THE FIRST SERGEANT OF COMPANY B.

BY JOSEPHINE P. OSMOND.

"Attention, Company!"

Every gun was brought to the order, every head was turned to the front, every eye was on the captain, and the two long ranks of blue-coated boys were as straight and even as old soldiers could desire. This was what they heard:

"There will be a competitive drill in this room next Friday night, after which promotions for corporal and sergeant will take place."

To an outsider, this announcement might have sounded quite trifling, but to those five-and-thirty boys it was a matter of vital importance. They had had a competitive drill once before and knew how exciting it was—and then—those coveted promotions! Not a private in the ranks but had some hope of being made corporal. As to the corporals, there were four of them to aspire to the office of sergeant, but that the victory lay between Tom Realey and Ralph Howard, no one doubted. They were both good drillers and well-liked by the boys.

"I'll bet on Realey," shouted one of the little fellows, after the company was dismissed.

"Howard's the man," said another voice, and soon cries of "Realey," "Howard" went up all over the drill-room till the captain had to restore order. But the seeds of jealousy were already sown in one boy's heart.

Ralph Howard and Tom Realey had always been chums, although Ralph lived on one of the finest avenues in the city, and Tom's home was on a poor little back street. They had been in the same Sunday school class for years; they had joined the Boy's Brigade at the same time, and they had been appointed corporals on the same eventful night. So far they had kept pace with each other, but now, one or the other must forge ahead, they could not both be First Sergeants, that was sure. That bothered Ralph, and had for a long time. He had foreseen that the time would come when it would be so, and now he felt a decided twinge of jealousy as he heard his own name and Tom's shouted by the contending parties. Tom didn't give the matter very much thought. In fact there weren't many things weighty enough to bother Tom's curly pate very long, and just now he was more interested in camp than anything else. The company was to hold its first annual encampment in July and how was he to get the necessary money was a practical problem which he did worry over a little.

"Why don't you go down to the market tomorrow Tom, and hang around till you get a job?" asked Jack Powers, one of the larger fellows, as they walked home.

"Could I, do you think?"

"Yes, indeed. I help my father every Saturday, and the men often want a boy to fetch and carry. You'll have to be there early, though."

"Never fear. I'll be on hand at five o'clock. Anything for camp."

But to go back to Ralph. As he walked home alone, he brooded more and more over the idea that either he or Tom must win the drill. Oh, how he did long to wear a sergeant's stripes.

"I don't believe Tom cares half as much about it as I do," he thought. "I know he never worries if he don't get good marks at school, but he generally gets 'em, just the same. He's been absent from Brigade lots oftener than I have, too. He wasn't there last week. Whee—e—e," and suddenly Ralph stopped right in the street. "No sir, he wasn't there, and we had that new movement and he won't know it, and I'll get ahead. Nobody'll think to tell him, and I shan't, that's certain."

"But would that be square and fair?" said a voice from within some place. "Is that an honest, friendly act? Oh, well, all's fair in love or war, and besides Tom had no business being absent. To be sure he had a cold, and if I was to do as I'd be done by—but pshaw! I'm not responsible for Tom Realey." And so he went on, arguing with himself and nursing jealous thoughts of Tom until he reached home. His uneasy conscience gave him a restless night and he woke with a heavy heart.

Not so his rival. It was a bright warm, morning. "A good market day," thought Tom, with an eye to business, as he sped down the street at five o'clock. Jack was right. It is the early bird that catches the worm, and Tom took in several fat ones this particular morning. He was quick and active and the men soon discovered it. There were wagonsful of potatoes to be unloaded, and baskets of cherries and peas and all sorts of early vegetables to be carried into the stalls. By ten he had earned sixty cents and right merrily did they jingle in his pocket. There was a brief pause in the work and he stood leaning against a wagon wheel, calculating.

"Let's see, how long would it take to earn $3.50 at sixty cents a week? Though I'd probably make more than—" just then the horses gave a lurch backward, the wheel moved and sent Tom headlong under the horses feet. Before he could regain his footing, down came the heavy iron shod hoof on his outspread hand crushing it cruelly and causing him to faint away with the pain. Some one saw the accident and stopped the horses before further harm was done. Quite a crowd gathered around as they lifted the limp little figure from the ground.

