

## THE YOUNGEST COLONEL IN THE SERVICE.

A MEMORIAL OF ALEXANDER ROBERTS DUNN, V. O.

[From Good Words for July.]

Soon after the battle of Balaklava, Lieutenant Dunn sold out, and returned to England. He could not remain in the regiment with another man unjustly, as he thought, placed over his head. It was not without a struggle that he gave up his profession and all the ambitious hopes he had fondly cherished in his youth. He had loved his mother-country, he had fought bravely in her defence, and she had treated him with all the harshness and injustice of a step-mother. He returned home brooding over his disappointment, resolved to renounce for ever a service in which influence was everything and merit counted for nothing. Such was the view he then took of the matter; but we cannot avoid thinking he was wrong to leave the service. We never yet met an officer, young or old, who had not a grievance, real or imaginary. The older hands learn to grin and bear it; the young and inexperienced alone think of giving everything up in disgust. We have met scores of officers who had left the service early in life because it had not answered their expectations. There was not one of them who did not bitterly regret the step he had taken, and who would not willingly have made any sacrifice to be replaced in his former position. And the sequel will show that Lieutenant Dunn's quarrel with his profession was only a lover's quarrel, soon to be repented of, soon to be made up.

A life of enforced idleness soon became intolerable, and Lieutenant Dunn left for the Rocky Mountains on a hunting expedition, in company with an officer of his former regiment. The wild life of the prairie, the society of the half-cast trappers, the occasional encounters with hostile Indians, the buffalo hunt, the midnight bivouac, the rough fare of the backwoods,—were not without their attractions to a man of his temperament, but still he was restless and dissatisfied. He was born a soldier, and his heart was still in his profession. Wherever he went he carried with him the longing desire to resume the career he had so brilliantly begun and so rashly abandoned. He carried this feeling with him to Canada, when he revisited his native Province towards the close of 1857; and it gathered strength from the reception he everywhere received. The courage he evinced in the charge of the six hundred was not forgotten; he had shed lustre on his native Province. The Indian mutiny was still going on, and the troops were being hurried from England and elsewhere to aid in its suppression. Why should not Canada raise a regiment to assist the mother country in the struggle? The enterprise was not without its difficulties, in a colony where men are scarce and the price of labour high. Lieut. Dunn was, perhaps, the only man who could have undertaken it with success. His name, the influence of his family, his military fame, the cross of valour which the Queen had placed on his breast with her own hand, and his ample means, entitled him to expect success where others might have failed. General Eyre approved of the proposal, and Lieutenant Dunn entered on his task with enthusiasm. It was mainly owing to his efforts that another regiment—the 100th, or Prince of Wales's Royal Canadian Regiment—was added to the British army. Several of our Highland regiments were raised by private gentlemen; but they were raised at a period and in a land where men were abundant and

labour cheap. They cost little; but it was different with the Canadian regiment. Lieutenant Dunn alone expended many thousands; and when his task was completed he was gazetted as junior major of the regiment. The appointment met with universal favour. Soon after this he was promoted to the lieutenant-colonelcy, in consequence of the retirement of Baron de Rottenburg, who originally held that appointment. Lieutenant Colonel Dunn thus by a happy conjunction of circumstances, found himself in command of a regiment when he had barely completed his twenty-seventh year.

His youth and inexperience had been adduced as an excuse for not giving him his troop. The firmness and judgment with which he discharged the duties of a commanding officer proved that he was qualified for the still higher office which he now held. He was a strict disciplinarian, and yet contrived to gain the affections even of those whom he was compelled to punish. The story is told of an Irishman, whom he had sentenced to a week's extra drill for some military offence, exclaiming on hearing his sentence, "Shure, Colonel, I had rather have a month's drill from you than a week from any one else." He was kind and familiar in his bearing to his officers; but none of them would ever have ventured to take any liberty with him. The distinction he had gained at Balaklava disarmed the envy which might otherwise have been excited by the promotion of one so young; his regiment was proud of him, and he was equally proud of his regiment. His great ambition was to raise it to the highest state of discipline, and to make it one of the crack regiments of the service.

