The Romance of the Only Woman War Correspondent

HOW MARS AND CUPID HAVE JUST YOKED THE DESTINIES OF TWO TALENTED DEPICTORS OF BATTLE SCENES

LESTER RALPH

War Artist, Son of Julian Ralph the Great War Correspondent

Mrs. Lester Ralph

Formerly Miss Elsie Reasoner

SHE is a slip of a girl, only five feet tall—just like a china doll—and she seemed altogether out of place on the battlefield. But as the shells shrieked and the Mauser bullets sang, she walked cheerfully around, watching the wounded men fall, and then after she had helped them, asking them questions about it. Now and again she paused to take snapshot photographs.

As she was the only girl war correspondent, it was her business to be there. And such a brave little body! Nothing seemed to daunt her. It is no wonder the war artist fell in love with her. He couldn't help it. They were married a few days ago.

He is Lester Ralph, the son of the famous war correspondent, whose war pictures are known throughout the world; she was Elsie Reasoner. Her graphic pen pictures of the American campaign in Cuba—made when she was only 19—illumined the pages of the magazines.

ELSIE REASONER was reared in the atmosphere of the editorial room. Her father, the Hon. Calvin Reasoner, now retired from active work, was for many years one of the most forceful writers of the West. She was reared in Leavenworth, Kansas, and later went to school in Washington, D. C.

When she was graduated she began the serious work of life, under the tutelage of her father, upon a newspaper in Salt Lake City. Miss Reasoner began by writing art criticisms. Art criticisms are not very exciting, but still they are newspaper work, and she liked them.

She wrote so well, too, that before long the editor of a newspaper in Chicago found out about her. Then she went to Chicago, and her studies of "Art in the West," made there, are quite famous in their way. Finally the Spanish-American War broke out.

War stories are more interesting than art criticisms. Even the layman can understand that, but only a newspaper woman or newspaper man can really appreciate the difference. The newspaper blood in the veins of Elsie Reasoner began to simmer with the first rumor of war. When war was actually declared she found that art really didn't interest her any more.

"I was determined to go to that war," she says, "and I wrote to my father and told him so. He advised me to go by all means if I felt that way about it. So I hurried to New York and tried to get an appointment as correspondent from some of the magazines there, but none of them would send me. They said it was no sort of work for a woman and I couldn't possibly do it.

"After all the others, I went to McClure's. A whole lot of correspondents were held up at Key West at that time waiting for a chance to go to Cuba. The outlook was not promising for my getting there, I must confess, but I was bound to go. When I saw Mr. McClure and made my proposition to him he refused point blank to send me.

"'Why, it's foolish,' he said. 'You can't get through, and even if you should you might not come back alive. I won't take the responsibility. But if you do go I'll be glad to take whatever you write.'

"I thought long and hard over the situation, and made up my mind that the chance of getting to Cuba by way of Jamaica was better than Florida, so I took a steamship for Kingston that very day. On landing, I hurried by rail to Port Antonio, and by great good luck, the Red Cross steamer State of Texas came into the harbor that very night.

"I was well supplied with letters of introduction from influential public men. I had one to General Miles, one to General Shafter, and several to officers of the fleet.

"I went aboard the Red Cross ship, and was introduced to Miss Clara Barton, who received me very cordially. When I told her of my mission and my letters, she permitted me to go with the ship to Siboney. I was thus able to land in Cuba eight days after leaving New York.

HELPED IN THE HOSPITALS WHILE DOING HER WORK

"THE battle of San Juan Hill had just been fought when I reached Siboney, and wounded men were being brought back to the hospitals from the front. I did what I could to help the Red Cross nurses by cooking gruel and carrying ice, but the first chance I got I pushed on inland on a queer little Cuban horse.

"On the way I visited a dozen or more of hospitals and took many pictures. Here is one now—a snapshot of a poor fellow—one of the regulars—lying on an improvised cot. He was shot through the thighs. But look at the smile on his face. Just as I snapped he caught sight of me. He was so weak that he could not raise himself or scarcely speak, but his face beamed when he saw me.

"'Sister has one of those kodaks,' he said to me, 'and how much you remind me of her.' He died, I think.

"I was present at a number of skirmishes; near enough to the firing line to hear the music of the Mausers and the crack of the rifles our boys carried. Indeed, I got just as close to the firing line as the commanding officers would permit me to go.

