

THE STORY OF A SHORT LIFE.

BY JULIANA HORATIA EWING.

CHAPTER XII.—(Continued.)

This was the good news from home that had sent the young subaltern's fur cap into the air, and that now sent him to his desk; the last place where, as a rule, he enjoyed himself. Poor scribe as he was, however, he wrote two letters then and there: one to his mother, and one of impetuous congratulations to his uncle, full of messages to Lady Jane.

The master of the house read the letter more than once. It pleased him.

In his own way he was quite as unworldly as his nephew, but it was chiefly from a philosophic contempt for many things that worldly folk struggle for, and a connoisseurship in sources of pleasure not purchasable except by the mentally endowed, and not even valuable to George, as he knew. And he was a man of the world, and a somewhat cynical student of character.

After the third reading he took it, smiling, to Lady Jane's morning-room, where she was sitting, looking rather pale, with her fine hair "coming down" over a tea-gown of strange tints of her husband's choosing, and with the new baby lying in her lap.

He shut the door noiselessly, took a footstool to her feet, and kissed her hand.

"You look like a Romney, Jane,—an unfinished Romney, for you are too white. If you've got a headache, you shan't hear this letter, which I know you'd like to hear."

"I see that I should. Canada postmarks. It's George."

"Yes, it's George. He's uproariously delighted at the advent of this little chap."

"Oh, I knew he'd be that! Let me hear what he says."

The master of the house read the letter. Lady Jane's eyes filled with tears at the tender references to Leonard, but she smiled through them.

"He's a dear, good fellow."

"He is a dear good fellow. It's a most *bonnie* intellect, but excellence itself. And I'm bound to say," added the master of the house, driving his hands through the jungle of his hair, "that there is a certain excellence about a soldier when he is a good fellow that seems to be a thing *per se*."

After meditating on this matter for some moments, he sprang up and vigorously rang the bell.

"Jane, you're terribly white; you can bear nothing. Nurse is to take that brat at once, and I'm going to carry you into the garden."

Always much given to the collection and care of precious things, and apt also to change his fads and to pursue each with partiality for the moment, the master of the house had, for some time past, been devoting all his thoughts and his theories to the preservation of a possession not less valuable than the paragon of Chippendale chairs, and much more destructible—he was taking care of his good wife.

Many family treasures are lost for lack of a little timely care and cherishing, and there are living "examples" as rare as most bric-a-brac, and quite as perishable.

Lady Jane was one of them, and after Leonard's death, with no motive for keeping up, she sank into a condition of weakness so profound that it became evident that, unless her failing forces were fostered, she would not long be parted from her son.

Her husband had taken up his poem again, to divert his mind from his own grief; but he left it behind and took Lady Jane abroad.

Once roused, he brought to the task of coaxing her back to life an intelligence that generally ensured the success of his aims, and he succeeded now. Lady Jane got well; out of sheer gratitude, she said.

Leonard's military friends do not forget him. They are accustomed to remember the absent.

With the death of his little friend the V. C. quits these pages. He will be found in the pages of history.

The kapellmeister is a fine organist, and a few musical members of the congregation, of all ranks, have a knack of lingering after evensong at the iron church to hear him "play away the people." But on the Sunday after Leonard's death the congregation rose and remained *en masse*

as the "Dead March from Saul" spoke in solemn and familiar tones the requiem of a hero's soul.

Blind Baby's father was a Presbyterian, and disapproved of organs, but he was a fond parent, and his blind child had heard tell that the officer who played the organ so grandly was to play the "Dead March" on the Sabbath evening for the little gentleman that died on the Sabbath previous, and he was wild to go and hear it. Then the service would be past, and the kapellmeister was a fellow-Scot, and the house of mourning has a powerful attraction for that serious race, and for one reason or another Corporal Macdonald yielded to the point of saying, "Aweel, if you're a gude bairn, I'll tak' ye to the kirk door, and ye may lay your lug at the chink, and hear what ye can."

But when they got there the door was open, and Blind Baby pushed his way through the crowd, as if the organ had drawn him with a rope, straight to the kapellmeister's side.

It was the beginning of a friendship much to Blind Baby's advantage, which did not end when the child had been sent to a blind school, and then to a college where he learnt to be a tuner, and "earned his own living."

