

THE SEARCH

By Grace Livingston Hill-Lutz
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Ruth knew in a general way that Jesus Christ was the Savior of the world, that His name should be the remedy for evil; but how to put it to them in simple form, ah! that was it. It was Cameron's search for God, and it seemed that all the world was on the same search. But now to-day she had suddenly come on some of the footprints of the Man of Sorrow as He toiled over the mountains of earth searching for lost humanity, and her own heart echoed His love and sorrow for the world. She cried out in her helplessness for something to give to these wistful people.

Somehow the prayer must have been answered, for the little congregation hung upon her words, and one old man with deep creases in his forehead and kindly wrinkles around his eyes spoke out in meeting and said:

"I like God. I like Him good. I like Him all e-time wi' mee! All e-time. Ev'e where! Him live in my house!"

The tears sprang to her eyes with answering sympathy. Here in her little mission she had found a brother soul seeking after God. She had another swift vision then of what the kinship of the whole world meant, and how Christ could love everybody.

After Sunday school was out little Sanda came stealing up to her:

"Mine brudder die," she said sorrowfully.

"What? Tony? The pretty fat baby? Oh, I'm so sorry!" said Ruth putting her arm tenderly around the little girl. "Where is your mother? I must go and see her."

Down the winding unkept road they walked, the delicately reared girl and the little Italian drudge, to the hovel where the family were housed, a tumbled-down affair of ancient stone, tawdrily washed over in some season past with sealing pink whitewash. The noisy abode of the family pig was in front of the house in the midst of a trim little garden of cabbage, lettuce, garlic, and tomatoes. But the dirty swarming little house usually so full of noise and good cheer was tidy today, and no guests hovered on the brief front stoop sipping from a friendly bottle, or playing the accordion. There was not an accordion heard in the community, for there had been a funeral that morning and every one was trying to be quiet out of respect for the bereaved parents.

And there in the open doorway, in his shirt sleeves, crouched low upon the step, sat the head of the house, his swarthy face bowed upon his knees, a picture of utter despair, and just beyond the mother's head was bowed upon her folded arms on the window seat, and thus they mourned in public silence before their little world.

Ruth's heart went out to the two poor ignorant creatures in their grief as she remembered the little dark child with the brown curls and glorious eyes who had resembled one of Raphael's cherubs, and thought how empty the mother's arms would be without him.

"Oh, Sanda, tell your mother how sorry I am!" she said to the little girl, for the mother could not speak or understand English. "Tell her not to mourn so terribly, dear. Tell her that the dear baby is safe and happy with Jesus! Tell her she will go to Him some day."

And as the little girl interpreted her words, suddenly Ruth knew that what she was speaking was truth, truth she might have heard before but never recognized or realized till now.

The mother lifted her sorrowful face all tears swollen and tried a pitiful smile, nodded to say she understood, then dropped sobbing again upon the window sill. The father lifted a sad face, not too sober, but bear-eyed and pitiful, too, in his hopelessness, nodded as if he accepted the fact she had told, but it gave him no comfort, and then went back to his own despair.

Ruth turned away with aching heart, praying: "Oh, God, they need you! Come and comfort them. I don't know how! But somehow, on her homeward way she seemed to have met and been greeted by her Savior.

It was so she received her baptism for the work that she was to do.

The next day permission came for her to go to France, and she entered upon her brief training.

"Don't you dread to have her go?" asked a neighbor of Aunt Rhoda.

"Oh, yes," sighed the good lady comfortably, "but then she is going in good company, and it isn't as if all the best people weren't doing it. Of course, it will be great experience for her, and I wouldn't want to keep her out of it. She'll meet a great many nice people over there that she might not have met if she had stayed at home. Everybody, they tell me, is at work over there. She'll be likely to meet the nobility. It isn't as if we didn't have friends there, too, who will be sure to invite her over week ends. If she gets tired she can go to them, you know. And really, I was glad to have something come up to take her away from that miserable little country slum she has been so crazy about. I was dreadfully afraid she would catch something there or else they would rob us and murder us and kidnap her some day."

And that was the way things presented themselves to Aunt Rhoda!

CHAPTER XIX.

All day the shells had been flying thick and fast. When night settled down the fire was so continuous that one could trace the battle front by the reflection in the sky.

