THE UNWELCOME GUEST.

In poverty and sorrow,
In sore distress and shame
A little child came hither
Without a father's name.

The elements around it
Were warring into strife,
For not one ray of gladness
Lit up the stranger's life.

But lo! an angel, pausing
Upon his shining track,
Beheld the unloved infant
And bore the tidings back.

The mild and pitying Saviour,
That in a manger lay,
Sent down another angel
To take the child away.

That pale and silent messenger
That comes but once to all,
Who wears upon his garment
The shadow of a pall—

He knelt beside the cradle,
And stooped above the child;
And lo! the sleeping infant
Looked up and faintly smiled.

He kissed the lips and forehead,
He hushed the babe to rest;
Then tenderly he bore him
Unto the Saviour's breast.

Now king nor queen nor kaiser,
Though clothed in purple state,
Is worthy on that little child
In royal robe to wait.

But angels stand around him,
Who guard the undefiled.
For none in heaven is greater
Than a sinless little child.

—Christian Mirror.

IN THE RESERVE.

They tell me I ought to look upon it as a duty—my husband's duty to his country—my duty to my husband; but it is so hard, so very hard to bear, and at times I cannot help railing against my unhappy fate, and—no—not wishing that I had never wed, but often that I had never been born.

Mine's no new story, but just the simple old tale of a foolish girl who fell in love with a soldier. I am older and wiser now, but still use those words, "fell in love with a soldier," weak as they may sound to you, for I did fall in love with my brave, true-hearted lad, and though care and trouble have made me older and wiser now, I love him better than ever, and if my time were to come over once more, I should fall in love with him again.

Jack enlisted when he was very young, the people taking him willingly enough because he was such a sturdy, well-built fellow. He went off and enlisted in a tiff, after a quarrel with his father, who was a small tradesman in a country town, where I was in service. Jack and I had often laughed and chatted together in boy and girl fashion, and when he had quarreled with his father, he came to say "good-bye" to me, and told me that he was going to enlist, and—I remember it all so well—I laughed at him, and told him not to be a goose, and he gave me a curious sorrowful look, and seemed as if he was going to say something to me, but he only choked like, turned sharply round, and went away.

As I said, I was very young and girlish then, and I had never thought more of Jack than that he was a nice, bright, merry lad, who always had a pleasant word to say to me, and I went about my business, thinking no more of the matter till about a week afterward, when there was a lot of talk in the town about how Jack Forrester had enlisted, and that his father was half-mad about it, and had gone to Norwich to buy his son off, but that he had been so fierce and angry with Jack that the lad had quarreled with him again, and declared that he would never come home any more.

It was two years before I saw Jack again, and it was one day when I was going along the road. I had not forgotten him, for from time to time people talked about Jack, who had always been a favorite in the town, and I had heard of his having been sent with a draft to Malta, but when we met I hardly knew the fine, tall, broad-shouldered, bronzed fellow with a great brown beard, and though I started and half felt that I knew who it was, I was ready to pass him, with my heart beginning to flutter in a curious, frightened way, but he caught my hands in his, and stood there, holding them tightly, and looking down in my face, speaking at last in a very husky voice, as he said:

"At last, Mary, my darling! How I have prayed to see this day."

I tried to laugh, and to say that I was glad to see him again, and to tell him he was very much changed, but the words would not come, and I began to cry; for he could speak now, and quickly and well, and he told me that he had been nearly broken-hearted at having to leave me, whom he loved with all his heart; how he had thought of me always during the years that he had been away, and ended by looking at me so searchingly, as he said:

"And have you been true to me, Mary, all this time?"

"True to you, Jack?" I said, simply. "I don't know."

"Don't know?" he said passionately. "Mary, my girl, have you the heart to play with me now? Is—is there any one?"

"Is there any one, Jack?" I said, repeating the words.

"Yes, girl, tell me—no, don't tell me you love some one else. I couldn't bear it."

"I don't love any one, Jack," I said, feeling half frightened at his fierce, quick way.

"And you don't love me?" he said.

"No, Jack, I don't think I do," I said, crying bitterly now; "but I always liked you very much, and I'm very glad to see you, Jack."

"Are you," he said joyfully. "Say that again, dear?"

"Say it again, Jack?" I replied, looking up in his eyes, and feeling my weak heart flutter very quickly now. "Of course I am very glad to see you back again, and you do look so different, dressed in that red coat."

"Do I?" he whispered. "Ah, but I'm not a bit changed. Mary, darling, I loved you when I was a boy, but I love you a thousand times more now that I am a strong man."

"Do you, Jack?" I said, blushing, as I walked by his side.

