

THE STORY OF A SHORT LIFE.

BY JULIANA HORATIA EWING,
CHAPTER IV.

"My mind is in the anomalous condition of hating war, and loving its discipline, which has been an incalculable contribution to the sentiment of duty . . . the devotion of the common soldier to his leader (the sign for him of hard duty) is the type of all higher devotedness, and is full of promise to other and better generations."—George Eliot.



"OUR sister is as nice as nice can be, Rupert; and I like the barrack-master very much, too. He is stout! But he is very active and upright, and his manners to his wife are wonderfully pretty. Do you know, there is something to me most touching in the way these two have knocked about the world together, and seem so happy with so

little. Cottagers could hardly live more simply, and yet their ideas, or at any rate their experiences, seem so much larger than one's own."

"My dear Jane! if you've taken them up from the romantic point of view all is, indeed, accomplished. I know the wealth of your imagination, and the riches of its charity. If, in such a mood, you will admit that Jones is stout, he must be fat indeed! Never again upbraid me with the price that I paid for that Chippendale arm-chair. It will hold the barrack-master."

"Rupert!—I cannot help saying it—it ought to have held him long ago. It makes me miserable to think that they have never been under our roof."

"Jane! Be miserable if you must; but, at least, be accurate. The barrack-master was in India when I bought that paragon of all chips, and he has only come home this year. Nay my dear! Don't be vexed! I give you my word, I'm a good deal more ashamed than I like to own to think how Adelaide has been treated by the family—with me at its head. Did you make my apologies to-day and tell her that I shall ride out to-morrow and pay my respects to her and Jones?"

"Of course. I told her you were obliged to go to town, and I would not delay to call and ask if I could be of use to them. I begged them to come here till their quarters are quite finished; but they won't. They say they are settled. I could not say much, because we ought to have asked them sooner. He is rather on his dignity with us, I think, and no wonder."

"He's disgustingly on his dignity! They both are. Because the family resented the match at first, they have refused every kind of help that one would have been glad to give him as Adelaide's husband, if only to secure their being in a decent position. Neither money nor interest would he accept, and Adelaide has followed his lead. She has very little of her own, unfortunately; and she knows how my father left things as well as I do, and never would accept a farthing more than her bare rights. I tried some dodges, through Quills; but it was no use. The vexation is that he has taken this post of barrack-master as a sort of pension, which need never have been. I suppose they have to make that son an allowance. It's not likely he lives on his pay. I can't conceive how they scrub along."

And as the master of the house threw himself into the paragon of all chips, he ran his fingers through hair, the length and disorder of which would have made the barrack-master feel positively ill, with a gesture of truly dramatic despair.

"Your sister has made her room look wonderfully pretty. One would never imagine those huts could look as nice as they do inside. But it's like playing with doll's house. One feels inclined to examine everything, and to be quite pleased that the windows have glass in them and will really open and shut."

The master of the house raised his eyebrows funnily.

"You did take rose-colored spectacles with you to the camp?"

Lady Jane laughed.

"I did not see the camp itself through them. What an incomparably dreary place it is! It makes me think of little woodcuts in missionary reports—'Sketch of a

Native Settlement'—rows of little, black huts that look, at a distance, as if one must creep into them on all-fours; nobody about and an iron church on the hill."

"Most accurately described! And you wonder that I regret that a native settlement should have been removed from the enchanting distance of missionary reports to become my permanent neighbor?"

"Well, I must confess the effect it produces on me is to make me feel quite ashamed of the peace and pleasure of this dear old place; the shade and greenery outside, the space above my head, and the lovely things before my eyes inside (for you know, Rupert, how I appreciate your decorative tastes, though I have so few myself. I only scolded about the chip because I think you might have got him for less), when so many men bred to similar comforts, and who have served their country so well, with wives I dare say quite as delicate as I am, have to be cooped up in those ugly little kennels in that dreary place—"

"What an uncomfortable thing a Scotch

two daughters for the ball. He has given up his dressing-room to the dowager, and put two barrack-beds into the coal-hole for the young ladies, he says. It's an insanity!"

"Adelaide told me all about it, and there is also to be a grand field-day this week."

"So our visitors have already informed me. They expect to go. Louisa Mainwaring is looking handsomer than ever, and I have always regarded her as a girl with a mind. I took her to see the peep I have cut opposite to the island, and I could not imagine why those fine eyes of hers looked so blank. Presently she said, 'I suppose you can see the camp from the little pine-wood?' And to the little pine-wood we had to go. Both the girls had got stiff necks with craning out of the carriage window to catch sight of the white tents among the heather as they came along in the train."

"I suppose we must take them to the field-day; but I am very nervous about those horses, Rupert."



