

## THE STORY OF A SHORT LIFE.

BY JULIANA HORATIA EWING.

CHAPTER X.—(Continued.)

## LETTER II.

"... I went to church yesterday, though it was only Tuesday. I need not have gone unless I liked; but I liked. There is service every evening in the iron church, and Aunt Adelaide goes, and so do I, and sometimes Uncle Henry. There are not very many people go, but they behave very well, what there are. You can't tell what the officers belong to in the afternoon, because they are in plain clothes; but Aunt Adelaide thinks they were Royal Engineers, except one commissariat one, and an A.D.C., and the colonel of a regiment that marched in last week. You can't tell what the ladies belong to unless you know them.

"You can always tell the men. Some were barrack sergeants, and some were sappers, and there were two gunners, and an army hospital corps, and a cavalry corporal who came all the way from the barracks, and sat near the door, and said very long prayers to himself at the end. And there were some school-masters, and a man with gray hair and no uniform, who mends the roofs and teaches in the Sunday-school, and I forget the rest. Most of the choir are sappers and commissariat men, and the boys are soldiers' sons. The sappers and commissariat belong to our brigade.

"There is no sexton to our church. He's a church orderly. He has put me a kind of a back in the corner of one of the officers' seats, to make me comfortable in church, and a very high footstool. I mean to go every day, and as often as I can on Sundays, without getting too much tired.

"You can go very often on Sunday mornings if you want to. They begin at eight o'clock, and go on till luncheon. There's a fresh band and a fresh chaplain, and a fresh sermon, and a fresh congregation every time. Those are parade services. The others are voluntary services, and I thought that meant for the volunteers; but O'Reilly laughed, and said, 'No, it only means that there's no occasion to go to them at all—he means unless you like. But then I do like. There's no sermon on week-days. Uncle Henry is very glad, and so am I. I think it might make my back ache.

"I am afraid, dear mother, that you won't be able to understand all I write to you from the camp; but if you don't, you must ask me, and I'll explain.

"When I say our quarters, remember I mean our hut; and when I say rations, it means bread and meat, and I'm not quite sure if it means coals and candles as well. But I think I'll make you a dictionary if I can get a ruled book from the canteen. It would make this letter too much to go for a penny if I put all the words in I know. Cousin George tells me when he comes in after mess. He told me the camp name for the iron church is tin tabernacle; but Aunt Adelaide says it's not, and I'm not to call it so, so I don't. But that's what he says.

"I like Cousin George very much. I like his uniform. He is very thin, particularly round the waist. Uncle Henry is very stout, particularly round the waist. Last night George came in after mess, and two other officers out of his regiment came too. And then another officer came in. And they chaffed Uncle Henry, and Uncle Henry doesn't mind. And the other officer said, 'Three times round a subaltern—once round a barrack-master.' And so they got Uncle Henry's sword-belt out of his dressing-room, and George and his friends stood back to back, and held up their jackets out of the way, and the other officer put the belt right round them, all three, and told them not to laugh. And Aunt Adelaide said, 'Oh! and 'You'll hurt them.' And he said, 'Not a bit of it.' And he buckled it. So that shows. It was great fun.

"I am, your loving and dutiful son,

LEONARD.

"P.S.—The other officer is an Irish officer—at least I think so, but I can't be quite sure, because he won't speak the truth. I said, 'You talk rather like O'Reilly; are you an Irish soldier?' And he said, 'I'd the misfortune to be quartered for six months in the County Cork, and it

was the ruin of my French accent.' So I said, 'Are you a Frenchman?' and they laughed, so I don't know.

"P.S. No. 2.—My back has been very bad, but Aunt Adelaide says I have been very good. This is not meant for swagger, but to let you know.

("Swagger means boasting. If you're a soldier, swagger is the next worst thing to running away.)

"P.S. No. 3.—I know another officer now. I like him. He is a D.A.Q.M.G. I would let you guess that if you could ever find it out, but you couldn't. It means Deputy-Assistant-Quarter-Master-General. He is not so grand as you would think; a plain general is really grander. Uncle Henry says so, and he knows."

## LETTER III.

"... I have seen V. C. I have seen him twice. I have seen his cross. The first time was at the sports. Aunt Adelaide drove me there in the pony carriage. We stopped at the enclosure. The enclosure is a rope, with a man taking tickets. The sports are inside; so is the tent, with tea; so are the ladies, in awfully pretty dresses, and the officers walking round them.

