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# THE BOY GENERAL

STORY OF THE LIFE OF  
MAJOR-GENERAL GEORGE A. CUSTER

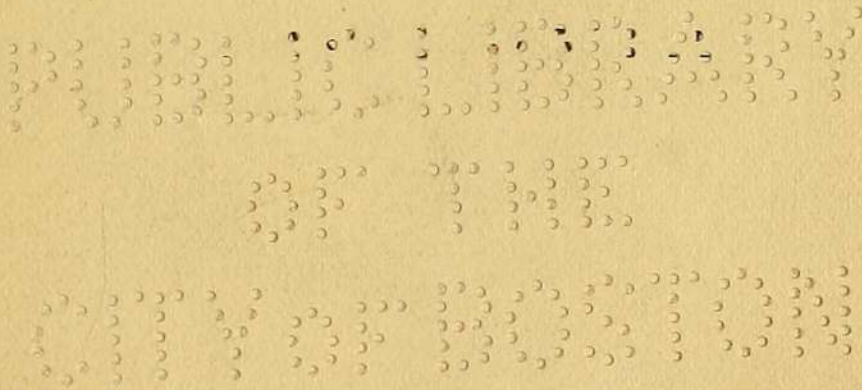
AS TOLD BY

ELIZABETH B. CUSTER

IN "TENTING ON THE PLAINS," "FOLLOWING THE GUIDON,"  
AND "BOOTS AND SADDLES"

EDITED BY

MARY E. BURT



NEW YORK  
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS  
1901

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*Apr 2, 1901*  
*A.*

YANKEE CLUB  
AND  
NOTICE TO

TROW DIRECTORY  
PRINTING AND BOOKBINDING COMPANY  
NEW YORK

To

SEVEN YOUNG SOLDIERS

WHO STRUGGLE WITH SAVAGE LESSONS

AND FIGHT BRAVELY

THE BATTLES OF COMMON EVERY-DAY LIFE

WARREN           KENNETH

GARDNER           TOMMY

PETER COOPER

CHARLES AND MERLE





## PREFACE

“THE BOY GENERAL” is a condensed survey of the life of Major-General George Armstrong Custer, as told by his wife, Elizabeth B. Custer, in her matchless books, “Tenting on the Plains,” “Following the Guidon,” and “Boots and Saddles.” It summarizes General Custer’s public services, from the reorganization of Texas after the Civil War and the suppression of the intended Mexican Invasion, to the pioneer work of himself and his brave soldiers in opening up the Northwest.

Sympathize as we may with the unfortunate Indian, we can but acknowledge that there is no longer any room on earth for uncivilized conditions to exist. Humanity is in the process of evolution toward a brotherhood that must be universal. “The Earth is the Lord’s.” It is not the Indian’s. It is not the White Man’s. It must open up for the good of all men, each individual to use it for his highest development.

In her descriptions of the joys and sorrows, the glory and the grief, the courage and the sacrifices of the daring troopers of the Plains, Mrs. Custer has well served the purposes of graver history, for her facts are indisputable and at first hand. She furnishes the original colors with which the future artist may paint, the action which the poet and novelist weave into song and romance. Her pages are crowded with pictures of a type of life almost extinct. Washington Irving in his Indian stories drew on records of a dead past. Mrs. Custer has drawn on living records of an intense present.

As good literature, "The Boy General" is a valuable accessory in teaching. It is an invaluable accessory as well in teaching history and geography. But to the really professional teacher knowledge is nothing as compared with character. The greatest value of the book lies in the fact that its pages teem with examples of fortitude, self-sacrifice, temperance, self-control, tenderness, kindness in dealing with difficult dispositions, a patriotism that cannot be bribed, resistance of temptations to dishonorable wealth, devotion to one's country in spite of pestilence, cold, fatigue, and starvation. These are lessons in manliness and they mean more than dates and statistics.

