

If there weren't to be any more letters from mother!

"I haven't kissed her good-night for ever so long," said Rupert. "I'd got a fool notion that it was babyish. I always used to think I couldn't go to bed without it. I wonder if she ever missed it. I've seen her look at me sometimes when I started upstairs. What sort of a place would this be without mother? I never could stand it—never! I should want to run away or drown myself!"

The door of the sick-room opened a little wider, and Mr. Allison entered noiselessly.

"Is there any change?" he whispered.

"Apparently none, Mr. Allison. She lies all the time like this. One hardly knows whether it be sleep or stupor."

"How long"—the strong man, choking, left the question unfinished.

"It is hard to say," answered the nurse pitifully. "But she has lost much within the last twenty-four hours."

The husband knelt at the foot of the bed, behind a screen which had been placed to shade the sick woman's face from the light, and rested his head upon the coverlet.

"My little Nellie!" he moaned, as if unconscious of any other presence in the room. "My rose of girls—my bride—the mother of my children—the heart of my heart! Spare her yet to me, O God! that I may have time to teach her how much dearer she is to me than money or lands or honors! Take her not—"

"Mr. Allison!"

It was the nurse who touched him. There was a quiver of suppressed excitement in her voice. He rose to his feet. His wife's eyes were open—the pallid face illuminated. One wasted hand moved feebly towards him across the white counterpane. He fell again on his knees and pressed the thin fingers to his lips.

"Henry—darling," the faint, thrilling voice seemed to come from very far away—"don't grieve any more! I'm going to get well!"

Long afterwards the doctor and nurse would sometimes recall together the unexpected recovery of Mrs. Allison.

"It was no cure of mine," the doctor would say. "Medicine had nothing to do with it. She was as nearly gone as she actually could be without ceasing to breathe, when she simply made up her mind to live. A marvellous cure."

Not so marvellous, perhaps, good physician!—Only a righting for once of the disordered sequence of this topsy-turvy world!

If the words of love and appreciation which beat so vainly at the closed bars of the coffin-lid, were spoken oftener into living ears, how many other weary feet might turn again from 'the valley of the shadow!'—Advance.

He Would be a Soldier.

"If you please, sir, I want to list for a soldier."

The applicant for service with the Queen's colors was a very small boy about ten years of age. The application was made to a very big soldier, with an immense moustache, who was sunning himself one evening just outside the gates of a certain West End barracks. He was a sergeant in the Guards, and looked both fierce and proud.

"Oh," he exclaimed, looking the little fellow straight in the face without so much as a smile on his countenance, intending, at least apparently, to take the application seriously. "What is your name?"

"Tommy Upright," was the reply given in a trembling voice, for the bigness and fierceness of the warrior, upon whose breast hung three medals, rather took the courage out of the would-be recruit.

"Humph! Thomas Upright," still looking at him, and you wish to enlist in the Guards?"

"Yes, sir," replied Tommy, who having gone so far bravely, determined to go through with the matter.

"Very good, Thomas Upright, or Upright Thomas, as the case may be. Now, atten-

tion! Let me see if you can walk according to your name. Follow me! Quick, march!"

The word of command was given in a sharp, loud voice that was most impressive. Awestruck as Tommy was he plucked up courage and did his best to keep step with the big guardsman. This, however, was no easy task owing to the unusual length of leg in the one case and the extreme shortness in the other. He followed the sergeant into the barracks, up a flight of stone stairs, and through a long, gloomy corridor, entering at length a small room, having somewhat the character of an office. One who appeared to be a superior officer was writing at a desk, who looked up as they entered, the sergeant saluting. There was a pleasant smile on his face as he caught sight of Tommy.

"Whom have we here, Sergeant Small?"

"A recruit, captain. Name, Thomas Upright; age, ten years," answered the sergeant, sharp and short.

"And is he desirous of joining the Coldstream Guards?" asked the captain, looking at Tommy.

"If you please, sir, I want to list for a soldier."

"I must explain to you, Tommy," said the officer, kindly, "that there are various classes of soldiers; some are tall, Grenadiers, like the sergeant; others are short, like my own Coldstreams, where there are some quite as short as you are. Then our soldiers have various occupations: some are gunners in the artillery, some are troopers in the cavalry, some are engineers, who build bridges, some are sappers and miners accustomed to shovel and pickaxe, some tend the wounded who have fallen in the field, and others "also serve who only stand and wait"; but all true soldiers serve under the same standard, and are strictly loyal to country, Queen, and God. Now, to what particular branch of the service do your inclinations tend?"

It must be confessed that Tommy was rather perplexed by so many different kinds of soldiers, and he hardly knew what to answer. He first of all thought he would like to be a Grenadier, but then, if all Grenadiers had legs like the sergeant's it would be impossible for him to keep step with them. The legs settled the question, as they had done many a question before.

"If you please, sir, I would like to join the Coldstream Guards."

"Very good, Tommy, I think you have well chosen. I will not give you any further explanation at present, but you shall see the battalion at drill, and then if you are still of the same mind your name shall be entered on the roll."