"I really cannot go if my Swoop has to be left behind."

conscience is!" interrupted the master of the house. "By the by, those religious instincts which are also characteristic of your race, must have found one redeeming feature in the camp, the 'iron church on the hill'; especially as I imagine that it is puritanically ugly!"

"There was a funeral going into it as we drove into camp, and I wanted to tell you the horses were very much frightened."

"Richards fidgets those horses; they're quiet enough with me."

"They did not like the military band."

"They must get used to the band and to other military nuisances. It is written in the stars, as I too clearly foresee, that we shall be driving in and out of that camp three days a week. I can't go to my club without meeting men I was at school with who are stationed at Asholt, and expect me to look them up. As to the women, I met a man yesterday who is living in a hut, and expects a dowager countess and her

"The horses will be taken out before any firing begins. As to bands, the poor creatures must learn, like their master, to endure the brazen liveliness of military music. It's no fault of mine that our nerves are scarified by any sounds less soothing than the crooning of the wood-pigeons among the pines!"

No one looked forward to the big field-day with keener interest than Leonard; and only a few privileged persons knew more about the arrangements for the day than he had contrived to learn.

O'Reilly was sent over with a note from Mrs. Jones to decline the offer of a seat in Lady Jane's carriage for the occasion. She was not very well. Leonard waylaid the messenger (whom he hardly recognized as a tidy one), and O'Reilly imparted all that he knew about the field-day: and this was a good deal. He had it from a friend—a corporal in the headquarters office.

As a rule, Leonard only enjoyed a limited

popularity with his mother's visitors. He was very pretty and very amusing, and had better qualities even than these; but he was restless and troublesome. On this occasion, however, the young ladies suffered him to trample their dresses and interrupt their conversation without remonstrance.

He knew more about the field-day than any one in the house, and, standing among their pretty furbelows and fancywork in stiff military attitudes, he imparted his news with an unsuccessful imitation of an Irish accent.

"O'Reilly says the march past'll be at eleven o'clock on the Sandy Slopes."

"Louisa, is that Major O'Reilly of the Rifles?"

"I don't know, dear. Is your friend O'Reilly in the Rifles, Leonard?"

"I don't know. I know he's an owl soldier—he told me so."

"Old, Leonard; not owl. You mustn't talk like that."

"I shall if I like. He does, and I mean to."

"I dare say he did, Louisa. He's always joking."

"No, he isn't. He didn't joke when the funeral went past. He looked quite grave, as if he was saying his prayers and stood so."

"How touching!"

"How like him!"

"How graceful and tender-hearted Irishmen are."

"I stood so, too. I mean to do as like him as ever I can. I do love him so very, very much!"

"Dear boy!"

"You good, affectionate little soul!"

"Give me a kiss, Leonard, dear."

"No, thank you. I'm too old for kissing. He's going to march past, and he's going to look out for me with the tail of his eye, and I'm going to look out for him."

"Do, Leonard; and mind you tell us when you see him coming."

"I can't promise. I might forget. But perhaps you can know him by the good-conduct stripe on his arm. He used to have two; but he lost one all along of St. Patrick's day."

"That can't be your partner, Louisa!"

"Officers never have good-conduct stripes."

"Leonard, you ought not to talk to common soldiers. You've got a regular Irish brogue, and you're learning all sorts of ugly words. You'll grow up quite a vulgar little boy, if you don't take care."

"I don't want to take care. I like being Irish, and I shall be a vulgar little boy too, if I choose. But when I do grow up, I am going to grow into an owl, owl, owl soldier."

Leonard made this statement of his intentions in his clearest manner. After which, having learned that the favor of the fair is fickleness, he left the ladies and went to look for his black puppy.

The master of the house, in arranging for his visitors to go to the field-day, had said that Leonard was not to be of the party. He had no wish to encourage the child's fancy for soldiers; and as Leonard was invariably restless out driving, and had a trick of kicking people's shins in his changes of mood and position, he was a most uncomfortable element in a carriage full of ladies. But it is needless to say that he stoutly resisted his father's decree; and the child's disappointment was so bitter, and he howled and wept himself into such a deplorable condition, that the young ladies sacrificed their own comfort and the crispness of their new dresses to his grief, and petitioned the master of the house that he might be allowed to go.

The master of the house gave in. He was accustomed to yield where Leonard was concerned. But the concession proved only a prelude to another struggle. Leonard wanted the black puppy to go too.

On this point the young ladies presented no petition. Leonard's boots they had resolved to endure, but not the dog's paws, Lady Jane, too, protested against the puppy, and the matter seemed settled; but at the last moment, when all but Leonard were in the carriage, and the horses chafing to be off, the child made his appearance, and stood on the entrance steps with his puppy in his arms, and announced in dignified sorrow, "I really cannot go if my Swoop has to be left behind."

(To be Continued.)