

THE SOLDIER'S PLEDGE.

"DO not drink," the colonel said  
Upon the festal morning;  
There was a toss of beauteous head,  
And bright eyes full of scorning.  
"As woman's eyes this wine is fair,  
I know 'twould make us merry;  
But I will pledge in water clear,  
And not in golden sherry."

"Why, colonel, why?" the bride spoke up,  
Sir Edwin's fairest daughter;  
"Why do you scorn the honoured cup,  
And pledge me in cold water?  
Upon your words there hangs a tale  
And wo to it would listen;  
Methinks I see your cheeks grow pale,  
Your eyes with tear-drops glisten."

"Oh, bonnie bride, the tears I shed  
Above this glass of water,  
Are for the best and bravest dead  
That e'er rode down to slaughter.  
'Twas long ago when on the bank  
Of Irigally's river,  
We met the Russians, rank to rank,  
A sword or spear to shiver.

"The night before in Powell's tent  
The officers were drinking,  
A ceaseless round the goblet went—  
A shameless round, I'm thinking.  
The morning found us flushed with wine,  
With hands and brain unsteady,  
But when the Russians formed their line  
Of battle, we were ready.

"I reeled, but still upon my steed  
I sat and gave the orders  
That formed the gallant ranks I'd led  
From England's brave borders;  
I curse the day I saw them mowed  
Down in the fire infernal,  
For braver troopers never rode  
Behind a drunken colonel!

"This order came to us: 'Advance,  
And hold the Ridge of Bannon!  
Beyond it shone the foeman's lance  
Above one hundred cannon  
We gained the ridge and there drew rein,  
But only for a minute,  
The demon drink had fired my brain—  
The flames of hell seemed in it!

"I shouted, 'Charge!' and thro' the smoke  
We left the Ridge of Bannon,  
And faced the lurid flames that broke  
From all those Russian cannon.  
We sabred here, we sabred there,  
Despite death's horrid rattle;  
We left our comrades everywhere  
Upon the field of battle!

"How each man like a tiger fought  
'Tis told to-day in story;  
The foe's success was dearly bought,  
And dearer still our glory.  
Six hundred gallants rode with me  
Upon the deadly cannon;  
But only ninety lived to see  
Once more the Ridge of Bannon!

"With wounded heart, by time unhealed,  
That fell morn in October,  
I galloped from the fatal field,  
By murder rendered sober.  
Behind me lay upon the field,  
By murmuring Irigally,  
Four hundred men who'd ne'er again  
At blast of bugle rally.

"Against our arms the battle went,  
Defeat succeeded slaughter,  
And all because in Powell's tent  
We did not pledge in water.  
The sword I drew that fatal day  
Is rusted now, and broken,  
'Tis well! for it must ever be  
Of crime a horrid token.

"Now this is why my eyes with tears  
To-day are overflowing;  
Above my comrades twenty years  
The grasses have been growing.  
Come, fill each cup, and say with me—  
(Still be your childish prattle!)  
The day is lost, as it should be,  
When brandy leads the battle.

"I'd drink to all whose bones are white  
Beside the distant river;  
Their gallant blades to-day are bright,  
And will be bright forever!  
In water let us pledge the braves  
Who questioned not, but followed—  
Who peaceful sleep in soldiers' graves,  
By Cossack lances hallow'd."

"Fill up!" cried out the bonnie lass,  
Sir Edwin's fairest daughter,

"Pour out your wine, and fill each glass  
With clear and sparkling water!  
We drink to them who will no more  
At blast of bugle rally—  
The gallant ghosts that guard the shore  
Of whispering Irigally!"

It was no woman's foolish whim,  
As tearful eyes attested,  
They filled their glasses to the brim;  
And drank as she requested.  
He bowed his head—the soldier gray  
Who led his men to slaughter;  
And those beside him heard him say:  
"Since then I pledge in water."

—Selected.

A BIT OF LEAD.