The chapters from "Boots and Saddles," recalling the most dangerous adventures of General Custer's life, have been repeatedly used in Western schools, and it was the enthusiasm of Western school-children that first gave the impulse to editing this book. Since then I have read the book critically with a class of New York children, and to their comments I owe the clew to my choice of text. It is with regret that many thrilling scenes have been omitted. In no case has the meaning been altered, and the text has been cut down to the necessary proportions only as the author has approved. The closing chapter is edited from reliable sources, chiefly from the writings of Lieutenant-General Nelson A. Miles, and an article in the *Century Magazine* of January, 1892, written by Captain Edward S. Godfrey, of the Seventh U. S. Cavalry, who was in the battle of the Little Big Horn. Information was also gathered from the letters and comments of Generals Sherman and Sheridan, McClellan and Fry, and Colonel Smith, of Brigadier-General Alfred H. Terry's staff. Many thanks are due to Mrs. Annie Gibson Yates, widow of Captain George W. Yates (the hero who planned the capture of Rain-in-the-face), for collecting these data, and to General Miles

for revising them. This is a chapter long desired by all the young readers who are interested in getting a clear account of the battle of the Little Big Horn. It is the only simple, reliable, and brief account of that battle that has been put in shape for children's reading.

I send this little book out with pride and satisfaction, knowing that it is worthy of a long life, for neither writer nor editor with respect for humanity will put a hand to anything not worthy of being permanent.

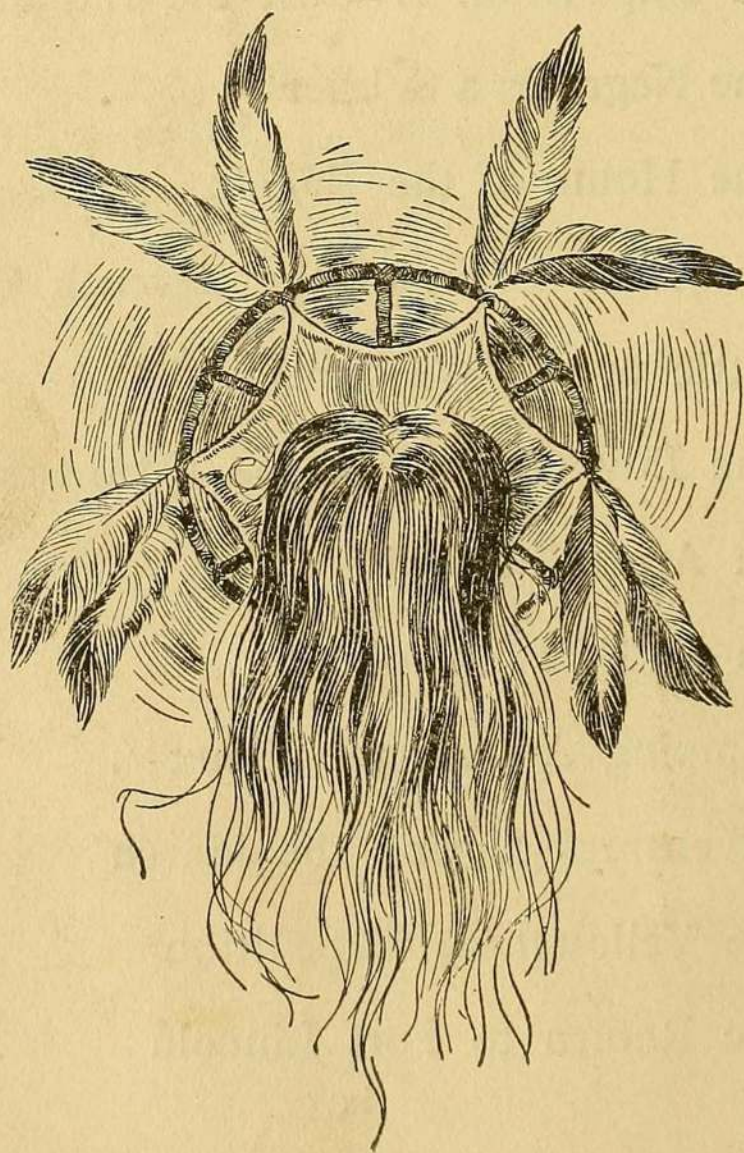
MARY E. BURT.

THE JOHN A. BROWNING SCHOOL,  
February, 1901.