"Here is a picture I took of a Spaniard lying dead on the field. He was a sharpshooter, and from his perch in a mango tree had been picking off some of Roosevelt's men. A big negro cavalryman finally located him and brought him down, badly wounded. There he is, just as he lay when I passed the place.

"I saw funny things, too. I saw a Cuban sell a horse for half of a pineapple and a piece of tobacco. I saw six-footers of the Michigan volunteers who had fought Spaniards almost hand to hand, run like deer from undersized land crabs; and I saw General Shafter—three hundred and seventy odd pounds—riding a diminutive Cuban horse.

"One thing made a lasting impression on me. It was the wonderful cheerfulness of our soldiers amid great hardships and suffering."

Miss Reasoner wrote many interesting articles about what she saw amid the flying bullets on the battlefield, and McClure's Magazine and the other magazines were glad to print all that they could get from her.

When the war was over she went to Paris as correspondent for the Associated Press, and then on to Holland, where she was the only American woman to witness the coronation of Queen Wilhelmina. And all the while she was adding to her fame as a correspondent.

YOUNG RALPH'S GREAT WORK IN FAR-AWAY AFRICAN WILDS

IN the meantime the Boer War had begun. As the foremost war correspondent, Julian Ralph went to the front for Harpers and Black and White and The Daily Mail, of London. Lester Ralph, his son, went with him. It was a curious turn of fate.

Lester Ralph was educated in Paris as an artist, and the war in the Transvaal was by no means his first campaign. He was present, with his father, at the fiasco between Greece and Turkey, and the little action he witnessed there only whetted his appetite for more.

One day a small British expedition was sent out from Bloemfontein to post proclamations, and young Ralph, looking for pictures, went along. In this way he witnessed the first sanguinary battle of the war—the ambuscade at Sanna's Post—when the Boers caught Colonel Broadwood's little column in a gulch, and killed or captured half of it.

Ralph, creeping through the lines, escaped to Bloemfontein, but his father, who, with the other correspondents, hurried to the scene, was thrown from his horse, and received injuries which eventually caused his death.

Following the ambuscade at Sanna's Post, young Ralph was stricken with the fever, and among the friends who assisted in nursing him back to health was Rudyard Kipling.

When Methuen fought his disastrous battles along the Modder River, Ralph was there, drawing pictures of them; he witnessed the capture of Kronje, and he was with Roberts when Pretoria fell. And all the while his sketches, published in America and in England, were telling the story of the great campaign as graphically as were his father's written words. Then when it was all over Lester Ralph returned to Paris.

AN END TO WARS AND WAR NEWS AND BEGINNING OF A HONEYMOON

MISS REASONER had seen the young artist's pictures of the war. They were more than mere sketches to her; back of them she could discern the suffering, the terror, the hardships they were meant to tell.

Two of the pictures drawn by Ralph appealed to her with particular emphasis. One of them presented a trooper kneeling over his wounded horse in a desert. The horse, apparently, was dying, and with the affection that only a soldier knows, the trooper was pouring the last drop of water from a canteen into its parched mouth.

The little war correspondent was able to appreciate the sentiment in that sketch. Another picture illustrated a charge by an English regiment up a hill; apparently the Boers were at the top and firing down. One of the English soldiers had been wounded, and a chaplain, in a hail of bullets, stood reading the Bible to him. Miss Reasoner had seen soldiers wounded just that way in Cuba, and it touched a tender cord.

Ralph, too, knew all about Elsie Reasoner; he had read and admired her stories of the Cuban War. They meant to him precisely what his pictures meant to her, and so when the two met at a studio party in Paris they had plenty to talk about.

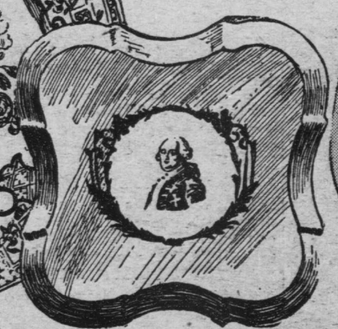
At the time the exposition in St. Louis began to take definite shape, Julian Ralph, father of the young war artist, was put in charge of the Bureau of Publicity. It is a curious commentary upon the devious methods of fate that Elsie Reasoner, already in love with the son of Mr. Ralph—and he with her—should have been fixed upon as his assistant.

But she was—this in spite of the fact that she had never even seen the elder Ralph. And so the courtship, begun in Paris, was continued in America.