"There's great fun outside, at least, I should think so. There's a crowd of people, and booths, and a skeleton man. I saw his picture. I should like to have seen him, but Aunt Adelaide didn't want to, so I tried to be *Latius* without.

"When we got to the enclosure there was a gentleman taking his ticket, and when he turned round he was V. C. Wasn't it funny? So he came back and said, 'Why, here's my little friend!' And he said, 'You must let me carry you.' And so he did, and put me among the ladies. But the ladies got him a good deal. He went and talked to lots of them, but I tried to be *Latius* without him; and then Cousin George came, and lots of others, and then the V. C. came back and showed me things about the sports.

"Sports are very hard work; they make you so hot and tired; but they are very nice to watch. The races were great fun, particularly when they fell in the water, and the men in sacks who hop, and blindfolded men with wheelbarrows. Oh, they were so funny! They kept wheeling into each other, all except one, and he went wheeling and wheeling right away up the field, all by himself and all wrong! I did laugh.

"But what I liked best were the tent-pegging men, and most best of all the tug-of-war.

"The Irish officer did tent-pegging. He has the dearest pony you ever saw. He is so fond of it, and it is so fond of him. He talks to it in Irish, and it understands him. He cut off the Turk's head,—not a real Turk, a sham Turk, and not a whole one, only the head stuck on a pole.

"The tug-of-war was splendid! Two sets of men pulling at a rope to see which is strongest. They did pull! They pulled so hard, both of them, with all their might and main, that we thought it must be a drawn battle. But at last one set pulled the other over, and then there was such a noise that my head ached dreadfully, and the Irish officer carried me into the tent and gave me some tea. And then we went home.

"The next time I saw V. C. was on Sunday at parade service. He is on the staff, and wears a cocked hat. He came in with the general and the A.D.C., who was at church on Tuesday, and I was so glad to see him.

"After church, everybody went about saying 'Good-morning,' and 'How hot it was in church?' and V. C. helped me with my crutches, and showed me his cross. And the general came up and spoke to me, and I saw his medals, and he asked how you were, and I said, 'Quite well, thank you.' And then he talked to a lady with some little boys dressed like sailors. She said how hot it was in church, and he said, 'I thought the roof was coming off with that last hymn.' And she said, 'My little boys call it the "Tug-of-War Hymn"; they are very fond of it.' And he said, 'The men seemed very fond of it. And he turned round to an officer I didn't know and said, 'They ran away from you that last verse but one.' And the officer said, 'Yes, sir, they always do; so I stopped the organ, and let them have it their own way.'

"I asked Aunt Adelaide, 'Does that officer play the organ?' And she said, 'Yes, and he trains the choir. He's coming in to supper. So he came.' If the officers stay sermon on Sunday evenings, they are late for mess. So the chaplain stops after prayers, and everybody that likes to go out before sermon can. If they stay sermon, they go to supper with some of the married officers instead of dining at mess.

"So he came. I liked him awfully. He plays like father, only I think he can play more difficult things.

"He says, 'Tug-of-War Hymn' is a very good name for that hymn, because the men are so fond of it they all sing, and the ones at the bottom of the church 'drag over' the choir and the organ.

"He said, 'I've talked till I'm black in the face, and all to no purpose. It would try the patience of a saint.' So I said, 'Are you a saint?' And he laughed and said, 'No, I'm afraid not; I'm only a kapellmeister.' So I call him 'kapellmeister.' I do like him.

"I do like the 'Tug-of-War Hymn.' It begins, 'The Son of God goes forth to war.' That's the one. But we have it to a tune of our own, on saints' days. The verse the men tug with is, 'A noble army, men and boys.' I think they like it, because it's about the army; and so do I.

"I am, your loving and dutiful son,

LEONARD.

"P.S.—I call the ones with cocked hats and feathers, 'Cockatoos.' There was another cockatoo who walked away with the general. Not very big. About the bigness of the stuffed general in the pawnbroker's window; and I do think he had quite as many medals. I wanted to see them. I wish I had. He looked at me. He had a very gentle face; but I was afraid of it. Was I a coward?

"You remember what these crosses are, don't you? I told you."

## LETTER IV.

"This is a very short letter. It's only to ask you to send my Book of Poor Things by the orderly who takes this, unless you are quite sure you are coming to see me to-day.

"A lot of officers are collecting for me, and there's one in the Engineers can print very well, so he'll put them in.

"A colonel with only one arm dined here yesterday. You can't think how well he manages, using first his knife and then his fork, and talking so politely all the time. He has all kinds of dodges, so as not to give trouble, and do everything for himself. I mean to put him in.

