



The
William Booth
Collection

SERGEANT-MAJOR DO-YOUR-BEST
OF DARKINGTON NO.1

CHAPTER XXV: SALLY AND THE TRAINING HOME

I have had a black time lately. This often happens with me after a bright time. When I have a good go at night some trouble is almost certain to come along the next morning. Sarah says it is the devil. "You see," she says, "how full of confidence and courage we should soon be if our experience was nothing but victory; and so Satan is sure to get something ready to upset us when we have had a real hallelujah season."

"No, Sarah," I says, "it's not the devil, it's the Lord, because He sees that if we had it all our own way, always a-winnin' the day, we should get top-heavy, and soon come to grief."

Well, I have been telling you in my last chapter how that we have been going along swimmingly at Darkington Corps these last few weeks. What with the Juniors, and the Drunkards' Friends, and Sarah visiting the Converts, and some other doings, why things got so hopeful that the Millennium seemed to be just coming along; and then, alas! a big trouble came up. This time it was your humble servant what got into a cross-current, that went very near to making a shipwreck of him and somebody else beside.

They say that open confession is good for the soul, so I'm going to make a clean breast of it, and tell you the story just as it happened – and a pretty story it is, lean assure you. Anyway, it's a story that makes me ashamed to tell it. Still, you had better have it.

Well, you see, three years ago our daughter Sally was made a Corps Cadet. I wasn't at all eager about it at the time, and never have been since, but it was Captain Pressem that did the thing. You see, he was always a-worryin' about the Training Homes, and driving our young people mad about being Officers. Now, I don't think Sally was very hot on it herself, although she was a good little creature, bless her! but if Sally was not much set on it, her mother was, and Sarah carried the day, as she so often does. So Sally got enrolled, and started on her lessons and duties; and very well she did them all, I must say; for, although I am her father, I must tell the truth about her.



The
William Booth
Collection

SERGEANT-MAJOR DO-YOUR-BEST
OF DARKINGTON NO.1

Now, I have told you I was not very hot about this business at the first, and as the time went on, I came to care less and less for it. You see, Sally was my youngest daughter, and I think I loved her more than the others. For one thing, she was more about me than the rest; and then, she had such nice little ways; why, bless you I she waited on me when I was down with the rheumatic fever like a regular nurse. Then, when Sarah has had her bad coughing bouts, I have thought that she might be going to Heaven someday not very far distant, as her sister did that died of a consumption; and when I have thought of that possibility, something has whispered to me how useful Sally might be in such a case, and which she couldn't if she went to be an Officer.

Besides, I'd heard things said about the Training Homes being a difficult place, and about the "hard go's " that girl-Officers have to face, and Jack has had a hard Corps, which he has made into a good one; and at last I settled in my mind that, on account of Sally not being as strong as she might be, she should stay at home, and give up all thoughts of her going to Clapton.

That was my plan for Sally, but how was I going to persuade Sarah to come over to my way of thinking? That was the thing I had to do and I felt it was no easy task. But it had to be done, and I resolved on a bold course; indeed, I knew I had no other chance. So one night I said out in a strong voice: –

" Sarah, I've made up my mind, and I'm not going to alter!"

"Alter what?" says Sarah.

"About Sally," says I.

"What about Sally? She is all right again; she seems to have got rid of her cold, and to be stronger than ever I knew her."

"Well, I reckon I've the responsibility of a father, and I'm determined to do my duty by the child."



The
William Booth
Collection

SERGEANT-MAJOR DO-YOUR-BEST
OF DARKINGTON NO.1

"Very good, I'm her mother," said Sarah, "and I reckon I shall try and do mine. But, pray, what have you resolved upon, Sergeant-Major?" said Sarah. "Are you going to buy her a new uniform with that overtime money?"

"No," said I, "it's something more important than that. I'm fully resolved that Sally shall not go to the Training Home."

"Not going to the Training Home!" says Sarah. "Not going to the Training Home!" and she fairly gasped again.

"No, she's not, Sarah. You see she was very young, and did not know what she was doing when she gave her word, and her health's not been goody and there's many hardships to be gone through; and Sergeant Grumbleton has advised me to seek some lighter employment for her; and Deacon Haberdasham has promised to take her into his establishment and teach her the business, and he thinks she will make a good shopwoman and attract customers; and I've never fully approved of her being an Officer; and, besides all this, I'm growing older, and so are you, and if anything happened, I'd like Sally to be here or close by to look after me a little."