"Who is he anyway?"

"Blest if I know. His name's Tom and he's been toting for us since five this morning, but more'n that, I couldn't say."

"Better send for an ambulance, he's not coming too, right off—"

So in almost no time, poor little Tom, friendless and alone, was whirled away to the hospital, and put under the influence of ether while his mangled right hand was dressed and his left arm, which had been broken, was set and put in a sling. When he awoke in one of the many white cots in the Children's Ward, he saw a sweet-faced nurse bending over him and just behind her was his mother with love and fear blended in her face. Tom was completely bewildered, didn't know where he was, and had to be told all that had happened since that fatal fall.

How long am I in for?" was his first question, but it brought no satisfactory answer. The nurse told his mother later, that it would be three or four weeks at least.

That afternoon Ralph Howard was sauntering along the street when he met Jack Powers going along like a trolley car.

"Have you heard about Tom Realey?" he asked breathlessly.

"Tom Realey? No—What?" said Ralph flushing guiltily.

"Got kicked by a horse down in the market. They say he's most killed. I'm going down to the hospital to see him now."

Ralph said nothing, but his lips trembled and his face grew white. He felt somehow as if he had been the cause of the accident. Had he not been wishing him ill? He turned and walked along with Jack until they came to the big brick building with formidable front steps and entrance.

"No visitors admitted on Saturday," snapped the clerk, as they timidly proffered their request to "see Tom Realey."

"I really couldn't tell you how he is," was all the information they could wring from him.

Poor Ralph! He will never forget the utter misery of that long afternoon. He couldn't play, he found reading impossible; so he wandered around the house and yard, a woe-begone, conscience smitten boy.

"If only I could see him once more and tell him how mean I've been, and that I don't want to be a sergeant."

All of a sudden it struck him that he could find out how Tom was by going to his home, and he lost no time in doing it. There he learned that instead of being "most killed" Tom's injuries were not serious, and he would probably be out in three weeks. His heart was a good deal lighter at this news, and arrangements were made for him to see Tom on the coming Monday.

Boys are not much given to tears, but when Ralph was admitted to the long ward full of pale suffering children, and his eyes caught sight of Tom propped up among the pillows, with the color all gone from his face, his left arm done up in a sling and his right hand covered with bandages, it was all he could do to keep a stiff upper lip.

"How are you, old boy!" as he grasped Tom's left hand.

"Oh, I'm wounded you see. I pretend I've been in sakirmish and the doctor and nurses call me the 'soldier', and talk of bullets, etc. We have lots of fun. But what worries me is I won't be able to handle a gun for a long, long while, and that may knock camp in the head, and of course I can't be in the competition Friday night."

"O Tom," said Ralph, and before he knew it he was telling Tom all his mean, unkind thoughts and plans, and asking his forgiveness.

Of course Tom readily gave it, but he could hardly understand Ralph's feelings His own nature was so open and generous he could not put himself exactly in Ralph's place and imagine himself feeling the same way; but he couldn't doubt Ralph's repentance, that was sincere, and he felt sorry for him.

"Don't feel so bad, old fellow. I won't be able to get it anyway and you can have it with a clear conscience."

"I'm not going Friday night."

"What nonsense! Why you old duffer, you are too."

"No, sir, I wouldn't feel right to wear sergeant's stripes unless you did. You can't, so I won't."

But Tom pooh-poohed at this and talked and argued, until Ralph half promised that he would go after all. Just then the nurse came in and said that Tom had had enough company for this time and Ralph must go.

Tom stayed a whole month in the hospital and although it seemed more like six, still he had some pretty good times, and he found out how much the captain and all the boys thought of him. They came to the hospital in swarms and had to go away without seeing him half the time. They brought him books and flowers and games and candy and ice-cream, in sufficient quantities to supply the whole ward with those luxuries. The doctors and nurses all learned to love him, and when the time came for good-byes there were some tears shed on both sides.

