

## THE STORY OF A SHORT LIFE.

BY JULIANA HORATIA EWING.

## CHAPTER VII.

What is there in the world to distinguish virtue from dishonor, or that can make anything rewardable, but the labor and the danger, the pain and the difficulty?—*Jeremy Taylor.*



HE V. C. did not look like a bloodthirsty warrior. He had a smooth, oval, olivart face, and dreary eyes. He was not very big, and he was absolutely unpretending. He was a young man, and only by the courtesy of his manners escaped the imputation of being a shy young man.

Before the campaign in which he won his cross he was most distinctly known in society as having a very beautiful voice and a very charming way of singing, and yet as giving himself no airs on the subject of an accomplishment which make some men almost intolerable to their fellow-men.

He was a favorite with ladies on several accounts, large and small. Among the latter was his fastidious choice in the words of the songs he sang, and sang with a rare fineness of enunciation.

It is not always safe to believe that a singer means what he sings; but if he sing very noble words with justness and felicity, the ear rarely refuses to flatter itself that it is learning some of the secrets of a noble heart.

Upon a silence that could be felt the last notes of such a song had just fallen. The V. C.'s lips were closed, and those of the master of the house (who had been accompanying him) was still parted with a smile of approval, when the wheels of his chair and some little fuss at the drawing-room door announced that Leonard had come to claim his mother's promise. And when Lady Jane rose and went to meet him, the V. C. followed her.

"There is my boy, of whom I told you. Leonard, this is the gentleman you have wished so much to see."

The V. C., who sang so easily, was not a ready speaker, and the sight of Leonard took him by surprise, and kept him silent. He had been prepared to pity and be good-natured to a lame child who had a whim to see him; but not for this vision of rare beauty, beautifully dressed, with crippled limbs lapped in Eastern embroideries by his color-loving father, and whose wan face and wonderful eyes were lambent with an intelligence so eager and so wistful, that the creature looked less like a morsel of suffering humanity than like a soul fretted by the brief detention of an all but broken chain.

"How do you do, V. C.? I am very glad to see you. I wanted to see you more than anything in the world. I hope you don't mind seeing me because I have been a coward, for I mean to be brave now; and that is why I wanted to see you so much, because you are such a brave man. The reason I was a coward was partly with being so cross when my back hurts, but particularly with hitting Jemima with my crutches, for no one but a coward strikes a woman. She trode on my dog's toes. This is my dog. Please pat him; he would like to be patted by a V. C. He is called The Sweep because he is black. He lives with me all along. I have hit him but I hope I shall not be naughty again any more. I wanted to grow up into a brave soldier, but I don't think, perhaps, that I ever can now; but mother says I can be a brave cripple. I would rather be a brave soldier, but I'm going to try to be a brave cripple. Jemima says there's no saying what you can do till you try. Please show me your Victoria Cross."

"It's on my tunic, and that's in my quarters in camp. I'm so sorry."

"So am I. I knew you lived in camp. I like the camp, and I want you to tell me about your hut. Do you know my uncle, Colonel Jones? Do you know my aunt, Mrs. Jones? And my cousin, Mr. Jones? Do you know a very nice Irishman, with one good-conduct stripe, called O'Reilly? Do you know my Cousin Alan in the Highlanders? But I believe he has gone away. I have so many things I want to ask you, and oh!—those ladies are coming after us! They want to take you away. Look at that ugly old thing with a hook-nose and

an eye-glass, and a lace shawl, and a green dress; she's just like the poll parrot in the housekeeper's room. But she's looking at you. Mother! Mother dear! Don't let them take him away. You did promise me, you know you did, that if I was good all to-day I should talk to the V. C. I can't talk to him if I can't have him all to myself. Do let us go into the library, and be all to ourselves. Do keep those women away, particularly the poll parrot! Oh, I hope I shan't be naughty! I do feel so impatient! I was good, you know I was. Why doesn't James come and show my friend into the library and carry me out of my chair?"

"Let me carry you, little friend, and we'll run away together, and the company will say, 'There goes a V. C., running away from a poll parrot in a lace shawl!'"

"Ha, ha! You are nice and funny. But can you carry me? Take off this thing! Did you ever carry anybody that had been hurt?"

"Yes, several people—much bigger than you."

"Men?"

"Men."

I wanted to see you. Do you mind my talking rather more than you? I have so much to say, and I've only a quarter of an hour, because of its being long past my bed-time, and a good lot of that has gone."

"Please talk, and let me listen."  
"Thank you. Pat The Sweep again, please. He thinks we're neglecting him. That's why he gets up and knocks you with his head."

"Poor Sweep! Good old dog!"  
"Thank you. Now, should you think that if I am very good, and not cross about a lot of pain in my back and my head—really a good lot—that that would count up to be as brave as having one wound if I'd been a soldier?"

"Certainly."  
"Mother says it would, and I think it might. Not a very big wound, of course, but a poke with a spear, or something of that sort. It is very bad sometimes, particularly when it keeps you awake at night."