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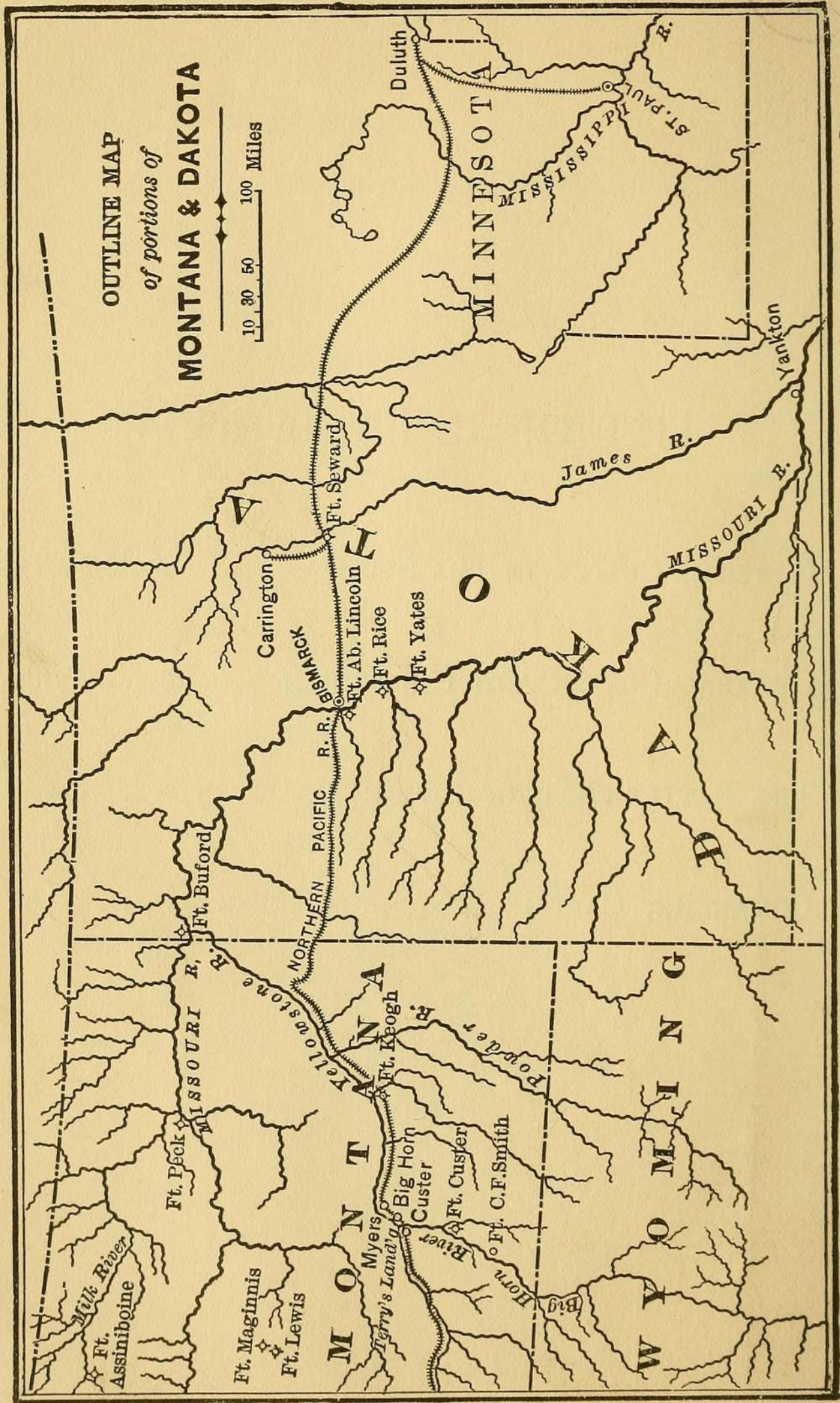
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THE BOY GENERAL



## CHAPTER I

### ON LEAVING THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC

GENERAL CUSTER graduated at West Point just in time to take part in the battle of Bull Run. He served with his regiment—the Fifth Cavalry—for a time, but eventually was appointed aide-de-camp to General McClellan. He came to his sister's home in my native town, Monroe, Michigan, on leave of absence, during the winter of 1863, and there I first met him.

In the spring he returned to the army in Virginia, and was promoted that summer, at the age of twenty-three, from captain to brigadier-general. During the following autumn he came to Monroe again to recover from a flesh-wound, which, though not serious, disabled him somewhat. At that time we became engaged. When his twenty days' leave of absence had expired he went back to duty, and did not return until a few days before our marriage, in February, 1864.