But about the competitive? Of course the drill for corporal was the most exciting; it was conducted on the plan of a spelling down and the private who remained standing longest was the winner. But our interest centers around the squad drill which decided which corporal should be made sergeant. The judges were the drill master, the captain, and Dr. Lee, the pastor, who knew almost as much about tactics as theology. Everyone said of course Ralph Howard would get it since Tom Healey was out of the race. Of the two remaining corporals, one was a great tall fellow who understood every thing perfectly, but he wasn't a born leader, his voice was thin and weak and somehow there was no life about his drilling. He drilled his squad first. Then Corporal Howard took the floor and in clear ringing tones gave his orders; he put the boys through everything they had ever had, and although a trifle nervous still his work was fine, fully up to expectations.

Last of all came little Ted Jones the smallest corporal of all, with his squad of ten-year-olds. He was a dear little fellow, rosy and sturdy, and didn't appear to be a particle embarrassed as he took the floor. And such drilling as was performed by that four! It was simply perfect, every one said, and a surprise to all. But the truth was, Ted had had his squad out every evening that week and he had even taught them new movements, so that all together it was a regular "walk over" as the boys said, and when he wheeled his squad into line, dismissed them, and saluted the captain, everyone cheered, they couldn't help it. It was a foregone conclusion that Ted got the promotion. Everybody was satisfied; no one could be jealous of Ted, and Ralph and Tom had a good laugh over their borrowed trouble.

So both the boys are still wearing corporals' chevrons, and what is better still, they are both the best of friends.—Interior.

THOSE ODD BABBINGTONS.

BY LEANDER S. KEYSER.

There were new people in the neighborhood—the Babbingtons. At first they made a decidedly favorable impression with their refined and cordial manners. They bought property in the eastern part of the city, because, as they averred, they wanted to live near the church of their choice, although in some other respects the location was quite inconvenient for them, being a considerable distance from the school which several members of the family attended.

"We've settled down just where we prefer to be," declared Mr. Babbington, "near the dear little church in which we expect to worship."

The Babbingtons fairly doted on the "dear little church." It was so "homelike"; the members were all so "clever" and "sociable" and "attentive to strangers," and "made so much of people," and the young preacher was so "sincere," and his sermons "lifted their souls heavenward."

"There's only one fault I have to find with your sermons," said Mrs. Babbington one day to the young minister.

"Indeed? What is that?" asked Mr. Grenald, looking a little crestfallen that she should venture to pass any criticism.

"They're too short," she teased.

And Mr. Grenald looked very much relieved, replying: "That's a criticism that is a compliment."

"Never in my life have I attended a church where I enjoyed myself so much," declared Mr. Babbington. "It's a sort of heaven; it has a celestial atmosphere about it; no quarreling, no backbiting It is all so different from the church in the East to which—"

"Oh, pa, don't mention that," interrupted Mrs. Babbington, a flush dyeing her cheeks.

"No, don't go over that," warned one of the daughters almost imperatively; at which Mr. Babbington held his peace.

After that he gave only vague hints of the church troubles in the East, but those hints were definite enough to prove to acute people that the difficulties had been quite serious and that the Babbingtons had been involved in them. But now, happily, all their spiritual afflictions were over, and they had reached their land of Beulah. Indeed, their enthusiasm scarcely knew any bounds.

"Those Babbingtons almost carry our preachers around on the palms of their hands," quoth a member who was just a little disposed to be envious. "We'll wait and see if their good feeling lasts."

Whether the speaker was a prophet or not I cannot say, but for a while those demonstrative people almost worshipped their preacher and their "dear little church." But people who are so very gushing and lavish in their professions of friendship are not always steadfast. No, indeed! Sad to say, it was not long before the love of the Babbington's began to chill—not all at once, but as the weather grows cold in autumn, by degrees. Their pastor whom they had metaphorically carried about on a cushion—well, he had his faults like other people; they hinted he wasn't a perfect man, he preached too bluntly, especially if he happened, all unconsciously, to puncture some of their shortcomings. Little by little they grew less cordial to him, and little by little, too, they began to find defects in this member and that one in the church.

It soon came about that rumors of the most caustic and contemptuous criticisms of himself from the Babbingtons reached the ears of the pastor, Mr. Grenald, and if he had been morbidly sensitive, they would have stung him to the quick; but he recalled Mr. Babbington's hints about the church troubles in the East, and that threw much light on their present conduct and spirit.