"Do I? Yes. Why, Mary, the thought of your darling face has been my protection ever since I went away. I wouldn't drink more than was good for me with the lads, for I said to myself, what would Mary say?"

"Did you say that, Jack?" I said, feeling so pleased, and with my heart beating faster than ever."

"Indeed I did, and I wouldn't go into any rough company, for I felt that you would know if I did, and somehow the thought of you, my darling, has kept me right and square, for I said I'd come back to you, and show you that, however people may run a soldier down, he has got a heart, like other men; and I had sworn that I would be true to you."

My head was in a whirl, and I wanted to speak, but I could not, and then I was vexed, for I felt that he would think me silly and stupid, and all I could do was to was to walk by his side right up to our door, where he said "Goodby," holding me tightly by both my hands.

"I must go and see my father now," he said.

"What, haven't you seen him, Jack?"

"No. How could I go and see him till I had seen the little girl who is all the world to me? Now, goodby, darling, I must see you again to-morrow."

He left me then, and I went in trembling, to run up to my room, and sob as I had never sobbed before.

It was not that I was miserable, but I felt so confused and strange, and my thoughts seemed to be always with Jack, and somehow I began to think at last that as he loved me so truly and so well, I suppose that, though I had not known it, I loved him, too.

Then I felt frightened and ashamed, and wondered what would become of me for being so bold, and at last, there it was, I found myself thinking all day long of the brave, true hearted fellow who had loved me all these years, and feeling angry with myself for thinking so little of him before.

Oh, how bright and pleasant everything seemed to look from that day forth, and how I used to sit and glow, and feel happier than I had ever felt before, when I thought about Jack loving me so well.

The future was nothing to me; I could only think of the present, and a hundred times a day I used to say to myself: "Jack loves me, and I'll try to love him, too."

Ah, it took no trying. My young girlish heart leaped forth to meet him, and all seemed happiness and joy till I began to wake up to the truth of all about me.

First, my mistress gave me a severe talking to upon the imprudence of being seen talking so much to a common soldier, and I felt as if I could have said bitter words to her for calling him "common." Then came the next trouble, and that came from Jack one evening, and it was as he was walking home with me from church.

"My furlough's nearly over, Mary, dear," he said, "and I shall have to go."

"Go?" I cried, and for the first time my arms started up and clung to him.

"Yes, my darling," he whispered, as he held me to his heart, "I must go and leave you. Father wants me to stay, but I've served half my time, and I'll do the rest, and come home like a man as has done his duty, and then I shall be in the reserve."

"But you'll—you'll take me with you, Jack?"

He didn't speak, but gave quite a sob as he held me tightly strained to his heart, and it was some time before the words would come; but at last they did, and he seemed cruel and as if he didn't care for me, as he told me he loved me too well to make me a soldier's wife.

"No, dear," he said, "the barracks would be no place for you. My darling must have a little home of her own. We must wait."

"Wait, Jack? How long?" I said.

He waited for a few minutes before he spoke again, and then he said, "Five years," and it sounded like a knell.

But five years soon pass by in a busy life. Jack went away, and I felt half broken-hearted, and thought him cruel to go; but I grew patient and hopeful. He wrote to me regularly from all his stations—such simple, true, loving letters, that there was always something to look forward to, and, as he used to say, though ours was a long courting, he would, after all, be only eight and-twenty, and me two years less, when he came back, and that the time had taught us to be fonder of each other, and the future would be all happiness and joy.

And so it was, in our humble way, when he came back with his papers to show that he had served his time and was in the Reserve. Being a strong, clever fellow, he soon got an engagement in the town, with thirty shillings a week. His father was dead now, or he might have had something to do with the business; but he did not seem to mind. He had saved some money, so had I, and we furnished a little house, and we were married.

Surely no woman was ever prouder of her husband than I, and as I grew more and more to understand his goodness of heart and love, I began to be afraid of the cloud that I now saw overshadowed our lives. I had not noticed it at first, but as I grew thoughtful and sat and dreamed over my baby, I wondered what I should do if there happened to be a war. The idea used to make me shudder and tremble, wondering how it was that I had never been thoughtful enough to think of it before.

"What, what's the matter, little mother?" he said to me, playfully, one day. "Wrinkles in your forehead and wet eyes. Has baby got a tooth coming, and are you afraid it won't come through?"

"Oh, Jack, dear," I said, as I flung myself sobbing into his arms, don't laugh—don't treat such things lightly. I have been thinking."

"Thinking! What about?"

"Suppose there were to be a war and you were called out?"

"Oh, nonsense, dear," he said. "Why, that would only be when the country was being drained, and every man would have to do his duty and fight for it."

"Country? Drained, Jack?" I said, vacantly.