"What is it this evening, sergeant?"

"Volley-firing and sharp-shooting, sir."

"Then perhaps you will take charge of our young recruit until we assemble in the drill hall, which will be in a very few minutes."

"Very good, sir," and saluting, also instructing Tommy to do the same, he passed out with his recruit. Tommy felt that it was absolutely necessary for him to keep step with the sergeant, and his attempts to do so as he crossed the barrack yard were ludicrous in the extreme. Although the sergeant was very sharp and short in answering questions, Tommy found him much more pleasant than he appeared to be at first, very kind-hearted and willing to explain many things that met the eye of the delighted boy with which he was unfamiliar. The grimness of the big soldier seemed to melt, as also did the awe with which Tommy was at first inspired, and they became quite chatty.

"Were you ever in a war, sergeant, and did you ever kill anyone?" asked Tommy, with that strange interest which boys seem to have in hearing about fighting and people being killed.

"I have been in wars, Tommy, and it has been my painful duty to take life; but I would at any time rather save than kill even an enemy."

Tommy did not see the force of saving an enemy, and was about to make a remark to that effect, when he was startled by the clear notes of a bugle, and what surprised him was that it was being sounded by a little boy about his own age. He thought what a fine thing it would be to be able to play like that; perhaps he would be able to do so some day.

"The assembly is called," said his conductor, sharply, "and we must be going to drill."

It seemed to Tommy that the sergeant was always grimmer when he had any work in hand or any duty before him, but he supposed sergeants were always like that.

In the drill hall Tommy found nearly two hundred boys assembled, ready for the captain as soon as he should make his appearance. And now it will be best to explain what it is probable our young readers already partly suspect, although it came somewhat as a surprise to Tommy Upright. For a long time past Captain Syme and Sergeant Small had conducted a weekly meeting of tectotal boys, who were known throughout the barracks as the 'Coldstream Guards.' Generally speaking they were the children of soldiers residing in barracks, but a great many came from the homes of civilians in the neighborhood, by whom the captain and sergeant were greatly respected. Of course when Tommy said that he wanted to enlist as a soldier in the Guards the sergeant was fully aware of the absurdity of such an application, but thinking he would make a suitable recruit for the Coldstreams he took the young applicant seriously and led him with assumed importance in to the captain; that officer, fully understanding the position, spoke to Tommy in the way he did, and invited him to 'drill' at the evening meeting.

Tommy thought the boys all seemed very happy, but rather noisy, until the captain entered, when the bugle sounded, and the sergeant shouted, "Hats off!" There was then well-nigh perfect silence. Mounting a slightly raised platform, with the young bugler by his side, the captain briefly addressed the boys, saying that he desired them to fire a few volleys. The bugle then sounded, and the captain, speaking in a commanding voice, said:

"The name of your battalion?"

"The Coldstream Guards," with united voices.

"Whom do you serve?"

"Our Queen, our country, and our God."

"Why are you enrolled?"

"To fight the great enemy, Strong Drink."

"In what respect is Strong Drink an enemy?"

"It dishonors our Queen, curses our country, and offends against our God."

"Under what banner do you fight?"

"The banner of True Temperance, and then, as the answer was shouted with increasing vigor, the bugle sounded, and the beautiful banner of the Coldstreams was unfurled amid great cheering.

Once more the bugle sounded, and again silence reigned while the captain continued to issue his commands.

"What should characterize your general conduct as soldiers?"

"Obedience to orders, endurance under hardships, courage in presence of the foe, a self-sacrificing spirit, and love towards God and man."

"What are your special duties?"

"To help save those who have fallen through drink, and prevent others from falling."

"What special means do you use?"

"The temperance pledge."

Tommy listened with wonder and astonishment to this volley-firing, and felt that the sounds would be ringing in his ears for many a day. But 'drill' was not yet finished, and again the bugle sounded.

"We will now have a little sharp-shooting. Present arms!" and in a moment every right arm was uplifted, holding in the hand a pledge-book. "Number one company, give the number of pledges taken during the last month. Sergeant Small will act as marker. Commence firing!" and Tommy heard a series of sharp calls like the crack of rifles.

"Two! One! Four! Three! One!" until every member of the company had fired, and then number two company was called upon, and so on through the hall.

Tommy was delighted with all he saw and heard, and expressed an earnest desire to have his name enrolled.

"I shall be much pleased to enter your name, Tommy, but would like you first of all to obtain the consent of your parents, which I doubt not will be readily given. When you are enrolled you will receive a badge like those you see the other boys wearing, a pledge-book in which you will enter the names of recruits obtained, and a "soldier's catechism," in which you will find full instructions as to our principles and your particular duties. May you be upright in conduct, as you are in name, a worthy member of the Coldstream Guards, and a good soldier of Jesus Christ, who came into the world not to destroy but to save men."

The captain shook Tommy kindly by the hand, who having given a real military salute retired, hastening home to tell all he had seen and heard, and ask permission forthwith to join the Coldstream Guards.—"Temple Record."