Cameron stood at his post under the stars and cried out in his soul for God. For days now death had stalked them very close. His comrades had fallen all about him. There seemed to be no chance for safety. And where was God? Had He no part in all this hell on earth? Did He not care? Would He not be found? All his seeking and praying and reading of the little book seemed to have brought God no nearer. He was going out pretty soon, in the natural order of the battle if things kept on, out into the other life, without, out into the other life, without had promised that if he would believe, and if he would seek with all his heart he would surely find Him.

Once in a Y. M. C. A. hut on a Sunday night a great tenor came to entertain them, and sang almost the very words that the stranger back in the states had written in his little book:

"If with all your hearts ye truly seek Him ye shall ever surely find Him. Thus saith your God!"

And ever since that song had rung its wonderful melody down deep in his heart he had been seeking, seeking in all the ways he knew, with a longing that would not be satisfied. And yet he seemed to have found nothing.

So now as he walked silently beneath the stars, looking up, his soul was crying out with the longing of despair to find a Savior, the Christ of his soul. Amid all the shuddering of the battle-ent earth, the concussion of the bursting shells, could even God hear a soul's low cry?

Suddenly out in the darkness in front of him there flickered a tiny light, only a speck of a glint it was, the spark of a cigaret, but it was where it had no business to be, and it was Cameron's business to see that it was not there. They had been given strict orders that there must be no lights and no sounds to give away their position. Even though his thoughts were with the stars in his search for God, his senses were keen and on the alert. He sprang instantly and silently, appearing before the delinquent like a miracle.

"Halt!" he said under his breath. "Can that cigaret?"

"I guess you don't know who I am!" swaggered a voice thick and unnatural that yet had a familiar sound.

"It makes no difference who you are, you can't smoke on this post while I'm on duty. Those are my orders!" and with a quick motion he caught the cigaret from the loose lips and extinguished it, grinding it into the ground with his heel.

"I'll have you—e-e-co-mar-shalled for this!" stuttered the angry officer, stepping back unsteadily and raising his fist.

In disgust Cameron turned his back and walked away. How had Wainwright managed to

bring liquor with him to the front? Something powerful and condensed, no doubt, to steady his nerves in battle. Wainwright had ever been noted for his cowardice. His breath was heavy with it. How could a man want to meet death in such a way? He turned to look again, and Wainwright was walking unsteadily away across the line where they had been forbidden to go, out into the open where the shells were flying. Cameron watched him for an instant with mingled feelings. To think he called himself a man, and dared to boast of marrying such a woman as Ruth Macdonald. Well, what if he did go into danger and get killed! The world was better off without him! Cameron's heart was burning hot within him. His enemy was at last within his power. No one but himself had seen Wainwright move off in that direction where was certain death within a few minutes. It was no part of his duty to stop him. He was not supposed to know he had been drinking.

The whistle of a shell went ricocheting through the air and Cameron dropped as he had been taught to do, but lifted his eyes in time to see Wainwright throw up his arms, drop on the edge of the hill, and disappear. The shell plowed its way in a furrow a few feet away and Cameron rose to his feet. Sharply, distinctly, in a brief lull of the din about him he heard his name called. It sounded from down the hill, a cry of distress, but it did not sound like Wainwright's voice:

"Cameron! Come! Help!"

He obeyed instantly, although, strange to say, he had no thought of its being Wainwright. He crept cautiously out to the edge of the hill and looked over. The glare of the heavens made objects below quite visible. He could see Wainwright huddled as he had fallen. While he looked the injured man lifted his head, struggled to crawl feebly, but fell back again. He felt a sense of relief that at last his enemy was where he could do no more harm. Then, through the dim darkness he saw a figure coming toward the prostrate form, and stooping over to touch him. It showed white against the darkness and it paid no heed to the shell that suddenly whistled overhead. It half lifted the head of the fallen officer, and then straightened up and looked toward Cameron; and again, although there was no sound audible now in the din that the battle was making, he felt himself called.

A strange thrill of awe possessed him. Was that the Christ out there whom he had been seeking? And what did he expect of him? To come out there to his enemy? To the man who had been in many ways the curse of his young life?

Suddenly as he still hesitated a verse from his Testament which had often come to his notice returned clearly to his mind:

"If thou bringest thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar. First be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

Was this, then, what was required of him? Had his hate toward Wainwright been what had hindered him from finding God?