"Ah! I fear that they are fickle and spasmodic people who can't agree with anybody very long," he reflected, as he dismissed the disagreeable thought and bent over the sermon he was preparing on steadfastness.

While Mr. Grenald remained pastor of the church, the Babbingtons grew colder toward him, until they seemed like icicles. But he left presently and went to another field of labor. When he presented his resignation, Mr. Babbington said very graciously:

"Oh! we'll not let the weeds grow under our feet in accepting his resignation."

It really pleased the poor man that Mr. Grenald was going to leave, for his fickle nature demanded a change, a new object upon which to pour out its effervescence. Another pastor was soon called by the church. He was a cordial man and gifted preacher, and in a few weeks the Babbingtons were copious in their demonstrations of friendship. They fairly overwhelmed him and his wife with attentions, driving them about in their carriage, calling with them upon the members, spending a great deal of time in their home, and, indeed, going to such a length as to excite scoffing remarks in the church and neighborhood.

"Wait a few months," snapped Sadie Bascott, a maiden lady who had long before guaged the character of the Babbingtons; "they'll soon drop Mr. Hodge like a hot gridiron, just as they did Mr. Grenald whom they abused so toward the last. Take my word for it! A new broom sweeps clean, but some people have the faculty of wearing it out mighty soon. This is no Jonathan and David love I can tell you that!"

And, lo! the very thing she had predicted came to pass, even sooner than she or any one else had expected.

"Well, I'm a better prophet than I thought," Sadie laughed, a few weeks later. "The Babbingtons and Hodges have had a fall-out already."

It was true. A misunderstanding had occurred between the Babbingtons and the new pastor, sharp words had been exchanged, and they parted company. Nor was that all. In one way and another a feeling of entanglement came between the Babbingtons and a large number of the members.

"They can't get along with anybody long," was the general verdict. "We hear that they were in a wrangle in the East, and it seems that they didn't leave their failings behind them when they moved to this part of the country."

At last the Babbington's left that section of the town in disgust, and secured property where people were not so "unrefined and quarrelsome," as they put it, blind to their own faults.

"Yes, they were odd—the Babbingtons—very odd," observed Sadie Bascott, with a knowing smile, "and the oddest thing was that they didn't know they were odd. Of course, they can't see that they are mostly to blame—some people never can."—Western Record.

HOW REBECCA MARIA BEGAN.

"Where's Rebecca Maria?" asked Lizzie Slocum, running up to the Potters' back door.

Mrs. Potter was alone in the kitchen making bread.

"I'm sure I don't know," she answered. "She went out somewhere when the dishes were done, and I supposed she was with the rest of you."

"She isn't," said Lizzie, and we're having a lovely game of hide-and-seek. You tell her to come right out if she comes in, won't you?"

It was not five minutes later when Bob rushed in.

"Mother," he called, "I say, where in the world is Bek? We're having the biggest kind of a game, and we want her awfully."

"I don't know where she is," answered Mrs. Potter for the second time. "I haven't seen her since the work was done up."

"Well, she's great! She knew we were going to play, and I don't see why she didn't come along out," said Bob. "She knows all the best places, and makes more fun than the rest of them put together."

Meantime Rebecca Maria, the missing, was down in the orchard in the old hammock, too absorbed in her own thoughts to hear them calling her.

Miss Weston, her Sunday School teacher, had talked to them earnestly last Sunday about denying themselves for Christ's sake. "We are not put here just to enjoy ourselves, and to do only what pleases us," she said. "God wants us to forget our own selves—that is, not to think first and foremost of ourselves, but to be busy thinking what we can do for others to help them or to make them happy. And the Bible tells us, you know, that 'Christ pleased not himself.' He never thought what would make him happiest or most comfortable, but what he could do for some one else."

"My dear girls, won't you each make a special effort to grow like him every day? It isn't easy (we are all apt to consider ourselves and our own happiness first); but if we keep trying it will come to be more natural. It should be the one great purpose of our life to grow like Christ. If we do not, our lives are wasted—worse than wasted. I pray every day that my girls may all live unselfish, helpful, Christ-like lives."