We had no sooner reached Washington on

our wedding-journey than telegrams came, following one another in quick succession, asking him to give up the rest of his leave of absence, and hasten without an hour's delay to the front. I begged so hard not to be left behind that I finally prevailed. The result was that I found myself in a few hours on the extreme wing of the Army of the Potomac, in an isolated Virginia farm-house, finishing my honeymoon alone. I had so besought him to allow me to come that I did not dare own to myself the desolation and fright I felt. In the preparation for the hurried raid which my husband had been ordered to make he had sent to cavalry head-quarters to provide for my safety, and troops were in reality near, although I could not see them.

The General's old colored servant, Eliza, comforted me, and the Southern family in the house took pity upon my anxiety. It was a sudden plunge into a life of vicissitude, and I hardly remember the time during the twelve years that followed when I was not in fear of some immediate peril, or in dread of some danger that threatened. After the raid was ended, we spent some delightful weeks together, and when the regular spring campaign began I returned to Washington, where I remained until

the surrender and the close of the war. After that we went to Texas for a year, my husband still acting as major-general in command of volunteers.

He did not even see the last of that grand review of the 23d and 24th of May, 1865. On the first day he was permitted to doff his hat and bow low, as he proudly led that superb body of men, the Third Division of Cavalry, in front of the grand stand, where sat the "powers that be." Along the line of the division, each soldier straightened himself in the saddle, and felt the proud blood fill his veins, as he realized that he was one of those who, in six months, had taken one hundred and eleven of the enemy's guns, sixty-five battle-flags, and upward of 10,000 prisoners of war, while they had never lost a flag, or failed to capture a gun for which they fought.

In the afternoon of that memorable day General Custer and his staff rode to the outskirts of Washington, where his beloved Third Cavalry Division had encamped after returning from taking part in the review. The trumpet was sounded, and the call brought these war-worn veterans out once more, not for a charge, not for duty, but to say farewell. Down the line rode their yellow-haired "boy general,"

waving his hat, but setting his teeth and trying to hold with iron nerve the quivering muscles of his speaking face; keeping his eyes wide open, that the tears might not fall.

Cheer after cheer rose on that soft spring air. Some enthusiastic voice started up afresh, before the hurrahs were done, "A tiger for old Curley!" Off came the hats again, and up went hundreds of arms, waving the good-by and wafting innumerable blessings after the man who was sending them home in a blaze of glory. I began to realize, as I watched this sad parting, that no friendship was like that cemented by danger on the battle-field.

The soldiers, accustomed to suppression through strict military discipline, now vehemently expressed their feelings; and though it gladdened the General's heart, it was still hard work to endure it without show of emotion. As he rode up to where I was waiting, he could not trust himself to speak to me. To those intrepid men he was indebted for his success. Their unfailing trust in his judgment, their willingness to follow where he led—ah! he knew well that one looks upon such men but once in a lifetime. Some of the soldiers called out for the General's wife. The staff urged me to ride forward to the troops, and I

tried to do so, but after a few steps I begged those beside whom I rode to take me back, I was too overcome from having seen the suffering on my husband's face to endure it.

As the officers gathered about the General and wrung his hand in parting, to my surprise the soldiers gave me a cheer. Though very grateful for the tribute to me as their acknowledged comrade, I did not feel that I deserved it.

Once more the General leaped into the saddle, and we rode out of sight. How glad I was, as I watched the set features of my husband's face, saw his eyes fixed immovably in front of him, listened in vain for one word from his overburdened heart, that I, being a woman, need not tax every nerve to suppress emotion, but could let the tears stream down my face, on all our silent way back to the city.

Then began the gathering of our "traps," a hasty collection of a few suitable things for a Southern climate, orders about shipping the horses, a wild tearing around of the improvident, thoughtless staff—good fighters, but poor providers. It was a comfort, when I found myself grieving over the parting with my husband's division, that our military family were to go with us. At dark we were on

the cars, with our faces turned southward. To General Custer this move had been unexpected. General Sheridan knew that he needed little time to decide, so he sent for him and asked if he would like to take command of a division of cavalry on the Red River in Louisiana, and march throughout Texas, with the possibility of eventually entering Mexico.