There was no time now to argue that this man was not his brother. The man would be killed certainly if he lay there many minutes. The opportunity would pass as quickly as it had come. The Christ he sought was out there expecting him to come, and he must lose no time in going to Him. How gladly would he have faced death to go to Him! But Wainwright! That was different! Could it be this that was required of him? Then back in his soul there echoed the words: "If with all your heart ye truly seek." Slowly he crept forward over the brow of the hill, and into the light, going toward that white figure above the huddled dark one; creeping painfully, with bullets ripping up the earth about him. He was going to the Christ, with all his heart—yes, all his heart! Even if it meant putting by his enmity forever!

Somewhere on the way he understood.

When he reached the fallen man there was no white figure there, but he was not surprised nor disappointed. The Christ was not there because he had entered into his heart. He had found Him at last.

Back at the base hospital they told Wainwright one day how Cameron had crawled with him

on his back, out from under the searchlights amid the shells, and into safety. It was the only thing that saved his life, for if he had lain long with the wound he had got, there would have been no chance for him. Wainwright, when he heard it, lay thoughtful for a long time, a puzzled, half-sullen look on his face. He saw that everybody considered Cameron a hero. There was no getting away from that the rest of his life. One could not in decency be an enemy of a man who had saved one's life. Cameron had won out in a final round. It would not be good policy not to recognize it. It would be entirely too unpopular. He must make friends with him. It would be better to patronize him than to be patronized by him. Perhaps also, down in the depths of his fat selfish heart there was a little bit of gratitude mixed with it all. For he did love life, and he was a mortal coward.

So he sent for Cameron one day, and Cameron came. He did not want to come. He dreaded the interview worse than anything he had ever had to face before. But he came. He came with the same spirit he had gone out into the shell-fire after Wainwright. Because he felt that the Christ asked it of him.

He stood stern and grave at the foot of the little hospital cot and listened while Wainwright pompously thanked him, and told him graciously that now that he had saved his life he was going to put aside all the old quarrels and be his friend. Cameron smiled sadly. There was no bitterness in his smile. Perhaps just the least fringe of amusement, but no hardness. He even took the bandaged hand that was offered as a token that peace had come between them who had so long been at war. All the time were ringing in his heart the words: "With all your heart! With all your heart!" He had the Christ, what else mattered? Somehow Wainwright felt that he had not quite made the impression on this strong man that he had hoped, and in an impulse to be more than gracious he reached his good hand under his pillow and brought forth an envelope.

When Corporal Cameron saw the writing on that envelope he went white under the tan of the battlefield, but he stood still and showed no other sign:

"When I get back home I'm going to be married!" said the complacent voice, "and my wife and I will want you to come and take dinner with us some day. I guess you know who the girl is. She lives in Bryne Haven up on the hill. Her name is Ruth Macdonald. I've just had a letter from her. I'll have to write her how you saved my life. She'll want to thank you, too."

How could Cameron possibly know that that envelope addressed in Ruth Macdonald's precious handwriting contained nothing but the briefest word of thanks for an elaborate souvenir that Wainwright had sent her from France?

"What's the matter with Cammie?" his comrades asked one another when he came back to his company. "He looks as though he had lost his last friend. Did he care so much for that Wainwright cod that he saved? I'm sure I don't see what he sees in him. I wouldn't have taken the trouble to go out after him, would you?"

Cameron's influence had been felt quietly among his company. In his presence the men refrained from certain styles of conversation, when he sat apart and read his Testament they hushed their boisterous talk, and lately some had come to read with him. He was generally conceded to be the bravest man in their company, and when a fellow had to die suddenly he liked Cameron to hold him in his arms.

So far Cameron had not had a scratch, and the men had come to think he had a charmed life. More than he knew he was beloved of them all. More than they knew their respect for him was deepening into a kind of awe. They felt he had a power with him that they understood not. He was still the silent corporal. He talked not at all of his new-found experience, yet it shone in his face in a mysterious

(To Be Continued Next Week)

Old Tradition.

From the Los Angeles Times.

The late Mrs. George Goud partyed divorce. At a Lakeview dinner a young divorcee was admiring Mrs. Goud's diamond jewels. "Oh, that's your wedding ring, isn't it?" she said. "How old fashioned it looks. In the past they made them so much wider than they do now." "In the past, you see," said Mrs. Goud, "they expected them to last a lifetime."

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