christians slaughtered, and bands of people driven from their homes to weep and starve in wintry wilds. He knew that other Christians eastward were in dread of outrage from their advancing enemy, and churches, whose history ran back quite to Apostolic days, were exposed to the spoiler’s avarice and fury. No wonder that Maurice felt his soul revolt.

“It is hard enough,” said he, “to fight the pagan foes of my country, but to slay my brethren in the faith, as we did at Edessa, is more than I can

bear. Never again, without resistance, will I see a Christian woman cut to pieces, while clinging to her daughter whom Galerius would make his slave.”

Was it right for him to serve in the army? Could he in honor leave it? Should he desert and risk the terrors of capture, or thenceforth be a vagabond in a strange land? Must he march against the Christians of Persia? These were the questions that troubled his mind. He lifted his eyes to heaven, asking God to give him wisdom, and deliver His people from the woes of war. “Let my right hand wither,” said he, “if it draw the sword upon one of Christ’s flock.” Jehovah would prove the shield of his Church in Persia, and turn back the pitiless invader.

An old warrior was seated upon the frosted grass eating his supper. His rations were stale bacon and hard peas. He cared for nothing better. A coarse purple robe marked him from other soldiers. Certain Persian ambassadors were brought before him, and were told, “This is the Emperor.” They bowed pompously to Carus, the successor of Probus.

They were astonished to find him so rough, and so devoid of courtly style and luxury. They began their speeches. Their “great king” had sent them

MY BOY.

BY REV. ROBERT F. SAMPLE.

HIS voice so sweet is heard no more,
 No twining arms about my neck,
 No pattering feet on study floor,
 No boisterous mirth that needeth check.
 I did not think
 So soon would sink
 My joy in hopeless wreck.

At morn we lift our hearts in praise
 To Him who watched when we all slept,
 But one joins not our morning lays;—
 I'm weeping now, I oft have wept—
 My joy how frail,
 Since from the vale
 Death's deep'ning shadows crept.

And when at night we meet to pray,
 I list to hear his simple prayer,
 "Forgive the wrong I've done to-day,"
 I look, but lo! a vacant chair—
 Until we meet
 At Jesus' feet
 An aching heart I'll bear.

Returning home from absence long,
 I look adown the grassy street
 For my sweet boy with shout and song
 As once he came with greetings sweet;
 I list in vain
 To hear again
 The music of his feet.

And when the gifts are handed round,
 Love's tokens brought from distant place.
 Of childish glee there is no sound:
 O, how I need sustaining grace!
 My strength is low,
 My footsteps slow,
 Along life's weary race.

There's less of light on summer fields,
 And sad the music of the grove,
 Less fragrance too the flow'ret yields
 When lonely now abroad I rove;
 And on the air
 My plaintive prayer,
 Like moan of mourning dove.

When to the grave I weeping go,
 I almost feel that I am dead;
 'Tis part of me that lies below
 The turf that hides his sunny head:
 No rest I'll know
 Till I shall go
 Down to his lowly bed.

And yet there's pleasure in my pain,
 I would not if I could forget;
 The past in mem'ry lives again,
 When morning comes and suns are set;
 And 'mid the shades
 Of cypress glades
 My boy lives with me yet.

But I should be resigned I know:
 God leads me by a way that's right;
 'Tis well with *him*, God tells me so,
 Let faith be strong when fails my sight.
 It is the Lord,
 How sweet his word—
 "In heaven there is no night."

Like song that cleaves the azure skies,
 To holier climes my darling sped;
 Like bird to higher branch that flies,
 He sweetly sings above my head.
 Then wherefore weep,
 Awake—asleep?
 He lives! He is not dead.

'Tis well with him in heaven above,
 No sickness, pain, nor sorrow there;
 In that far land of peace and love
 A golden crown he'll ever wear.
 The shadows all
 On this side fall,
 Suns never set—up there.

Soon I shall meet my boy again,
 Beyond the pearly gates of God,
 And we shall walk the flow'ry plain
 His angel feet for years have trod.
 Then cease my tears;
 Swift fly my years,
 And bring me home to God.