Poor Jemima fretted so bitterly for the loss of the child she had nursed with such devotion, that there was possibly some truth in O'Reilly's rather complicated assertion that he married her because he could not bear to see her cry.

He took his discharge, and was installed by the master of the house as lodge-keeper at the gates through which he had so often passed as "a tidy one."

Freed from military restraints, he became a very untidy one indeed, and grew hair in such reckless abundance that he came to look like an orang-outang with an unusually restrained figure and exceptionally upright carriage.

He was the best of husbands every day in the year but the seventeenth of March; and Jemima enjoyed herself very much as she boasted to the wives of less handy civilians that "her man was as good as a woman about the house, any day." (Any day, that is, except the seventeenth of March.)

With window-plants cunningly and ornamentally enclosed by a miniature paling and gate, as if the window-sill were a hut garden; with colored tissue-paper fly-catchers made on the principle of barrack-room Christmas decorations; with shelves, brackets, Oxford frames, and other efforts of the decorative joinery of O'Reilly's evenings; with a large hard sofa, chairs, elbow-chairs, and antimaccassars; and with a round table in the middle,—the Lodge parlor is not a room to live in, but it is almost bewildering to peep into, and curiously like the shrine of some departed saint, so highly framed are the photographs of Leonard's lovely face and so numerous are his relics.

The fate of Leonard's dog may not readily be guessed.

The gentle reader would not deem it unnatural were I to chronicle that he died of a broken heart. Failing this excess of sensibility, it seems obvious that he should have attached himself immovably to Lady Jane, and have lived at ease and died full of dignity in his little master's ancestral halls. He did go back there for a short time, but the day after the funeral he disappeared. When word came to the household that he was missing and had not been seen since he was let out in the morning, the butler put on his hat and hurried off with a beating heart to Leonard's grave.

But The Sweep was not there, dead or alive. He was at that moment going at a sling trot along the dusty road that led into the camp. Timid persons, imperfectly acquainted with dogs, avoided him; he went so very straight, it looked like hydrophobia; men who knew better, and saw that he was only "on urgent private matters," chaffed him as they passed, and some with little canes and horseplay way-laid and tried to intercept him. But he was a big dog, and made himself respected, and pursued his way.

His way was to the barrack-master's hut.

The first room he went into was that in which Leonard died. He did not stay there three minutes. Then he went to Leonard's own room, the little one next to

the kitchen, and this he examined exhaustively, crawling under the bed, snuffing at both doors, and lifting his long nose against hope to investigate impossible places, such as the top of the military chest of drawers. Then he got on to the late general's camp-bed and went to sleep.

He was awakened by the smell of bacon frying for breakfast, and he had breakfast with the family. After this he went out, and was seen by different persons at various places in the camp, the general parade, the stores, and the iron church, still searching.

He was invited to dinner in at least twenty barrack-rooms, but he rejected all overtures till he met O'Reilly, when he turned round and went back to dine with him and his comrades.

He searched Leonard's room once more, and not finding him, he refused to make his home with the barrack-master; possibly because he could not make up his mind to have a home at all till he could have one with Leonard.

Half a dozen of Leonard's officer friends would willingly have adopted him, but he would not own another master. Then military dogs are apt to attach themselves exclusively either to commissioned or to non-commissioned soldiers, and The Sweep cast in his lot with the men, and slept on old coats in corners of barrack-rooms, and bided his time. Dogs' masters do get called away suddenly and come back again. The Sweep had his hopes, and did not commit himself.

Even if, at length, he realized that Leonard had passed beyond this life's outposts, it aroused in him no instinct to return to the Hall. With a somewhat sublime contempt for those shreds of poor mortality laid to rest in the family vault, he elected to live where his little master had been happiest—in Asholt camp.

Now and then he became excited. It was when a fresh regiment marched in. On these occasions he invariably made so exhaustive an examination of the regiment and its baggage as led to his being more or less forcibly adopted by half a dozen good-natured soldiers who had had to leave their previous pets behind them. But when he found that Leonard had not returned with that detachment, he shook off everybody and went back to O'Reilly.