HEY were building  
a church in Dean's  
Leigh parish; or  
rather they had  
built it—even to  
the very tall spire  
which only needed  
a coat of lead on the  
top to complete it. It  
is strange of how much  
worth little things are  
—the very little things  
that pe. ple are so apt  
to overlook, I mean.  
One sees this especially

when the small things happen to lie in  
close quarters with the big, important  
ones. Here was this church large and  
grand; built to hold many people and  
be filled with prayer and praise; built  
by many men of different trades;  
taking months to build; with a spire  
pointing like a finger to the sky—one  
of the highest spires in England—and  
yet the builders told me that unless  
that small coating of lead were put on  
the top all their labours would be lost;  
rain would drain through the stone  
work, damp soak into it, and down  
would come the big spire with a crash  
some fine day—all for the want of  
that bit of lead to secure it at the top.

"Well," I said to the builders who  
told me this when I walked down to  
see the new church, "then here's a  
nice little lesson to be learned by the  
way! Many Christian lives lived in  
this great world don't seem worth  
much more than that little bit of lead.  
But that's just because we don't con-  
sider how much the bit of lead is worth.  
Such lives keep a great deal of harm  
away from Church on earth simply by  
sticking to it—and they are nearest to  
heaven of the whole building too up  
there! We want the bits of lead."

I watched the builders melt their  
lead, and mount with it boiling in a  
cauldron to the very loftiest point of  
the scaffolding. It was dangerous  
work, to say the least; but theirs were  
stout hearts.

It was of no use. They could not  
reach high enough to pour the lead on  
the top of the spire. They descended,  
disheartened; it seemed as if all their  
work would be in vain.

"It'll come down on somebody's  
head some day, sure enough," growled  
one.

"There's many cottages as isn't far  
away," grunted another.

"Your mother'll not stand much  
chance, I reckon, if there comes a  
strong puff of a winter night, Jim  
Baldock!" said a third.

The man addressed had been anx-  
iously gazing at the spire or above it—  
for some time, and now he spoke up.

"I have it mate, there ain't no way  
but one that'll fetch it! One on you'll  
stand on the top scaffolding, an' let  
me mount o' his shoulders wi' the lead,  
an' we'll do it."

"Bravo, Jim!" cried many voices  
in answer to the brave and unexpected  
proposal.

"But ta'n't safe to risk your life so,  
Jim."

"Is it safe to risk hers?" Jim  
Baldock answered softly, jerking his  
thumb over in the direction of his bed-  
ridden mother's little cottage.

Jim was a Christian; and perhaps you  
would have guessed as much without  
my telling you. The first stone he  
ever laid was the corner-stone of Jesus  
Christ in his own soul, and he has  
been building upon that ever since.

At Jim's last word another loud  
cheer rang through the air; and then  
they all fell to settling how the plan  
was to be carried out. It was quickly  
arranged thus. Will Garnet, being  
the tallest man among them, as well  
as the stoutest, would let little light  
Jim to stand on his shoulders, and  
Jim should pour in the lead over the  
top of the spire.

Will was Jim's great friend. They  
went to the same meeting-house to-  
gether and prayed for one another  
there, and thanked God for each  
other's mercies. They worked together  
to—I don't mean only in their every-  
day toil as builders, but in that share  
of work which the Great Master  
Builder had set them to do in the  
building up of stones in his spiritual  
Church, to be found unto praise, and  
honour, and glory at his coming.  
Working for souls some people call  
this, but I don't quite like that phrase;  
it seems to leave the body out of count,  
as though it were a part of man not  
worth caring for. Very often the best  
way of reaching people's souls is  
through their bodies. Our bodies as  
well as our souls are to be built up  
living temples for the Holy Spirit.  
We can't be considered apart from our  
bodies—weak, frail and ailing as they  
are; but some day they shall be re-  
newed to us strong, beautiful and in-  
corruptible.

"I like ye for this, mate!" Will  
Garnet said approvingly, as they went  
to their work side by side. "It's a  
rare dangerous job you've set yourself,  
but you may reckon on my standin'  
firm."

"Ay, I know. An you'll break it  
kind to mother, an' see to her it—if  
I don't see her again?"