Rebecca Maria had thought a great deal of what Miss Weston had said. She did not want her life to be wasted. She meant to do a great deal of good while she lived. In fact, she spent much of her time thinking about it—how she would go about feeding and clothing poor people and nursing the sick when she was old enough. Everybody would love her for her good deeds, and when she died the funeral would be held in the church, which would not begin to hold the sobbing multitudes who would come.

Oh, no! Rebecca Maria had no intention of wasting her life, but somehow Miss Weston's talk had made her feel uncomfortable. She was sure she wanted to be just the kind of a person she described, but she had not thought it would be so hard, nor that she would have to grow into such a character. It had rather seemed to her that she could just be so whenever she happened to wish to be. But to forget herself, and to keep thinking about other people and their pleasure all the time—why, it would be such hard work!

"You just somehow find you're thinking about your own self lots of times," she said. "I don't see how you're going to forget, and go make yourself uncomfortable for somebody else's sake. Miss Weston said it wasn't natural. I know 'twouldn't be for me."

Yesterday Rebecca Maria's mother had sent her down to see Mrs. Sullivan, their washerwoman. She had had to wait for a few minutes for some things to be done up, and she saw Mrs. Sullivan's baby lying in the cradle. Such a poor, pale, wasted little baby it was.

"Dear me!" said Rebecca Maria, with her accustomed frankness, "how your baby does look! I should think you would feel real worried about her."

"I do," answered Mrs. Sullivan, wiping her eyes with her apron. "The doctor says she would get along nicely if I could have her outdoors more; but how can I ever do that, being away washing all day, and granny too old and lame to get out herself?"

Rebecca Maria subsided with unusual promptitude, and she had not emerged from that state yet.

"God wants us to forget ourselves, and think what we can do to help others and make them happy." That was what Miss Weston said, and Rebecca Maria felt that it was true.

It was the long vacation now. She had to help her mother about the house work some, of course, but she had two or three hours every day just for play. She might go down every pleasant day and take that poor little baby out.

She might—yes, but how tiresome it would be, and how she would miss her play hours! But God wanted her to forget herself, and that was the way to grow like Christ.

How she had thought and thought all day long! Her poor little head was aching hard, and she had come out here alone, determined to settle the question before she went in.

"Its queer," she said to herself, wearily; "its just what I've meant to do, and now I don't want to!" I believe it is easier to think how you will do such things than it is to do 'em when you have a chance. And I do want to be good. I guess I want to enough to do hard things, and I s'pose I might as well begin on this. If you don't start, you won't ever get where you want to go; but I don't believe I shall ever be so very extra good after all. I shouldn't wonder a bit if the house would hold all the folks that will want to come to my funeral because I've helped them. But I'll begin anyway."

So Rebecca Maria began the next day. She did find it tiresome very often, and sometimes she was sorely tempted to give it up; but she was a sturdy little maid.

"I've begun," she kept saying to herself, "and I'd look pretty backing out. No, I'll keep on if it is hard."

Every day the baby grew rosier and healthier, and Mrs. Sullivan invoked heaven's choicest blessings on Rebecca Maria's head.

"It's been hard work sometimes to keep at it," she said to her mother the last day of vacation, but I guess it has paid more than playing would. That wouldn't have done me any good though, but I guess I shall always feel glad I helped the baby, don't you? Seems to me now I ought to have decided right straight off to do it without thinking about it all that day. But now I've begun, mamma, I do mean to keep on and on as long as I live. I've asked God to help me."—Gospel Advocate.

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Express for Halifax	12.00
Accommodation for Moncton and points du Chene	12.35
Express for Sussex	16.35
Express for Rothesay	20.45
Express for Quebec, Montreal, Halifax and Sydney	22.30

Buffet Sleeping cars for Montreal, Levis, St John and Halifax will be attached to trains leaving St. John at 22.30 o'clock and Halifax at 20.00 o'clock.

TRAINS WILL ARRIVE AT ST. JOHN:

Accommodation from Sydney, Halifax and Moncton (Monday excepted)	6.05
Express from Montreal and Quebec (Monday excepted)	6.55
Express from Sussex	8.30
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