"Of course; when there was some tremendously big war—only then. That's what the reserve is for. Just to be—there—in reserve, you know, in case it should be wanted."

"But will they be wanted soon, Jack?"

"Wanted? No, my dear. Not likely. Why, who are we to go to war with? Not with the French, nor yet with Russia or America, nor yet with Germany. Why, the queen's daughter will some day be empress there."

"Then you don't think there is any danger, Jack?"

"Danger? No, my pet; and beside, what soldier ever thinks about danger?"

"Not about danger, Jack, dear, but about leaving his wife and child."

"Hush! Don't, woman!" he cried, almost fiercely. "I can't bear it."

I never saw him look so strange before as he did then, and it was days before he appeared to get over it really. Then it seemed to be forgotten; but I know now that it always hung over us both like a cloud, though we hid it one from the other. The years went on, and we had another and another little one, and though we were no better off in money matters, we were very happy, for a better husband, or one prouder of his children, never lived. "Neglect 'em, old woman?" he used to say. "No, I hope not. We've got 'em to take care of, and so we will, as long as we can. When we can't, they must buckle to and take care of us."

Nothing was ever too hard for him to do; there was nothing in the way of work that he would not undertake, and, from being a well-drilled soldier, he did it in such an orderly way that the townspeople liked to get him to do odd jobs, and this was very nice, but the drawback was that they kept him from doing anything better.

As I have said, the dread of his being called out was always hanging over us like a cloud, and when the Afghan war came, he used to get his paper and read out to me how the lads were getting on, and quite flush up like, as he seemed to grow excited over what was taking place, my heart used to sink, and I've laid in bed at night trembling and I in agony lest he should be wanted again; but the good news came at last of there being peace once more, and it was then that I found out how he had been thinking and reading about it himself.

"Hooray, old girl," he cried, "it's all settled. They won't call out the reserves this time. I'm not afraid to go, nor should I shrink from my duty as an old soldier, but somehow it would come hard, just now."

Then the time passed on once more, and I breathed more freely till the news came of the trouble in Egypt, and once more I seemed to be in agony, always looking forward to the day, and yet fondly hoping that what Jack said was right, and that it would only be in the case of some great war, or in an emergency, that the reserves would be called out.

"Nonsense, my girl," he cried, merrily. "Not for Egypt. They would not call us out for that. They'll only want a few thousand for that job." Don't you make yourself uneasy about that."

It was the very next week that I saw him reading his paper on Sunday morning, as usual, just as he always did over his pipe when the week's work was done, while he read little bits to me of what he thought would be interesting, and, that day, war and fighting were as far from my mind as ever they could be, till all at once it struck me that Jack's voice was a little altered, and as an idea flashed into my brain, I looked up sharply, and found that he had shifted himself a little so that he had got the newspaper between us, and that seemed to make my fancy something certain.

"Jack," I said, in a quick, sharp way, "you haven't read anything about the war in Egypt."

"Didn't I?" he said. "Oh, they're getting off right enough. I think the ships'll do all the work. Oh, they'll polish off the Egyptians and bring the pyramids back for loot."

I got up and pressed the paper down with my two hands to see that he was looking at me in a curious, frightened way.

"Jack," I said, "you're keeping it back from me. They're going to call out the reserves."

"Yes," he said, letting the paper go and standing up firm and strong in his soldierly way; "they've settled to have them out, my girl."

"And you'll have to go, Jack?" I wailed.

"Yes, dear, I shall have to go like—a man. Like better men than I am who will have to go."

"There ain't no better men, Jack, nowhere," I cried, as I flung my arms around his neck, and clung to him. "No, dear, you can't go—you shan't go," I panted. "How can you leave me and the children?"

I never felt so proud of my husband as I did that day when he strained me tightly to his breast and said quietly, as if he was giving orders:

"My little woman is going to be strong and brave, and to help me in my trouble. I shall have to go, my darling, and I will go like a man."

"Yes, Jack," I sobbed, piteously, "you shall go like my brave, true husband; but oh, Jack, it is so—so very hard."

"Don't make it harder for me, my darling," he whispered. "Don't—for God's sake, don't!"

It seemed to come to me then that it was my duty to try and help and comfort him, and I dashed away the tears and held his hand in mine, as I laid my head against his breast.

"I'm going to be strong, Jack," I whispered. "I won't make it harder for you to go—and—and—oh, Jack—Jack!"

And then I got over it again, and tried to be cheerful, when I had had my cry out, and chatted and laughed about how we would get on till he came back. And he laughed and chatted, too, and said, that the government would take care of me and the little ones, and that they would soon polish off the Egyptians.

"We'll spoil 'em, my girl," he cried, "and I'll soon be back again."