When O'Reilly married, he took The Sweep to the Lodge, who thereupon instituted a search about the house and grounds; but it was evident that he had not expected any good results, and when he did not find Leonard he went away quickly down the old Elm avenue. As he passed along the dusty road that led to camp for the last time, he looked back now and again with sad eyes to see if O'Reilly was not coming too. Then he returned to the barrack-room, where he was greeted with uproarious welcome, and eventually presented with a new collar by subscription. And so, rising with gun-fire and resting with "lights out," he lived and died a soldier's dog.

The new heir thrives at the Hall. He has brothers and sisters to complete the natural happiness of his home, he has good health, good parents, and is having a good education. He will have a goodly heritage. He is developing nearly as vigorously a fancy for soldiers as Leonard had, and drills his brothers and sisters with the help of O'Reilly. If he wishes to make arms his profession he will not be thwarted, for the master of the house has decided that it is in many respects a desirable and wholesome career for an eldest son. Lady Jane may yet have to buckle on a hero's sword. Brought up by such a mother in the fear of God, he ought to be good, he may live to be great, it's odds if he cannot be happy. But never, not in the "one crowded hour of glorious" victory, not in years of the softest comforts of a peaceful home, by no virtues and in no success, shall he bear more fitly than his crippled brother bore the ancient motto of their house:

"*Lætus Sorte Mea.*"

THE END.

IT DOES NOT TAKE a great man to be a Christian, but it takes all there is of him.—*B. Fay Mills.*

TO AN IDLE BOY.

BY FLORENCE A. JONES.

Do you weary, lad, of the daily round
Of lessons and books and school?
Do you long for a place where there's naught but
play,
With never a hateful rule?

When you watch the birds as they sway and swing
From the top of the highest trees
And fling you defiance in crazy notes—
Do you envy their life of ease?

Do you think the jolliest life on earth
Is that of a free, wild bird,
Who follows its own sweet will all day
With never a chiding word?

Do you ever stop, just to think of this,
That a bird can never be
Aught but a bird, but a boy by God's grace
A noble manhood may see?

Ah! my little man, you must strive to fill
Your part of the dear Lord's plan,
Or you'll mourn your childhood in bitterness
With the aching heart of a man.

What you sow in youth you will reap in age,
Increased by the passing years—
Regret is the harvest of idleness
And garnered with fruitless tears.
—*Union Signal.*

PETER, THE "MINT BIRD."

If you have a silver dollar of 1836, 1838, or 1839, or one of the first nickel cents coined in 1856, you will find upon it the true portrait of an American eagle which was for many years a familiar sight in the streets of Philadelphia. "Peter," one of the finest eagles ever captured alive, was the pet of the Philadelphia Mint, and was generally known as the "Mint bird." Not only did he have free access to every part of the Mint, going without hindrance into the treasure vaults where even the Treasurer of the United States would not go alone, but used his own pleasure in going about the city, flying over the houses, sometimes perching upon the lamp posts in the streets. Everybody knew him and admired him, and even the street boys treated him with respect. The government provided his daily fare, and he was as much a part of the Mint establishment as the superintendent or chief coiner. He was so kindly treated that he had no fear of anybody or anything, and he might be in the Mint yet if he had not sat down to rest on one of the great fly-wheels. The wheel started without warning, and Peter was caught in the machinery. One of his wings was broken, and he died a few days later. The superintendent had his body beautifully mounted, with the wings spread to their fullest extent; and to this day Peter stands in a glass case in the Mint's cabinet, where you may see him whenever you go there. An exact portrait of him as he stands in the case was put upon the coins named.—*Harper's Young People.*

HINDU FABLE ABOUT FLATTERY.

A fox who had an eye on a peacock on a tree sat down near the tree and gazed toward the sky.

"Reynard," said the peacock, "what have you been doing?"

"I have been counting the stars," said the fox.

"How many are there?" said the peacock.

"As many as the fools on earth," said the fox.

"Who is a fool?" said the peacock.

"I am one," said the fox, "because I have been counting the stars in the sky when I could have been counting the stars on your brilliant plumage which I so much admire."

"No, Reynard," said the peacock, "therein is not your folly, but in the thought that your fine words would make an easy prey of me."

The fox went away, saying: "The knave that hath been found out should run away as fast as his legs will carry him."—*Ramaswami Raju.*

THERE ARE IN PHILOSOPHY, so in divinity sturdy doubts and boisterous objections. More of these no man hath known than myself, which, I confess, I conquered, not in a martial posture, but on my knees.—*Sir Thomas Browne.*