A Soldier's Children
Written by Juliana Horatia Ewing
Dedicated to the "Queer Ones"
In memory of
the South Camp Aldershot
J. H. E.

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Depicted by R. André:
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Our home used to be in the dear old Camp, with lots of bands and trumpets and bugles and dead marches; and three times a day there was a gun. But now we live in View Villa at the top of the village, and it isn't nearly such fun.
We never see any soldiers, except one day we saw a Volunteer, and we ran after him as hard as ever we could go, for we thought he looked rather brave;
But there’s only been one funeral since we came, an ugly black thing with no Dead March or Union Jack, and not even a firing party at the grave.
There is a man in uniform to bring the letters, but he's nothing like our old Orderly, Brown.

I told him, through the
hedge, "Your facings are dirty,

and you'd have to wear your belt if my father was at home," and, oh, how he did frown!
But things can't be expected to go right when Old Father's away, and he's gone to the War;
Which is why we play at soldiers and fighting battles more than ever we did before.
And I try to keep things together: every morning I have a parade of myself and Dick, to see that we are clean, and to drill him and do sword—exercise with poor Grandpapa's stick.
Grandpapa's dead, so he doesn't want it now, and Dick's too young for a real tin sword like mine: He's so young he won't make up his mind whether he'll go into the Artillery or the Line.
I want him to be a gunner, for his frock's dark blue, and Captain Powder gave us a wooden gun with an elastic that shoots quite a big ball.

It's nonsense Dick's saying he'd like to be a Chaplain, for that's not being a soldier at all.
Besides, he always wants to be Drum-Major when we've funerals, to stamp the stick and sing **RUM—TUM—TUM**! To the Dead March in Saul (that's the name of the tune, and you play it on a drum).
Mary is so good, she might easily be a Chaplain, but of course she can't be anything that wants a man.

She likes nursing her doll, but when we have battles she moves the lead soldier's about, and does what she can.
She never grumbles about not being able to grow up into a General, though I should think it must be a great bore.

I asked her what she would do if she were grown up into a woman, and belonged to some one who was wounded in the war;
Besides, he always wants to be Drum-Major when we've funerals, to stamp the stick and sing RUM - TUM - TUM! To the Dead March in Saul (that's the name of the tune, and you play it on a drum).
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I asked her what she would do if she were grown up into a woman, and belonged to some one who was wounded in the war.
She said she'd go out and nurse him; so I said, "but supposing you couldn't get him better, and he died; how would you behave?"
And she said if she couldn't get a ship to bring him home in, she should stay out there and grow a garden, and make wreaths for his grave.
Nurse says we oughtn't to have battles now father's gone to battle, but that's just the reason why.

And I don't believe one bit what she said about it's making Mother cry.
But yesterday Dick said, "I was thinking in Church, and I've thought of a game about soldiers, and it's a perfectly Sunday one;"

Only she does like us to put away our toys on Sunday, so we can't have the soldiers or the gun.
“It’s a Church Parade: you’ll have to be a lot of Officer’s and men, Mary’ll do for a few wives and families, and I’ll be Chaplain to the Forces’ and pray for everyone at the War.”

So he put his night-gown over his knickerbocker suit, and knelt on the Ashantee stool, and Mary and I knelt on the floor.

I think it was rather nice of Dick, for he said what put it into his head.
mighthave much time for their prayers on active service,
and we ought to say them instead.
I should have liked to parade the lead soldier’s, but I didn’t, for Mother says, “What’s the good of being a soldier’s son if you can’t do as you’re bid?” But we thought there’d be no harm in letting the box be there if we kept on the lid.

Dick couldn’t pray out of the Prayer Book, because he’s backward with being delicate, and he can’t read. So he had to make a prayer out of his own head, and I think he did it very well indeed.

He began, “God save the Queen, and the Army and the Navy, and the Irregular”
Forces and the Volunteers!

Especially Old Father (he went out with the first draft, and he's a Captain in the Royal Engineers).

But I said, "I don't think 'God save the Queen' is a proper prayer, I think it's only a sort of three cheers."

So he said, "God bless the Generals, and the Colonels, and the Majors, and the Captains, and the Lieutenants, and the Sub-lieutenants, and the Quartermasters, and the non-commissioned Officers, and the Men;"
“And the bands, and the colours, and the guns, and the horses and the wagons, and the gun-carriage they use for the funerals; and please I should like them all to come home safe again. (‘Doht, Mary! I havn’t finished; it is’n’t time for you to say Amen.’)
"I haven't prayed for the Chaplains, or the Doctor's who help the poor men left groaning on the ground when the victories are won;

"And I want to pray particularly for the very poor ones who die of fever and miss all the fighting and fun."
"GOD bless the good soldiers, like Old Father, and Captain Powder, and the men with good-conduct medals; and please let the naughty ones all be forgiven!"
"And if the black men kill our men, send down white angels to take their poor dear souls to Heaven!"

"Now you may both say Amen, and I shall give out Hymn four hundred and thirty seven."
There are eight verses and eight Alleluias, and we can't sing very well, but we did our best.
Only Mary would cry in the verse about "Soon soon to faithful warriors comes their rest!"
And now we can play at Soldier's every day till Old Father comes home from the War.

But we're both very glad Dick has found out a Sunday game about fighting for we never had one before.
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