

red. Right in the centre of the white cloth were two lovely things—a shining silvery sword with a sabretache and all accessories, and a splendid red leather writing case or desk. The sword *was* a real beauty, almost as big as a grown-up soldier's. Each article had a small ticket on it, on which Tom plainly distinguished *T-h-o-m-a-s* written; he was too excited to read more.

Now in the regiment—it was rather remarkable—there were only two Thomases, and of course every one knew who they were.

Tom, quivering with excitement, stole back to his waiting chum.

"Tommy," he said "I believe that sword is for me. I told Mr. Jones"—the schoolmaster—"I wanted one badly."

"Oh my! It is a beauty! I am glad," returned Tommy, ungrudgingly. With chums it is safe ground to surmise that one generally gives up and defers to the other.

"I'll lend it to you, Tommy, see if I don't," went on Tom.

"*Silence!*" The schoolmaster rang the bell, and there was a sudden hush in the crowded gymnasium.

The list of names was called out, and Tom's patience was much imposed on as his waiting period grew longer. At last Mrs. Miller held up the desk; the sword could not be far off.

"Thomas"—a pause, apparently she was engaged in deciphering the surname.

"That's you, Tommy," nudged Tom.

"Thomas Rockstro."

"Quick! don't loiter, Rockstro," called Mr. Jones impatiently.

Tom managed to go forward somehow, and get through his salute in the proper military fashion, but he felt it horribly all the same. No more enjoyment for him that evening. He knew in an unheeding, unresponsive fashion that Tommy had received the sword, and was holding it up for inspection. He escaped presently from the noise and glare, and ran home, for once in his life without his faithful companion, who rambled about unsuspectingly, wondering where-ever he had disappeared.

Tommy could not help feeling pleased he had the sword—who could? But as the week went on, and Tom avoided him in every possible way, he grew miserable. He was cute enough to recognise the bone of contention, and resolved, after sundry deliberations and much anxious thought, to bear it no longer. So he went and knocked next

door, and to his joy found Tom alone inside, gloomily poring over the fire.

"Tom," he cried, dashing into the subject with an appearance of great unconcern, "Tom, please exchange. Let me have the desk and you take this sword,"—holding it out persuasively—"as you like it best. I don't mind—that is, not much," truthfully.

"Don't you really?" said Tom eagerly.

"No. Only be friends again, please, Tom."

"Oh, all right," returned Tom, grasping the coveted beauty affectionately. "But, remember it is your free will, Tommy," he added suspiciously, as a thought of the keen-eyed, sharp-voiced mother next door darted across his mind.

"Yes," murmured the other huskily, however.

"There's the desk. It's really worth more; it's full of paper, and envelopes, and pens, and I haven't touched a thing," said Tom, delivering it over.

Tommy had a good cry in bed that night, things were so crooked, and Tom did not seem as if he half appreciated the sacrifice. The latter was indeed a little ashamed. When his chum had departed he had time to think. Then Mrs. Rockstro came in and caught sight of the sword.

"Well I never!" she said. "If that isn't Tommy's sword."

"It's mine now," said Tom defiantly.

"You have never been and taken it from him?"

"I gave him my writing-case for it."

"And he so fond of the sword," pursued Mrs. Rockstro. "Why, his mother told me only yesterday that he *would* take it to bed with him, and even kissed it just like a baby when no one was looking. I wonder at you, I do, being so selfish as to deprive that little chap of it. You ought to ha' been contented with your own nice present."

Mrs. Rockstro's words haunted Tom in his dreams all night. He hated the sword when he looked at it next morning; the possession of it was not half so satisfying as he had imagined. He looked forward eagerly and yet fearfully to seeing Tommy, but his mind was soon set at rest on that point. Tommy was not at school either that day or the next. He had the "mizzles" said his little sister, but he was getting on all right, and the doctor said he must be kept warm. Tom, who had already had that common complaint, spent some days in enforced retirement from Tommy because the baby might