"Sergeant-Major," says Sarah, taking me up rather sharp like, "I'm ashamed of you. Have you taken leave of your senses? Whatever will the Captain say, and the Divisional Officer say, and the Soldiers say, and Colonel Scour-the-land say, and what will Jesus Christ say, and what will your conscience say to this going back on all your promises?"

Well, I was going to say right out: "I don't care what anybody says!" But I didn't say it, and I'm glad I didn't, because it would not have been the truth, because what Sarah said made me feel awful bad, and I felt I must either end the argument or give in, which I'd made up my mind I wouldn't do. And so I just struck the table with my fist ever so hard, and said with a loud voice: "Well, Sarah, I've given you my reasons, and I don't want any more arguments about it."

"But, Sergeant-Major," said Sarah, "you've given your word, and Sally's given her word, and Sally's mother has given her word; and, whatever Sally's father may say or do, Sally's mother's not going to draw back. Sally's going to be an Officer, and you are



The
William Booth
Collection

SERGEANT-MAJOR DO-YOUR-BEST
OF DARKINGTON NO.1

going to send her away with your blessing, and be proud of having had a chance of doing so in time and in eternity, or I'm not the wife of Sergeant-Major Do-your-best."

Time went on. Again and again Sarah raised the question, but I simply said I wouldn't have any more arguments, because my mind was made up. And so it was, for one of those stupid fits that so often made me make such a fool of myself before I was converted had come over me, and no matter what was said, I refused to yield.

Sally was a bit obstreperous at first. But when she saw that I was determined, she consented, and the prospect of going into Deacon Haberdasham's place pleased her fancy very much. She had hardly got there, however, before she gave up wearing her uniform, going to the Open-Air, and selling her "War Crys," and a lot of other duties which, I must say, was a little trouble to me. Because, you see, I had believed what Grumbleton had said, that she could be a useful Local, do the Juniors, and go to Heaven without being an Officer. But as for Sarah, she fretted over the matter night and day, in spite of all I could say. Indeed, it seemed to me sometimes that she would break her heart over it, and I thought it was a great pity to make such a to-do over so small a thing.

Now, you know that there's wheels within wheels, and when I made up my mind that Sally should not be an Officer, I never thought of what was going to come out of my resolution. If I had done, I should certainly have acted very differently.

Well, you see, Sally had a chum, and her name was Patty Featherhead, and these two were regular bosom friends. They had grown up side by side, attending the same school, been members of the same Junior Company, and now they were Corps Cadets together. Indeed, they were seldom apart. They went to the same meeting, sat side by side on the same bench, and when you saw one you always expected that the other was not very far away.

Patty was a light-hearted, merry-souled creature. She could do a good talk, sing a nice song, and, considering that she was rather pretty looking and strong for her years, she seemed to have the making of a useful Officer in her. But although she was good and clever, and nearly two years older than Sally, she hadn't got over much backbone in



The
William Booth
Collection

SERGEANT-MAJOR DO-YOUR-BEST
OF DARKINGTON NO.1

her. On the contrary, she was weak, and easily led astray. And when Sally told her that I had made up my mind that she was not to be an Officer, and asked Patty's advice about the matter, she made up her mind that she would not be an Officer either, and they both agreed that they would give up all thoughts of the Training Home for the present, and stay in Darkington, and serve God together as Local Officers.

Deacon Haberdasham was only too glad to take the two girls into his employment; and they soon got fixed up behind the counter of the retail part of his great establishment. At the first the change was very agreeable. Everybody was kind to them. They had more pocket-money, got better clothes, and had more liberty than they had ever had before. So they walked about the town, were in high spirits, attracted the attention of the young men about them, and seemed to be in quite a jolly state of mind. But Sarah was sad at heart, and cautioned Sally continually, and prayed for her without ceasing; but she seemed to be powerless to prevent the sorrow that she could not help fearing might be coming upon her darling child.

Meanwhile, I must confess that I didn't get on well myself. I was uneasy in my conscience. I had many doubts as to whether I had done the right thing in keeping Sally back from the work to which she had been offered, and then I could not keep the question from my heart: "What if she should backslide and desert the Corps, and go to the fashionable church which Patty's family attended? and, most of all, what if the girl should chuck religion up altogether?"

