

THE BLIND AND THE WAR NEWS.

It was a busy corner and Tom Browning hesitated a moment before stepping into the roadway preparatory to crossing the street. His dark glasses and cane told Mr. Philo Goodheart the reason of this hesitation and, with the tact of unobtrusive sympathy and perfect breeding, he touched the blind man on the arm and said quietly:

"Have you any objection to my helping you over?"

"Not in the least," replied Tom, cheerfully; and the two men threaded their way through the maze of cars, trucks, moters and other vehicles to the opposite curb.

"I am going straight on," observed Mr. Goodheart; "and if you are coming my way I should be glad of your company."

"I am just going down to the mail-box to post this bundle," said Tom, indicating by a little jerk of his elbow a package he was carrying under his arm.

As they walked on a newsboy came up crying: "Buy your war special here!"

Mr. Goodheart bought one and, turning to his companion, said with some hesitation:

"I suppose you find some difficulty in keeping posted on the war?"

"Not a great deal," replied Tom with a smile. "I get the news a little later than you, perhaps, since my paper is only a weekly, but I always read it with interest just the same."

"Your paper?" said Mr. Goodheart, puzzled. "I don't understand, I confess. You --"

"You think because I cannot see that I cannot read, that I must necessarily be cut off entirely from the world of books and papers," interrupted his companion with a slight appearance of impatience. Mr. Goodheart was silent.

"That," continued Tom, "is the opinion of tens of thousands of otherwise well informed, intelligent people. They are totally ignorant of the fact that the blind can read with their fingers, their books being printed in raised characters formed, universally nowadays, by tangible dots arranged in various positions. There is a vast body of book and periodical literature thus available for their use. But it has one disadvantage -- it is enormously dear. Here, I will show you."

By this time they had reached the post-box. Tom placed his bundle upon it, unbuckled its confining straps and showed astonished Mr. Goodheart several of the most remarkable books he had ever seen. They were about fourteen inches long by twelve in width and one inch in thickness, while their pages were covered with lines of curiously arranged dots, looking for all the world like an area of human skin covered with chicken-pox.

"Most extraordinary!" explained the good man. "And you can read this with your fingers?"

Tom, by way of answer, read him a few lines and still further increased his amazement. The book happened to be a volume of Green's "History of the English People."

"Your books are rather bulky," remarked Tom's companion, as the bundle was rebuckled into its wrapper and dropped into the parcel-box.

"That they are," answered the blind man; "and they are extremely dear into the bargain; so dear, in fact, that we, as individuals, are unable to buy them. The full set of ~~which~~ books ~~which~~ I have just posted, for instance, is made up of more than thirty volumes of the size you have seen and costs, at the cheapest, about \$27.00. All our books are in proportion to that."

Mr. Goodheart gasped. Twenty-seven dollars! Enough money to start a library of ordinary works, but for the blind, the poorest portion of the country's citizenship, the price of one book.

"But," he said, wonderingly, "where and how do you get books, then?"

"Some years ago," replied his companion, "a number of blind men and women organized what is known as the Canadian Free Library for the Blind. They secured a small grant from the Government of Ontario for the purchase of books, but were obliged to supplement this with subscriptions secured from private sources. This library is now situated in Toronto where it has the endorsement of the Social Service Commission and forms one of the units of the Ontario Libraries Association.

"On the shelves you will find several thousand volumes in every system of raised print in common use among the blind and in many languages. These books are loaned to borrowers in every part of Canada, the Federal Government co-operating so far as to carry them free in the mails.

"Everything promised well for the future of the library. New borrowers were adding their names constantly to the list, and several thousand volumes were loaned yearly. But -- "

He stopped speaking suddenly, while a shadow crossed his usually cheerful face.

"Well?" said Mr. Goodheart, eagerly.

"The present war has endangered the existence of our greatest source of literary supply by turning philanthropy into other unusual channels, thus cutting off our library and threatening to kill it by starvation. I understand that very little money has been received since the outbreak of hostilities. But I must be moving, sir. Thank you for your kindly assistance. If you are ever in Toronto do not fail to visit the Canadian Free Library for the Blind. Good-bye."

Mr. Philo Goodheart was very thoughtful that evening at dinner and next day's mail carried to Toronto his cheque for \$100.00 made payable to the order of the Canadian Free Library for the Blind.

What a pity there are so few Goodhearts in the world!

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