

DEAN'S
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LIVE USEFULLY.



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A SOLDIER'S widow lived in a little hut,

near a mountain village. Her only child was a poor cripple. Hans was a kind-hearted boy. He loved his mother, and would gladly have helped her to bear the burdens of poverty; but his feebleness forbade it. He could not even join in the rude sports of the young mountaineers. At the age of fifteen years, he felt keenly the fact that he was useless to his mother and the world.

It was at this period that Napoleon Buonaparte decreed that the Tyrol should belong to Bavaria, and not to Austria, and sent a French and Bavarian army to accomplish his purpose. The Austrians retreated. The Tyrolese resisted valiantly. Men, women, and children of the mountain-land, were filled with zeal in defence of their homes. On one occasion, ten thousand French and Bavarian troops were destroyed in a single mountain-pass, by an immense avalanche of rocks and trees prepared and hurled upon them by an unseen foe.

A secret arrangement existed among the Tyrolese, by which the approach of the

enemy was to be communicated by signal fires, from village to village, from one mountain height to another; and combustible materials were laid ready to give an instant alarm.

The village in which Hans and his mother lived was in the direct line of the route the French army would take, and the people were full of anxiety and fear. All were preparing for the expected struggle. The widow and her crippled son alone seemed to have no part but to sit still and wait. "Ah! Hans!" she said, one evening, "it is well for us now that you can be of little use; they would else make a soldier of you." This struck a tender chord. The tears rolled from his check. "Mother, I am useless," cried Hans, in bitter grief. "Look round our village—all are busy, all ready to strive for home and fatherland; I am useless."

"My boy, my kind, dear son, you are not useless to me. Besides, you will live to find the truth of our old proverb—

'God has His plan for every man.'"

Easter-holidays, the festive season of Switzerland, came. The people lost their fears of invasion in the sports of the season. All were busy in the merry-making—all but Hans. He stood alone on the porch of his mountain hut, overlooking the village.



Toward the close of Easter-day, after his usual evening prayer, he fell into a deep sleep.

He awoke in the night, as if from a

dream, under the strong impression that the French and Bavarian army was approaching. He arose, hastily dressed himself, and strolled up the mountain-path. The cool air did him good, and he continued his walk till he climbed to the signal-pile. Hans walked round the pile; but the watchers were nowhere to be seen; perhaps they were busied with the festivities of the village. Near the pile was an old pine-tree; and in its hollow stem the tinder was laid ready. Hans paused by the ancient tree; and, as he listened, a singular sound caught his attention, quickened by the peculiar circumstances in which he found himself. He heard a slow tread, then the click of muskets, and two soldiers crept along the cliff. Seeing no one, for Hans was hidden by the old tree, they gave the signal to some comrades in the distance.

Hans saw instantly the plot and the danger. The secret of the signal-pile had been revealed to the enemy; a party had been sent forward to destroy it; the army was marching to attack the village. With no thought of his own peril, and perhaps

recalling the proverb his mother had quoted, he seized the tinder, struck the light, and flung the blazing turpentine brand into the pile.

The two soldiers, whose backs were then turned to the pile, waiting the arrival of their comrades, were seized with fear; but they soon saw only a single youth limping down the mountain-path. They fired, and lodged a bullet in the boy's shoulder. Yet the signal-fire was blazing high, and the whole country aroused from mountain-top to mountain-top. The plan of the advancing army was defeated, and a hasty retreat followed.

Hans, faint and bleeding, made his way to the village. The people with their arms, were mustering thick and fast. The inquiry was everywhere heard, "Who lighted the pile?" "It was I," said at last a faint, expiring voice.

Poor crippled Hans tottered among them, saying, "The enemy, the French, were there." He faltered and sank upon the ground. "Take me to my mother," said he; "at last I have not been useless."

They stooped to lift him. "What is this?" they cried; "he has been shot. It is true; Hans the cripple has saved us." They carried Hans to his mother and laid him before her. As she bowed in anguish over his pale face, Hans opened his eyes and said; "It is not now, dear mother, you should weep for me; I am happy now. Yes, mother it is true—

'God has His plan for every man.'

You see he had it for me, though we did not know exactly what it was."

Hans did not recover from his wound; but he lived long enough to know that he had been of use to his village and his country; he lived to see grateful mothers embrace his mother—to hear that she would be revered and honoured in the community which her son had preserved at the cost of his own life.

