

“What’s to be done about it?” Private Chadwick asked.

“I must go home and see mammy,” replied little Billy.

Private Chadwick shook his head, and continued to shake it, as if by that means he would blot out the idea.

“Can’t I get a furlough?” little Billy asked, with tears in his voice.

If any other conscript had asked him this question, Private Chadwick would have used violent language, but the innocence and ignorance of little Billy were dear to him.

“Now, who ever heard of the like of that?” he said in a kindly tone. “There ain’t but one way for a conscript to leave this camp, and that is to desert.”

“I’ll do it!” exclaimed little Billy.

“You know what that means, I reckon,” said Private Chadwick dryly.

“It means that I’ll see my dear mammy once more,” replied little Billy. “And after that, I don’t care what happens.”

Private Chadwick looked at little Billy long and hard, smiling under his mustache, and then went out. He walked to the centre of the encampment, where the flag-pole stood.