"But you won't have to go yet, Jack," I said, with my voice shaking, in spite of all I could do.

"Yes, dear," he said, "directly. I shall be warned to-morrow, you'll see."

He was, and the next day he had left his work, the good byes were said, and he had gone, looking as bright and eager as could be, while I laughed, and held up the children for him to kiss, and he told them father would soon be back, and treated it just as if he was going for a holiday. Then we saw him into the train—saw him leaning out, waving his capy to me till the went around the curve, the little ones waving their handkerchiefs, and looking as happy as could be, till he was out of sight, and I looked happy, too, till our eldest girl turned her little face up to me, and I saw her pretty lips tremble, and her face work, as she cried out all at once:

"I don't want poor father to go."

How could I keep calm then? You, who think of those who are dear, and who have husbands, sons and brothers forced to fight for their country, tell me that? I know that it is their duty, and that it must be done. That is the same with the highest as with the lowest in the land. No, not quite. It is terrible hard that the men of the reserve should, in so little a quarrel, be obliged to leave the homes they have made, their steady, regular work, and wives and children at home in penury and misery. One week the father is earning his good wages and bringing them home; the next week he is gone, and the unhappy woman who shares his lot is no longer the prosperous workman's wife, but the poor wife of the soldier, struggling to live upon the scanty pay that she receives. The situation the reserve man held is forfeited at once, and besides the black outlook of poverty in the winter to come—for what can a woman with little children do to earn her bread?—there is the never-ceasing, weary hours, and watching and waiting for news. The telegrams of fights arrive. "Only a trifling skermish," the papers say, "Our losses very small;" but there is always a list of killed and wounded for wife, sister or mother to read with swimming eyes, to see if he whom she loves is there.

"Not this time," she cries, with a burst of joy, unless—yes, unless he be one of the missing "that may turn up." That may turn up, when all the time he may be lying wounded on the burning sand. I tell you that night after night I lie awake, seeing my poor fellow with glazing eyes and whitened lips fainting in the terrible heat, and seeming to ask me for water to quench his thirst. Then I have seen him lying on a stretcher, carried by four comrades to the rear. At one time it will be with his face gashed, and a dreadful look of agony as he turns his head from side to side. At another time I have seen him carried in with his face covered over, so I cannot see it, but I know it is he; and I have felt the cold sweat trickle from my brow as I have lain trembling and sick at heart.

Dreams and fancies, you will say; but who that has a loved one at the war can help such fancies—dreams? I have fought and tried—I have knelt and prayed for strength, and the strength has come; but there are times when my agony seems greater than I can bear.

He was gone to do his duty, as thousands of our brave fellows have gone before, and we whom they have left behind, we soldiers' wives, will do our best to keep hope alive, and patiently bear our lot; but for those who, like myself, are so suddenly left adrift—struggling without the husband's protecting arm—ought not the country, which we are told is grateful, do a little more? The Reserve man should not marry, you will say; but is this just? After years of toil, ready at any time to risk his life in the country's cause, has he not earned his rest? Surely you will own he has, and that he does no wrong in making himself a home. Think of this, then, sooner than condemn, and have some pity on the suffering wives who sit at home and weep.

A HUNTER'S TERRIBLE DEATH.—Thos. Bear of Jefferson county, Pa., went out hunting on Wednesday last. Not returning home, a search was made for him. On Friday afternoon his headless body was found in the woods a few miles from his home. His head and portions of his breast and shoulders were found in the brush twenty-five feet away from the body. A short distance beyond where the body lay a large tree had been felled. The trunk was chopped only half in two and was split up for several feet. It is supposed that Bear was chopping down the tree to secure a raccoon which he had treed, when the trunk split in falling and one half of it flying up struck him in the breast with such violence as to tear his head and shoulders from his body and hurl them to the spot where they were found.

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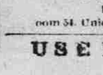

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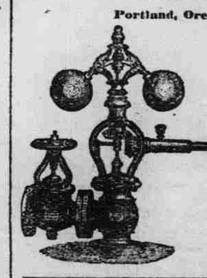

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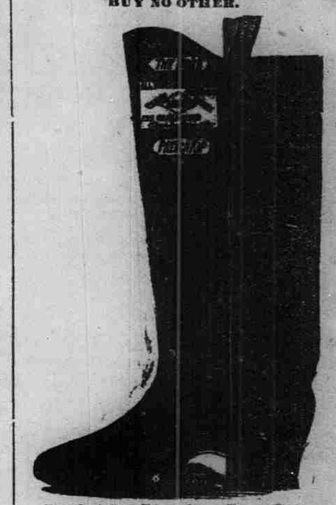

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