And then there was a cloud came up between me and Sarah, and there never had been any difference between us that had lasted more than an hour or two since the day we were converted, and now we often ate and drank together, and scarcely spoke; and then I got bad in my health, and I went to the doctor, and took pills and powders. But they did not seem to do me any good.

I don't think there can be any doubt that Sally is a backslider. It's just awful. She won't go to the meetings. She never reads her Bible, which she used to do regular as the clock, and I don't think she prays when she is by herself; and she will keep company and go to places that can't do her any good. Then, what seems dreadful, when her mother tries to talk to her she goes into tempers, and tells her plain that she's old



The
William Booth
Collection

SERGEANT-MAJOR DO-YOUR-BEST
OF DARKINGTON NO.1

enough to judge such things for herself.

I heard some of the things she was saying the other day when I was shaving, and I says to her after I had done: "Sally," says I, "this is very cruel treatment of your mother, who has loved you so much, and worked for you so long. If you don't mind, you'll break her heart, and bring my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave."

At which she just looked up at me, and said: "Well, father, I suppose it is not just the thing, but it's all your fault."

"My fault!" says I. "Haven't I..."

But she interrupted me, and, in quite a pert manner, she says: "Yes, it is your fault. You shouldn't have made me break my vows, and stopped me going to the Training Home."

I can tell you I did feel bad after that.

Here's bad news. Patty Featherhead has gone, and nobody knows where! She's been strangely altered now for some time, and, since she got engaged to Tom Swellington, she's given up the meetings, and made no pretensions to religion. You see, she's had nobody at home to hold her in check a little, and she's gone down hill, until she's become one of the fastest, flightiest girls in Darkington.

The Captain sought her out several times, but she would not listen to him at all; indeed, I couldn't have believed that anyone so young and so good could possibly have turned round and got so hardened all at once. When Sarah tried to talk to her at her own place – for she's left home and gone to lodgings – she told her plump that she had better mind her own business, because whatever had come about, had all been along of her daughter Sally; and that if it hadn't been for her she should have been in the Training Home by this.

Was not that awful? It went into me like a knife when Sarah told me. How much more awful it seemed a day or two after, you may guess, when we found that Tom



The
William Booth
Collection

SERGEANT-MAJOR DO-YOUR-BEST
OF DARKINGTON NO.1

Swellington had disappeared as well, and that there wasn't a doubt in anybody's mind but that he and poor Patty had gone away together.

Patty has returned, but. Oh I what a return it is I What had been imagined in Darkington was quite correct. Tom had promised to marry her when he was here, but kept putting it off, and then he said if she would go with him to London, the event could be pulled off there. But when he got her there days and days passed, and he had always some excuse for not doing as he had said, and then he left her without a friend all alone in that great city.

Poor Patty I She passed the time weeping, and hoping that he would come back, for ever so long, but it was all in vain; and then she got rid of her bits of finery to pay the rent of her room, and then through fretting and hunger, and a broken heart, she fell sick, and, in despair, sold everything she had left to get enough to pay her fare back to Darkington. And late one night she tapped at the door of her father's house, and asked to be taken in as she was so sick. But he refused even to see her, and sent her out a message that she must go elsewhere to be nursed. He would never see her again.

In her despair she thought of Sarah, and in the darkness with feeble footsteps, the poor thing, half dead, stole round to our house, and with trembling fingers, knocked at the door. Sarah opened it, and though reduced to a mere skeleton, recognised her in a moment, took her in her arms, and led her in.

I was out late at the Outpost that night, and on my return, before I had well got off my hat and coat, Sarah said: "Sergeant-Major, I want you to go upstairs with me." The tears were in her eyes. I could not tell what was the matter with her; but I felt as if something had happened, and I followed her. Instead of going into our room, which is in the front, she turned round into what used to be Sally's chamber, and there, on the little bed where I had so often kissed Sally "good-night," lay the wasted form of Patty.

It was soon plain to everybody that had anything to do with her that Patty had come home to die. The doctor said so. He wondered how ever she had been able to do the journey. It was plain to Sarah, and she knows such things by instinct, but it was plainest



The
William Booth
Collection

SERGEANT-MAJOR DO-YOUR-BEST
OF DARKINGTON NO.1

of all to Patty herself. She felt sure her race was run; she had thrown away her chance, and had now the solemn duty to fulfill of appearing before her Lord to give an account of herself.