"I wrote to Cousin Alan, and asked him to collect for me. I like writing letters, and I do like getting them. Uncle Henry says he hates a lot of posts in a day. I hate posts when there's nothing for me. I like all the rest.

"Cousin Alan wrote back by return. He says he can only think of the old chap whose legs were cut off in battle:

"And when his legs were smitten off,  
He fought upon his stumps!"

It was very brave, if it's true. Do you think it is? He did not tell me his name.

"Your loving and dutiful son,

LEONARD.

"P.S.—I am *Latius sorte mea*, and so is The Sweep."

(To be Continued.)

## RALPH'S BALLOON.

Ralph was a very ambitious little boy. He always wanted something bigger and higher and better than any one else had. And he never was willing to wait for it. When people told him: "Wait until you are a bigger boy. Wait until you get on trousers. Then you may have a bicycle. Then you may go upon the roof and fly a kite. Then you can travel on the steam-cars all by yourself. Wait, Ralph!"—Ralph always answered: "I don't want to wait. I want all those things now."

One morning he said to Marion, "Marion, I want a kite—a big kite—a kite that will go up!"

Marion was a very obliging sister. She was old enough to know that little boys sometimes have foolish little wishes that it does no harm to gratify. She sat down and made Ralph a kite. It was made of a

stout piece of brown paper. It had a good tail, made of pieces of muslin tied together, and a long bit of cord to hold it by.

Ralph flew his kite in the house for a while. Then he took it out-of-doors, and tried to fly it in the garden. He was not very successful in getting it up. The truth was, he was too small to know how to manage a kite. But Ralph did not think that was the reason. He thought it was because the kite was not a proper kind.

"I don't like this kite," he complained to Marion. "I want something better. Something that will go up high."

"I am going down town presently," answered Marion, "and when I come back I will bring you something—something that will go up high."

Marion was a very kind sister indeed. When she came she brought Ralph a big red balloon. "Now, Ralph," she said, "here is something that will go up. You will have no trouble about this."

She tied a very long piece of string to the balloon, and let Ralph take it. He tried it in every room in the house, and it went to the ceiling in each one.

"Now I want to take it out-of-doors," he said.

"You had better not take it outside," answered Marion. "If the string broke, it would fly away."

"Oh no, I won't lose it!" declared Ralph. "Frank Burns has got a balloon too, and I want to see mine go up higher than his goes up."

So Ralph took his balloon out, and presently Marion heard the shouts of the little boys, and saw them running gayly about the garden. Each boy had his balloon high up in the air.

"Mine will go higher than yours, Frank," shouted Ralph.

"No, mine can go higher than yours, Ralph." Frank opened his hands and showed his ball of twine. "See, I have got a whole ball of twine. My mother gave it to me."

Ralph reddened with anger. "Yes," he shouted, "mine shall go higher than yours! I say it shall! I will make it go higher than the tree."

He gave a great jump in the air as he spoke, to make the balloon go as high as it possibly could. His foot tripped, and down he went on his face. The string slipped from his hand, and the big balloon, rising slowly, went up, up, far among the tree-tops. Ralph stared at it with round eyes, too much astonished to cry over his fall.

"There, Ralph!" exclaimed Marion from the window. "There, I told you you would lose it! Now it's gone!"

Ralph did not answer. He stood watching the big red balloon as it kept on rising, still remaining near the spot where Frank's blue one sailed over the tree. Presently it passed beyond Frank's, and still kept going up, higher and higher, until it seemed like a small dot against the white clouds. Then a puff of wind struck it, and away it went over the tops of the trees and houses, and that was the last Ralph ever saw of it.

Then Ralph turned to Marion, and gave a long sigh of satisfaction. "Anyway," he cried, "it went ever so much higher than Frank's did." — *Harper's Young People.*

## THE DOOR TO THE HOUSE.

(By Katharine Pyle.)

There were idle thoughts came in the door,  
And warmed their little toes,  
And did more mischief about the house  
Than any one living knows.

They scratched the tables, and broke the chairs,  
And soiled the floor and wall.  
For a motto was written above the door,  
"There's a welcome here for all."

When the master saw the mischief done,  
He closed it with hope and fear,  
And he wrote above, instead, "Let none  
Save good thoughts enter here."

And the good little thoughts came trooping in  
When he drove the others out.  
They cleaned the walls, and they swept the  
floor,  
And sang as they moved about.

And last of all an angel came,  
With wings and a shining face,  
And above the door he wrote, "Hero Love  
Has found a dwelling-place."