

From Ensign to Colonel

CHAPTER III.

FROM ENSIGN TO COLONEL.

IN every young man's career comes a time of probation. During this critical period that youth is wise who enters into a truce with his feelings. This is the period when influences for good or bad assert themselves—the parting of the ways. The sign-posts are painted in capitals.

When Brock buttoned his scarlet tunic and strapped his sword on his hip, as fine a specimen of a clean-bodied, clean-minded youth as ever trod the turnpike of life, he knew that he was at the cross-roads. The trail before him was well blazed, but straight or crooked, rough or smooth, valley or height, it mattered little so long as he kept nourished the bright light of purpose that burned steadily within him.

Five years of uneventful service, chiefly in England, passed by, and our hero was celebrating his coming of age. His only inheritance was health, hope and courage. While neither monk nor hermit, he had so far been as steadfast as the Pole Star in respect to his resolutions. He had allowed nothing to induce him to break the rules engraved on brass that he had himself imposed. His mind had broadened, his spirits ran high, his conscience told him that he was graduating in the world's university with honour. His love for athletics still continued. He had the thews of a gladiator, and in his Guernsey stockings stood six feet two inches. Add to this an honest counten-