Soon after his appointment to the majority of the 100th regiment, he was presented with the sword of General Wolfe. This interesting relic, so closely associated with one of the most glorious episodes of Canadian history, could not have been placed in more deserving hands than those of the young Canadian soldier, whose career was destined to be as brief and almost as brilliant as that of its original possessor. It was exhibited in the Canadian department of the Great Exhibition of 1862, and was examined by thousands with that tender respect which every thing connected with the young hero who fell on the plain of Abraham ought ever to excite. It was highly valued by Colonel Dunn, and is now in the possession of his brother-in-law, Mr. Thurlow Dowling.

Colonel Dunn accompanied his regiment to England. Their first station was Aldershot, but after some time they were removed to Gibraltar. There much of his leisure time was spent in yachting, of which he was passionately fond, and on more than one occasion he had a narrow escape from drowning. One or two illustrations may be given of his generous courage, his dauntless disposition, and great powers of endurance. On one occasion several of his brother officers had accompanied him on board his yacht, a favourable breeze sprang up, all sail was set, and they skimmed joyfully along before the wind. The yacht leaped over considerably, so that the sea almost touched the deck. One of the officers, Captain Coulson, happened to bend forward, the vessel gave a sudden lurch, he lost his balance and fell overboard. "Put her about," he cried, "or I am lost!" On seeing his friend in the water, Colonel Dunn rushed forward, and was about to leap overboard to try to rescue him, when the other officers, knowing that he could only lose his own life without aiding the drowning man, seized him and held him down by force. An oar was thrown to and seized by the officer in the

water; the yacht was put about, but when they reached the spot he had disappeared. This incident shows how generous were his impulses, how little store he set by his own life, and how ready he was to rush to the assistance of others without weighing the consequences to himself.

On another occasion he was caught in one of those sudden gales so common in the Mediterranean. There were none on board the yacht but himself and two or three attendants. The gale increased to a hurricane; every effort was made to save the yacht, but she at length became unmanageable, and all hope of safety was given up. Colonel Dunn told his men that nothing more could be done, and descended to the cabin. The crew remained on deck, expecting that every moment would be their last. At length, to their great joy, a Spanish vessel bore in sight, they hoisted a signal of distress, and the ship kept them in sight till the hurricane had sufficiently abated to admit of a boat being lowered. On descending to the cabin they found Colonel Dunn sleeping as soundly as if there had been no danger, and loudly expressed their surprise that he could go to sleep under such circumstances. "Why not?" was his answer; "we had done all that could be done." It seemed to him perfectly natural to go to sleep when nothing else remained to be done.

Tired at times of the monotonous life on the glowing rock at Gibraltar, he visited the opposite coast of Africa, and made his way into the interior in search of sport. Such adventures were not without their danger, as the Moors are extremely jealous of strangers, and ready to attack them if they think they can do so with impunity.

The next station was Malta. Here Colonel Dunn had the misfortune to lose his half-brother, an officer in the regiment, who died of fever. He nursed him most tenderly during his illness. And his letters at this period prove that with all his reserve and seeming coldness, he had a warm and affectionate heart. He caused his brother to be buried in full uniform. It was an idea of his that a soldier, like a monk, should wear in the grave the garb he wore in life. While stationed at Malta, he had another almost miraculous escape. He had been dining at Government House, and was driving home in his carriage with his servant, and his coachman seated on the box. Part of the road lay along the precipitous shore from which it was separated by a species of embankment. The night was dark, and part of the embankment had been broken down. The coachman mistook the way, and the carriage and horses were precipitated over the cliff; Colonel Dunn, with some difficulty, contrived to reach the shore; but the horses were drowned and the carriage destroyed. On this occasion he lost his Victoria Cross and all his Crimean medals, and had much difficulty in having them replaced. From all that has been said it might be inferred that Col. Dunn bore a charmed life—the sequel, alas! will show that the charm extended only up to a certain point.

On the 20th of December, 1864, Lieutenant Colonel Dunn was gazetted as full Colonel—the youngest colonel in the British service. His active mind and adventurous spirit soon led him to long for a larger field of action than Malta, and he exchanged into the 33rd Regiment which was then stationed at Poona, in the Bombay Presidency. India has always been the nursery of military reputations, the field where our bravest soldiers have carved their way with their swords to rank and fame. The 33rd is known in the service as the Duke of Wellington's Own Regiment; and the name may have been aug-