News of Patty's return was soon noised abroad. It was talked about at the Corps, for everybody knew her there. It soon reached Deacon Haberdasham's place, and there was one countenance in that establishment that fell, and one heart that almost stopped beating, when the whisper reached her that Patty Featherhead, broken in health and spirit, had come back to Darkington to die.

That one was our Sally. The depth of the impression made on Sally's heart by this melancholy news was no ways lessened when she heard that Patty's father had refused to take her in, and that Sarah, her own mother, had opened her door and laid her in the little chamber where she had herself spent so many happy hours.

All this finished Sally, and before the regular hour of closing came she was once more at home. She had not been there for many a day. There had been a gulf between mother and daughter. But that gulf vanished away as Sally walked into the old house, threw herself into her mother's arms, asked forgiveness, and found it. Then, with her mother's kisses warm on her cheek, she was soon kneeling by the bedside of Patty. That was a wonderful meeting.

Patty grows worse daily. The doctor says she cannot last long. Sally has left the millinery establishment for good. She has made herself Patty's nurse, and a faithful, tender creature she is in a sick chamber, as I've proved myself. She clings to the hope of nursing her back to life, and of yet going with her hand-in-hand to the Training Home. But, alas! it is only a dream. Patty is marked to die. Her opportunity of training on earth is gone.

Patty has disappeared again. This time we know where she has gone, and the way she went. We did not see her go through the Pearly Gates with our natural eyes, but very nearly so. I shall never forget her last hours while my life lasts. They were a lesson to me.



The
William Booth
Collection

SERGEANT-MAJOR DO-YOUR-BEST
OF DARKINGTON NO.1

Early one morning Sarah woke me. "Sergeant-Major," she said, "if you want to see the last of Patty in this world, you must come along sharp. She has entered the Valley; she'll soon be through."

I was not long getting there. Sally was holding Patty's hand, and you could see the end was near. Her voice was little more than a whisper; and yet there was wonderful force in all her looks and words.

"Sally," she said, "I want to say something to you. I have said it before, but I want to say it again, and to say it so that the Sergeant-Major and your mother can hear."

Sally bent over her, and kissed her forehead, saying: "Yes, Patty, I will remember every word you say, and do whatever you ask me."

"Sally," she said, "it was my fault about our not going to the Training Home. It was me that made you go back on your word."

"No, no!" said Sally; "it was not you; it was me that was to blame."

"No, no!" said Patty. "Listen. It was me that had got drawn away by the vanities and pleasures of the world. You see, I wanted an easier life than an Army Officer's seemed to be, and I whispered things to you, and instead of encouraging you to stick to your vows, and listen to your mother, I helped you to go the other way."

Sally wanted to speak again. She wished to take, at least, her share of the blame. Then I wanted to say: "No, Patty, I'm the guiltiest of all. It's Sally's father that has spoiled your life, and been the cause of your death." But I couldn't get a word out. My tongue wouldn't act. Besides, we all saw that the cold hand of death was on the child, and, in our desire to hear her last words, we let her go on.

"Sally," she said, "you must go back to the Corps, and confess your backslidings. I know the Lord's forgiven you. He did it – bless His name! – in this little chamber, in which your dear mother's given me the privilege to die. But you must go to the mercy-seat, and confess your backslidings before your old comrades, and tell them you've



The
William Booth
Collection

SERGEANT-MAJOR DO-YOUR-BEST
OF DARKINGTON NO.1

come back to the Corps to pay your vows, and live for God. And, Sally, mind, you must go to the mercy-seat for me as well, and say the same for me."

Then, summoning all her remaining strength, she added: "Sergeant-Major, tell the young people to be careful to pay their vows. The paths of life are very slippery. Mine was. I didn't take care, and so I fell. But God has picked me up again. I am going into His presence, but *I've lost my crown.*"

Then, while a sudden brightness lit up her countenance, she went on: "*Sally, mind nobody steals yours.* You must be an Officer, and do your work, and meet me in the Morning."

And then the darkness fell. Patty was gone, and Sally has started again for the Training Home, and I shall give her my blessing when she goes away.