

## **TROUBLE IN THE "AMEN CORNER"**

By THOMAS CHALMERS HARBAUGH

'Twas a stylish congregation, that of Theophrastus Brown,  
And its organ was the finest and the biggest in the town;  
And the chorus-all the papers favorably commented on it,  
For 'twas said each female member had a forty-dollar bonnet.

Now in the "amen corner" of the church sat Brother Eyer,  
Who persisted every Sabbath day in singing with the choir;  
He was poor, but genteel looking, and his heart as snow was white,  
And his face beamed with sweetness when he sung with all his might.

His voice was cracked and broken; age had touched his vocal cords.  
And nearly every Sunday he would mispronounce the words  
Of the hymns, and 'twas no wonder; he was old and nearly blind,  
And the choir rattling onward always left him far behind.

The chorus stormed and blustered, Brother Eyer sang too slow,  
And then he used the tunes in vogue a hundred years ago;  
At last the storm cloud burst and the church was told, in fine,

That the brother must stop singing, or the choir would resign.

Then the pastor called together in the lecture room one day  
Seven influential members, who subscribe more than they pay,  
And having asked God's guidance in a printed prayer or two  
They put their heads together to determine what to do.

They debated, thought, suggested, till at last "dear Brother York,"  
Who last winter made a million on a sudden rise in pork,  
Rose and moved that a committee wait at once on Brother Eyer,  
And proceed to rake him lively "for disturbin' of the choir."

Said he: "In that 'ere organ I've invested quite a pile,  
And we'll sell it if we cannot worship in the latest style;  
Our Philadelphy tenor tells me 'tis the hardest thing  
For to make God understand him when the brother tries to sing.

"We've got the biggest organ, the best~ressed choir in town,  
We pay the steepest sal'ry to our pastor, Brother Brown;  
But if we must humor ignorance because it's blind and old-  
If the choir's to be pestered, I will seek another fold.

Of course the motion carried, and one day a coach-and-four,  
With the latest style of driver, rattled up to Eyer's door.

And the sleek, well-ressed committee, Brothers Sharkey, York and Lamb,  
As they crossed the humble portal took good care to miss the jamb.

They found the choir's great trouble sitting in his old armchair,  
And the summer's golden sunbeams lay upon his thin white hair,  
He was singing "Rock of Ages" In a voice both cracked and low,  
But the angels understood him, 'twas all he cared to know.

Said York: "We're here, dear brother, with the vestry's approbation,  
To discuss a little matter that affects the congregation";  
"And the choir, too," said Sharkey. giving Brother York a nudge.  
"And the choir, too!" he echoed, with the graveness of a judge.

"It was the understanding when we bargained for the chorus,  
That it was to relieve us, that is, do the singing for us;  
If we rupture the agreement, it is very plain, dear brother,  
It will leave our congregation and be gobbled by another.

"We don't want any singing except that what we've bought!  
The latest tunes are all the rage; the old ones stand for naught;  
And so we have decided-are you listening, Brother Eyer?-  
That you'll have to stop your singin', for it flurrrytates the choir."

The old man slowly raised his head, a sign that he did hear,

And on his cheeks the trio caught the glitter of a tear;  
His feeble hands pushed back the locks white as the silky snow,  
As he answered the committee in a voice both sweet and low:

"I've sung the Psalms of David for nearly eighty years;  
They've been my staff and comfort and calmed life's many fears;  
I'm sorry I disturb the choir, perhaps I'm doing wrong,  
But when my heart is filled with praise I can't keep back a song.

"I wonder if beyond the tide that's breaking at my feet,  
In the far~ff heavenly temple, where the Master I shall greet-  
Yes, I wonder when I try to sing the songs of God up higher  
If the angel band will chide me for disturbing Heaven's choir."

A silence filled the little room; the old man bowed his head:  
The carriage rattled on again, but Brother Eyer was dead!  
Yes, dead! his hand has raised the veil the future hangs before us,  
And the Master dear had called him to the everlasting chorus.

The choir missed him for a while, but he was soon forgot!  
A few churchgoers watched the door; the old man entered not.  
Far away, his voice no longer cracked, he sings his heart's desires,  
Where there are no church committees and no fashionable choirs!