"I will, Jim."

"Then I a'n't aught left to think.  
We're ready for death whenever it  
comes our way, a'n't we, mate? We  
know our Lord Jesus. He can't fail  
us. Will, it comforts me now to  
think how 'the Everlasting Arms' are  
underneath us, even under that great,  
dizzy spire, when we're up there. If  
I was to fall, it 'ud only be home all  
the sooner, would'nt it? You'd go on  
wi' the Master's work, o' course, just  
as us'al, mate, an' p'raps it might lead  
others to come forward as is holdin'  
back now—there's never no knowin',  
mate. Now let's have a bit o' prayer."

They didn't stop to kneel down,  
there wasn't time; the boiling lead  
would have cooled meanwhile; so they  
prayed aloud as they went along. And  
God heard them. His ear is always  
close to the mouth of his children  
when they speak, right into it. I wish  
they would remember that sometimes  
when they let their lips say words that  
grieve him.

"Ready now, mate?"

"Ay, lad!"

They had mounted the tall scaffold-  
ing now, and stood on its highest plank.

There was a mighty crowd gathered  
below them—silent and awestruck.  
Prayers went up from some hearts for  
safety of the brave man who was risk-  
ing his life for his mother's sake and  
for many of theirs.

Jim stood erect on his friend's shoul-  
ders. Will Garnet's face was ashen-  
hued, but he never even trembled.  
His strong right arm clung as for dear  
life to the top of the scaffolding pole.

Just as Jim was about to pour the  
molten lead upon the top of the spire  
a strong wind arose. It blew into  
their faces in sudden gust, and threat-  
ened to sweep both away into the  
abyss beneath. Jim felt that they  
could neither of them stand it long,  
and he went quickly to his work.

Down came a mass of molten lead,  
dislodged by the fierce gale on the  
right arm of the man who was sup-  
porting his friend. Jim busy at his  
work, never saw it fall—never knew.

Will Garnet never stirred—never  
writhed. His right arm, with its  
cruel, burning lead upon it, still grasped  
the scaffolding pole firmly as ever.

It would have been death to Jim if  
he had cried or faltered. Without  
words of mine, you may picture to  
yourself the peril of the position.

The work was done, it was only that  
of a few moments. The two brave  
fellows came down again, and were  
received with cheers by the crowd.

"Thank God!" exclaimed Jim  
Baldock, out of a full heart.

Will Garnet said nothing. He fell  
heavily forward into his friend's arms,  
and fainted.

They loosened his coat, and then they  
saw his right arm bleeding, burning,  
and eaten away by the scalding metal.  
That man was a hero.

The tall spire is standing to this  
day, with its cap of lead, strong and  
firm. Jim Baldock and Will Garnet  
must be old men now if they are still  
on earth; and Jim's mother is long  
gone to those glorious mansions of rest  
prepared by the Master Builder him-  
self in heaven.—Sel.

MOTHER'S TURN.

"IT is mother's turn to be taken  
care of now."

The speaker was a winsome  
young girl, whose bright eyes,  
fresh colour, and eager looks, told of  
light-hearted happiness. Just out of  
school, she had the air of culture,  
which is an added attraction to a blithe  
young face. It was mother's turn now.  
Did she know how my heart went out  
to her for her unselfish words?

Too many mothers, in their love for  
their daughters, entirely overlook the  
idea that they themselves need recrea-  
tion. They do without all the easy,  
pretty, and charming things, and say  
nothing about it; and the daughters do  
not think there is any self-denial  
involved. Jenny gets the new dress,  
and mother wears the old one, turned  
upside down, and wrong-side out.  
Lucy goes on the mountain trip, and  
mother stays at home and keeps house.  
Emily is tired of study, and must lie  
down in the afternoon; but mother,  
though her back aches, has no time for  
such an indulgence.

Dear girls, take good care of your  
mothers. Coax them to let you  
relieve them of some of the harder  
duties, which, for years, they have  
patiently borne.—Intelligencer.