The Great Powers of Europe, casting jealous eyes on the promise of a greater power in our young republic, and thinking to take advantage of the Civil War, had agreed to place the supernumerary Austrian Prince, Maximilian, on the throne in Mexico, and cede the country to France to keep a balance of power. Our Government felt the time had come to convince France that if there was to be an invasion of Mexico the one to do the seizure and gather in the spoils was Brother Jonathan. So an army of sufficient strength was sent into Texas, led by General Custer, to settle the question of invasion by the mere presence of our troops so near the border.

Very wisely the General kept a part of the understanding why he was sent South from the "weepy" member of his family. He preferred transportation by steamer rather than to be floated southward on a flood of feminine



tears. In order to spare me anxiety he spoke only of that part of the order pertaining to the establishment of law in Texas. The State having been outside the limit where the armies marched and fought, was unhappily unaware that the war was over, and it had become the home of bushwhackers and all kinds of lawless desperadoes. Before the winter was over the civil authorities of Texas began to be able to carry out the laws. It was considered unnecessary to retain the division of cavalry in the South. The anticipated trouble with Mexico was over and the General was ordered North to await his assignment to a new station.

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## CHAPTER II

### POLITICAL TEMPTATIONS

OUR home-coming was a great pleasure to us and to our two families. My own father was proud of the General's administration of civil as well as military affairs in Texas, and enjoyed the congratulatory letter of Governor Hamilton deeply. The temptations to induce General Custer to leave the service and enter civil life began at once. He had not been subjected

to such allurements the year after the war, when the country was offering posts of honor to returned soldiers, but this summer of our return from Texas, all sorts of suggestions were made. I can scarcely see now how a man of twenty-five could have turned his back upon such alluring schemes for wealth as were held out to him. It was at that time much more customary than now, even, to establish corporations with an officer's name at the head who was known to have come through the war with irreproachable honor. The country was so unsettled by the four years of strife that it was like beginning all over again, when old companies were started anew. Confidence had to be struggled for, and names of prominent men as associate partners or presidents were sought for persistently.

Politics offered another form of temptation. The people demanded for their representatives the soldiers under whom they had served, preferring to follow the same leaders in the political field that had led them in battle. The old soldiers, and civilians also, talked openly of General Custer for Congressman or Governor. It was a summer of excitement and uncertainty. How could it be otherwise to a boy who, five brief years before, was a beardless youth with no apparent future before him? When the

General was offered an appointment as foreign Minister, I kept silence as best I could, but it was desperately hard work. I was inwardly very proud, but I concealed the fact because my husband expressed such horror of inflated people.

Among the first propositions was one for the General to take temporary service with Mexico. This scheme found no favor with me. It meant more fighting and further danger for my husband, and anxiety and separation for me.

Carvajal, who was then at the head of the Juarez military government, offered the post of Adjutant-General of Mexico to General Custer. The money inducements were, to give twice the salary in gold that a major-general in our army receives. As his salary had come down from a major-general's pay of \$8,000 to \$2,000, this might have been a temptation. There was a stipulation that one or two thousand men should be raised in the United States, any debts assumed in organizing this force to be paid by the Mexican Liberal Government. Señor Romero, the Mexican Minister, did what he could to further the application of Carvajal, and General Grant wrote his approval of General Custer's acceptance, in a letter in which he speaks of my husband in unusually flattering

terms as one "who rendered such distinguished service as a cavalry officer during the war," adding, "There was no officer in that branch of the service who had the confidence of General Sheridan to a greater degree than General Custer, and there is no officer in whose judgment I have greater faith than in Sheridan's. Please understand, then, that I mean to endorse General Custer in a high degree."

The stagnation of peace was being felt by those who had lived a breathless four years at the front. However much they might rejoice that carnage had ceased, it was very hard to quiet themselves into a life of inaction. No wonder our officers went to the Khedive for service! no wonder this promise of active duty was an inviting prospect for my husband! It took a long time for civilians, even, to tone themselves down to the jog-trot of peace.

Maximilian was then uncertain in his hold on the Government he had established, and it would have been an easy matter to drive out the usurper. The question was settled by the Government's refusing to grant the year's leave for which application was made, and the General was too fond of his country to take any but temporary service in another.

