

## HONOR WITHOUT VICTORY

IN *Henry Esmond* Thackeray says: "One of the greatest of a great man's qualities is success; 'tis the result of all others; 'tis a latent power in him which compels the favour of the gods, and subjugates fortune. In being victorious, I fancy, there is something divine."

While temporarily the victor may thus seem supreme, history apparently nods toward the conquered as those more often illuminated with the most exalted nobility. Napoleon, who is always associated with Waterloo though still overshadowing his conqueror, Wellington, includes among his masters of the art of war these men: Alexander, Hannibal, Caesar, Gustavus, Turenne, Eugene, and Frederick. He did not include the Duke of Marlborough who never lost a battle. Neither did he include Scipio, who defeated Hannibal at Zama in the only battle of history where one great captain defeated another decisively. Zama gave the world to Rome. But Scipio is lost in the archives of history in comparison to the

defeated Hannibal. It is recorded that he died in exile, scuttled by politicians behind his back, led by Cato, in some insignificant scandal over tribute.

In our own time Wilson, like Lincoln and Jefferson and many others before him, was merely another of the victims of the end of a successful war. Before the War was over, the leaders of the Allies were ready enough and willing enough to "go along" with his fourteen points, which did as much to break the power of Germany as any commander. But the instant the cataclysm was terminated, all these immediately reverted to the type of primitive reasoning in which "to the victors belong the spoils."

On his arrival in Paris, this "Scottish peasant" was hailed as the savior of Europe. The brother of Georges Clemenceau, who more than anyone else ruined Wilson's program, said that "no man since Jesus so filled the hopes of European mankind."

But, surrounded by "realists" both at home and abroad, Wilson

was cut to pieces. Even his own party leaders were opposed to him, and "the beasts of Ephesus" tore him to shreds. Because of the hard terms, the Germans called him a hypocrite. Thus the Messianic catastrophe of the champion of democracy stands as one of the greatest tragedies of history. He went to Europe the idol of common people and returned home "literally without friends." But he still had his ideals. "Ideas live," he said. "Men die. No good cause is ever lost."

And whenever in the near or distant future the Great War comes up for consideration, even though he was a vanquished among the victors, or perhaps because of that, there will be no name ranking ahead of that of Wilson.

Similarly time unquestionably will see a growing luminosity for another great defeated, now still too thickly surrounded by the dust of conflict to stand out clearly in his true proportion. That was Stresemann, the son of the typical middle-class beer brewer, who became the personification of the old German imperialism as "Ludendorff's young man"; crashed with the military collapse and yet rose

to power in the hour of Germany's greatest need, learning from experience, and eventually as Foreign Minister of the Weimar Republic, negotiated the Locarno Treaties and brought Germany into the League of Nations.

In politics he was an artist. Inclined to be earnest, melancholic introspective in youth, he knew literature and loved fine poetry. In debate "he was winged with music." He was the pride of the middle class, typical of the old peaceful Rhineland of gay taverns, contentment of song. A great man because he was representative of a great people. Like them, he was defeated, but of him it has been said that "he was Germany." And that was of the Germany that was the best.

Keats, than whom no one has written better to this day, died early of disappointment over unfavorable reviews of his work. "I am very sorry to hear what you say of Keats," Byron wrote to Shelley. "Is it actually true? I did not think criticism had been so killing. Poor fellow. I read the review of 'Endymion' in the *Quarterly*. It was severe—but surely not so severe as many reviews in that and other journals

upon others. But in this world of bustle and broil, and especially in the career of writing, a man should calculate on his powers of resistance before he goes into the arena."

Of Browning it was said that whatever he was he wasn't a poet. Of Ibsen it was said in his time that whatever he was he wasn't a dramatist. Of Wagner it was said that whatever he was he wasn't a musician. For twenty years the latter was pursued by every sort of enmity and derision. He existed by hack work, suffered banishment, and was almost continually in despair over finances. His early work was violently attacked, and generally his music was tabbed as incomprehensible or obnoxious. Nietzsche attacked him as a decadent, and Mark Twain afterwards characteristically observed that his music "isn't as bad as it sounds."

Wagner merely suffered the usual fate of any original creative

genius. Vanquished in his own personal life, his great work moved on forward to triumph.

It is the same in all fields of constructive effort. Pasteur was humiliated by the Academy. Lavoisier was guillotined by a republic that "had no need of chemists." Priestley, who discovered oxygen, was driven from his sacked and devastated home. Leblanc, after giving the world cheap alkali, died in a French poorhouse.

It was Henrich Heine who wanted to know "what is the fundamental reason for the curse which falls upon all men of great genius? Why does the lightning of unhappiness strike most often the lofty spirits, the towers of humanity, while it so compassionately spares the humble thatched roofs of mediocrity?"

Is it perhaps the immutable law of compensation ever at work "evening up" the chance and destinies of all men?—*Ralph Cannon, condensed from Coronet.*

\* \* \*

## A SOUND CAR

HE had answered an advertisement offering a second-hand car, and was being given a trial run.

"It's sound in every part," commented the would-be seller.

"So I hear," was the reply.