"My little friend, that would count for lying out all night wounded on the field when the battle's over. Soldiers are not always fighting."



"Let me carry you, little friend, and we'll run away together."

"Men hurt like me; or wounded in battle?"

"Wounded in battle."

"Poor things! Did they die?"

"Some of them."

"I shall die pretty soon, I believe. I meant to die young, but more grown-up than this, and in battle. About your age, I think. How old are you?"

"I shall be twenty-five in October."

"That's rather old. I meant about Uncle Rupert's age. He died in battle. He was seventeen. You carry very comfortably. Now we're safe! Put me on the yellow sofa, please. I want all the cushions, because of my back. It's because of my back, you know, that I can't grow up into a soldier. I don't think I possibly can. Soldiers do have to have such very straight backs, and Jemima thinks mine will never be straight again 'on this side the grave.' So I've got to try and be brave as I am; and that's why

"Did you ever lie out for a night on a battle-field?"

"Yes, once."

"Did the night seem very long?"

"Very long, and we were very thirsty."

"So am I sometimes, but I have barley-water and lemons by my bed, and jelly, and lots of things. You'd no barley-water, had you?"

"No."

"Nothing?"

"Nothing till the rain fell, then we sucked our clothes."

"It would take a lot of my bad nights to count up to that! But I think when I'm ill in bed I might count that like being a soldier in hospital?"

"Of course."

"I thought—no matter how good I got to be—nothing could ever count up to be as brave as a real battle, leading your men on and fighting for your country, though you know you may be killed any minute. But

mother says, if I could try very hard, and think of poor Jemima as well as myself, and keep brave in spite of feeling miserable, that then (particularly as I shan't be very long before I do die) it would be as good as if I'd lived to be as old as Uncle Rupert, and fought bravely when the battle was against me, and cheered on my men, though I knew I could never come out of it alive. Do you think it could count up to that? Do you? Oh, do answer me, and don't stroke my head! I get so impatient. You've been in battles—do you?"

"I do, I do."

(To be Continued.)

## THE COOKING CLUB.

The B class in a certain grade of the Birchville school was made up of five boys and seven girls.

They often played together at recess. The five boys were generally too many for the seven girls in games of ball and marbles, but the girls were apt to come out ahead at croquet or tennis, and that made it even.

When vacation came there were more games, but there were other things too, and one thing was the girls' cooking club. The seven girls met at each other's houses, and the seven patient manmas did all they could to turn out seven accomplished cooks. And before vacation was half over they had learned to make a number of tasteful dishes very nicely indeed.

When they had tried them often, and were very sure of their skill, the seven girls asked the five boys to tea. The invitations were written on smooth slips of birch bark.

"Cora," said Gertie, as she whisked the whites of eggs into a pretty foam, "would you believe, our boys have got up a secret society, but I can't find out much about it."

"Oh, well, we'll be sure to know before long," answered Cora, as she measured the sugar. "Those boys can't keep a secret a great while."

"I wonder how their mothers like it," said Gertie.

"Oh, the mothers are right in it, I think," said Florence. "And I know what they call it, too. It's the K. K. Here, Cora, these yolks are ready. Shall I sift the flour?"

"Yes, if you will," said Cora. "What do you s'pose K. K. is for? Well, I shan't bother my head till this cake is done."

So the K. K.'s were forgotten for the time, and the cake was a perfect success, so were the other dishes prepared in the afternoon. The supper was on time, and you may be sure the boys were prompt. Grace and Pearl appeared at the table with damaged fingers neatly done up, which made them look quite interesting, and didn't seem to lessen their enjoyment.

"Ladies, this is an occasion to be proud of," said Roy Hall, as he took his last sip of lemonade. "You have covered yourselves with glory and honorable scars. I hope you will invite us to tea again; but now it is our turn, and we invite you to a meeting of our secret society, at my mother's a week from to-day, at five o'clock. The password is flapjacks."

Wasn't there a buzzing among the seven girls and five boys after that! I don't think Cora ever said again that boys couldn't keep a secret. Those boys did, and so did their mothers.

But one week later, at five o'clock, the secret was out. The seven girls were shown into Mrs. Hall's dining-room, which was decorated with vines and evergreens. And there was a tea-table as full of good things as the girls' had been. And there were the five boys in snowy caps and aprons with K. K. embroidered in red on each one.

"Well, who'd have thought!" cried Gertie. "You dear boys! But what does K. K. stand for, anyway?"

"Why, Kooking Klub, of course," said Roy. "I guess boys can learn cooking as well as girls if they take a notion."

And then they all laughed, and the boys in their white aprons were so jolly that they all kept on laughing; but they found time to eat between laughs, especially when the ice-cream came on.

And if you had seen both parties you would have said the boys' was just as nice as the girls'. It really couldn't have been any nicer, but it was just as nice.—*Eudora Stone Bumstead, in Youth's Companion.*