This decision made me very grateful and when

there was no longer danger of further exposure of life, I was also thankful for the expressions of confidence and admiration of my husband's ability as a soldier that this contemplated move had drawn out. I was willing my husband should accept any offer he had received except the last. I was tempted to beg him to resign; for this meant peace of mind and a tranquil life for me. It was my father's counsel alone that kept me from urging each new proposition to take up the life of a civilian. He advised me to forget myself. He knew well what a difficult task it was to school myself to endure the life on which I had entered so thoughtlessly as a girl.

He had a keen sense of humor, and could not help reminding me occasionally, when I told him despairingly that I could not, I simply *would* not, live a life where I could not be always with my husband, of days before I knew the General, when I declared to my parents, if ever I did marry it would not be a dentist, as our opposite neighbor appeared never to leave the house. It seemed to me then that the wife had a great deal to endure in the constant presence of her husband.

My father, strict in his sense of duty, constantly appealed to me to consider only my

husband's interests, and forget my own selfish desires. He used in those days to walk the floor and say to me, "My child, put no obstacles in the way to the fulfilment of his destiny. He chose his profession. He is a born soldier. There he must abide."

In the midst of this indecision, when the General was obliged to be in Washington on business, my father was taken ill. The one whom I so sorely needed in all those ten years that followed, when I was often alone in the midst of dangers and anxieties, stepped into heaven as peacefully as if going into another room. His last words were to urge me to do my duty as a soldier's wife. In the autumn the appointment to the Seventh Cavalry came, with orders to go to Fort Garland. One would have imagined, by the jubilant manner in which this official document was unfolded and read to me, that it was the inheritance of a principality. Out of our camp-luggage a map was produced, and Fort Garland was discovered, after long prowling about with the first finger, in the space given to the Rocky Mountains. Then the General launched into visions of what unspeakable pleasure he would have, fishing for mountain trout and hunting deer.

It would have been a stolid soul indeed that

did not begin to think Fort Garland a sort of earthly paradise. The sober colors in this vivid picture meant a small, obscure post, several hundred miles from any railroad, not much more than a handful of men to command, the most complete isolation, and no prospect of an active campaign, as it was far from the range of the warlike Indians. But Fort Garland soon faded from our view, in the excitement and interest over Fort Riley, as soon as our orders were changed to that post. We had no difficulty in finding it on the map, as it was comparatively an old post, and the Kansas Pacific Railroad was within ten miles of the Government reservation.

We ascertained, by inquiry, that it was better to buy household articles at Leavenworth, than to attempt to carry along even a simple outfit. It was difficult to realize that Kansas had a city of 25,000 inhabitants, with several daily papers. Still, I was quite willing to trust to Leavenworth for the purchase of household furniture, as it seemed to me that housekeeping in garrison quarters was a sort of camping out after all, with one foot in a house and another in position to put into the stirrup and spin "over the hills and far away."

## CHAPTER III

## WESTWARD HO!

WHEN we were ready to set out for the West, in October, 1866, our caravan summed up something like this list: my husband's three horses, my own horse, Custis Lee, several hounds given to the General by the planters with whom he had hunted deer in Texas, a superb greyhound, his head carried so loftily as he walked his lordly way among the other dogs, that I thought he would have asked to carry his family-tree on his brass collar, could he have spoken for his rights. Last of all, some one had given us the ugliest white bull-dog I ever saw. But in time we came to think that the twist in his lumpy tail, the curve in his bow legs, the ambitious nose, which drew the upper lip above the heaviest of protruding jaws, were simply beauties, for the dog was so affectionate and loyal, that everything which at first seemed a drawback, leaned finally to virtue's side. He was well named "Turk," and a "set-to" or so with Byron, the domineering greyhound, established his rights, so that it only needed a deep growl



and an uprising of the bristles on his back to recall to the overbearing aristocrat some wholesome lessons given him when the acquaintance began. Turk was devoted to the colt Phil, and the intimacy of the two was comical; Phil repaid Turk's little playful nips at the legs by lifting him in his teeth as high as the feed-box, by the loose skin of his back. But nothing could get a whimper out of him, for he was the pluckiest of brutes. He curled himself up in Phil's stall when he slept, and in travelling was his close companion in the box-car. If we took the dog to drive with us, he had to be in the buggy, as our time otherwise would have been constantly engaged in dragging him off from any dog that strutted around him and needed a lesson in humility. When Turk was returned to Phil, after any separation, they greeted each other in a most human way. Turk leaped around the colt, and in turn was rubbed and nosed about with speaking little snorts of welcome. When we came home to this ugly duckling, he usually made a spring and landed in my lap, as if he were the tiniest, silkiest little Skye in dogdom. He half closed his eyes, with that expression peculiar to affectionate dogs, and did his little smile at my husband and me by raising his upper lip and showing his front

teeth. All this with an ignoring of the other dogs and an air of exclusion, as if we three—his master, mistress, and himself—composed all there was of earth worth knowing.

