

# THE SOLDIER'S REPRIEVE

A Dramatic Reading



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"I thought, Mr. Allan, when I gave my Bennie to his country, that not a father in all this broad land made so precious a gift--no, not one. The dear boy only slept a minute, just one little minute, at his post; I know that was all, for Bennie never dozed over a duty. How prompt and reliable he was! He was so young, and not strong, that boy of mine! Why, he was as tall as I, and only eighteen! and now they shoot him because he was found asleep when doing sentinel duty! Twenty-four hours, the telegram said--only twenty-four hours. Where is Bennie now?"

"We will hope with his Heavenly Father," said Mr. Allan, soothingly.

Blossom was near them listening. She had not shed a tear. Now she answered a gentle tap at the kitchen door, opening it to receive a letter. "It is from him," she said.

Mr. Owen took the letter, but could not break the envelope.

The minister opened it.

"Dear Father: When this reaches you, I shall be in eternity. At first, it seemed awful to me; but I have thought about it so much now, that it has no terror. They say they will not bind me, nor blind me, but that I may meet my death like a man. I thought Father, it might have been on the battlefield, for my country; but to die for neglect of duty, O Father, I wonder the very thought does not kill me! But I shall not disgrace you. I am going to write you all about it and, when I am gone, you may tell my comrades. I cannot now.

"You know I promised Jemmie Carr's mother I would look after her boy, and when he fell sick, I did all I could for him. He was not strong when he was ordered back into the ranks, and the day before that night, I carried all his luggage, besides my own, on our march. Toward night we went in on double-quick, and the luggage began to feel very heavy, but everybody else was tired too, and, as for Jemmie, if I had not lent him an arm now and then, he would have dropped by the way. I was all tired out when we came to camp, and then it was Jemmie's turn to be sentry, and I took his place, but I was too tired, Father. I could not have kept awake if a gun had been pointed at my head; but I did not know it until it was too late."

"God be thankful!" interrupted Mr. Owen. "I knew Bennie was not the boy to sleep at his post."

"They tell me today that I have a short reprieve--time to write to you--our good Colonel says. Forgive him, Father, he would gladly save me if he could; and do not lay my death up against Jemmie. The poor boy is broken-hearted, and does nothing but beg them to let him die in my stead.

"I can't bear to think of Mother and Blossom. Tell them I die as a brave boy should and that, when the war is over, they will not be ashamed of me. Good-bye, Father! God seems near and dear to me, not at all as if He wished me to perish forever, but as if He felt sorry for His poor, sinful, broken-hearted child and would take me to be with Him and my Savior in a better life."

--- END OF FREE PREVIEW ---