And now the only girl war correspondent and the young war artist are on their honeymoon.

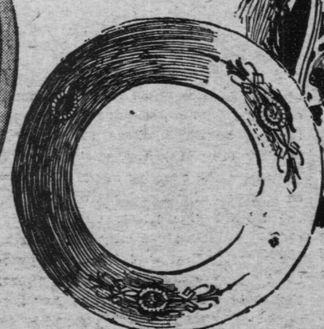
Philadelphia's Gallery of Ceramic Frauds

Modern French imitation of Chinese ware of the 18th Century. Forgery easily detected in the crudity of the decoration and the yellowish appearance of the porcelain.

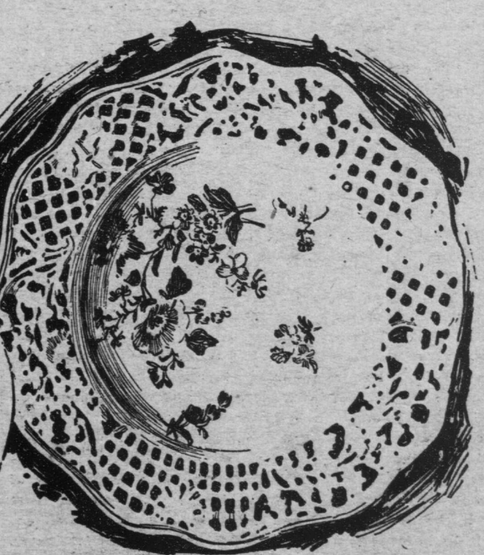


Hard Paste Porcelain. They made about 1850. Forged mark is that used on Sevres soft paste porcelain made prior to 1770.

A French Coffee Pot in hard Paste Porcelain. Style a poor imitation of Dresden.



French soft paste porcelain (modern) forged date 1771. Easily detected, as the Jewel decoration here used was not made prior to 1780.



French hard porcelain plate bearing forged mark of Dresden ware.

A NUMBER of forgeries of famous makes of china and pottery have recently been discovered in the large collection of ceramics at the Pennsylvania Museum, in Memorial Hall, Fairmount Park.

Dr. Edwin Atlee Barber, curator of the museum, has in hand the preparation of a case of such forgeries, copies and reproductions, to be part of the permanent exhibit of the museum for purposes of comparison.

All of the examples of pottery in this case will be selected from the present exhibits, from which the fraudulent matter is being weeded out.

In nearly every large collection of pottery and porcelain reproductions and forgeries of well-known manufactures will be found.

In the case of the frauds in the collection at Memorial Hall, they have come into the museum as bequests, for the most part, along with extremely rare and valuable material.

ONE of the grossest cases of forgery in the museum discovered by Mr. Barber is a set of pale blue and white porcelain, decorated with heads of famous beauties and fops of France of the period of the Restoration.

This porcelain was made of hard paste between 1830 and 1850. It bears, however, the mark of the old soft paste porcelain of Sevres, made only prior to 1770.

The cost price of this set doubtless did not exceed $20. Yet under the guise of the genuine it brought upwards of $500.

A cup and saucer in clever imitation of the old French soft paste porcelain made prior to 1770 is palpably not more than 20 years old. It is really of modern French soft paste. It bears the jewel decoration, and the forged date of 1771.

Decorations of the kind were not made at Sevres, however, until about 1780. This makes an anachronism of only nine years, and yet it is sufficient to give the lie to the transaction, and set the expert thinking.

In an open-work plate purporting to be Dresden, the mark is a palpable forgery. The plate is seen at once to be modern French hard paste porcelain.

There is a handsome coffee pot of French make also made in imitation of Dresden china.

THERE is a third plate in imitation of Dresden which is really French hard paste porcelain of a late date. Here the ignorant forger has marked it with the insignia of old Sevres soft paste and dated it 1765.

Modern Majolica ware is made after the old patterns of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but so well copied that it puzzles the expert.

Perhaps the most profitable china to forge is the Old English, decorated in dark blue with American views. Originals of this style are rare and extremely valuable, but there is a factory in Baltimore to which most of these prized heirlooms may be traced.

These plates are being made in numbers at a cost of probably 25 cents each, and sold at $15 and $20 each as genuine old English ware.

They are disposed of a few at a time, the chief market being at sales of old china. The genuine "Anti-Slavery" plate is especially rare, yet the obliging Baltimorean will furnish two to any one who has the price, at a moment's notice.