We had two servants, one being Eliza, our faithful colored woman. She had come home with me to care for my father in his last illness. We had also a worthless colored boy, who had returned with the horses. What intellect he had was employed in devising schemes to escape work.

Last of all to mention in our party was Diana, the pretty belle of Monroe. The excitement of anticipation gave added brightness to her eyes, and the head, sunning over with a hundred curls, danced and coquetted as she talked of the future.

One of our Detroit friends invited us to go with a party to St. Louis; so we had a gay send-off for our new home. I don't remember to have had an anxiety as to the future; I was wholly given over to the joy of realizing that the war was over, and now the one great danger was passed, I felt as if all that sort of life was forever ended. In St. Louis we had a round of gayety. The great Fair was then at its best, for everyone was making haste to dispel the gloom that our terrible war had cast over the

land. There was not a corner of the Fair-ground to which my husband did not penetrate.

The junketing and frolic came to an end in a few days, and our faces were again turned westward to a life about as different from the glitter of a gay city in a holiday week as can be imagined. Leavenworth was our first halt, and its well-built streets and excellent stores surprised us. It had long been the outfitting place for our officers. The soldiers drew supplies from the military post, and the officers furnished themselves with camp equipage from the city. Here also they bought condemned ambulances, and put them in order for travelling-carriages for their families. I remember getting a faint glimmer of the climate we were about to endure, by seeing a wagon floored, and its sides lined with canvas, which was stuffed to keep out the cold, while a little sheet-iron stove was firmly fixed at one end, with a bit of miniature pipe protruding through the roof. Everything was transported in the great army-wagons called prairie-schooners. These were well named, as the two ends of the wagon inclined upward, like the bow and stern of a fore-and-after. It is hard to realize how strange a long train of supplies for one of the distant posts looked as it wound slowly over the plains. The blue wagon

beds, with white canvas covers rising up ever so high, disclosed, in the small circle where they were drawn together at the back, all kinds of material for the clothing and feeding of the army in the distant Territories. The number of mules to a wagon varies; sometimes there are four, and again six.

The driver, if he is not a stolid Mexican, takes much pride in his mules. By some unknown means, poor as he is, he possesses himself of fox-tails, which he fastens to their bridle, and the vagaries in the clipping of the poor beasts' tails would set the fashion to a Paris hair-dresser. They are shaved a certain distance, and then a tuft is left, making a bushy ring. The coats of the mules sometimes shine like the fine hair of a good horse. Alas! not when, in the final stages of a long march, the jaded, half-starved beasts dragged themselves over the trail. Driver and lead mules, even, lose ambition under the scorching sun, and with the insufficient food and long water famines.

My husband had the utmost respect for a mule's sense. When I looked upon mules as dull, half-alive animals, he bade me watch how deceitful were appearances, as they showed such cunning, and evinced the wisdom of a quick-witted thoroughbred, when apparently

they were unobserving, sleepy brutes. It was the General who made me notice the skill and rapidity with which a group of six mules would straighten out what seemed to be a hopeless tangle of chains and harness, into which they had kicked themselves when there was a disturbance among them. One crack of the whip from the driver who had tethered them after a march, accompanied by a plain statement of his opinion of such "fools," would send the whole collection wide apart, and it was but a twinkling before they extricated themselves from what I thought a hopeless mess. No chains or straps were broken, and a meek, subdued look pervading the group left not a trace of the active heels that a moment before had filled the air.

The prairie-schooner disappeared with the advancing railroad; but I am glad to see that General Meigs has perpetuated his memory, by causing this old means of transportation to be made one of the designs in the beautiful frieze carved around the outside of the Pension Office at Washington. Ungainly and cumbersome as these wagons were, they merit some such monument, as part of the history of the early days of frontier life in our country. We were in the West several years before the rail-

road was completed to Denver, and the overland trains became an every-day sight to us. Citizens used oxen a great deal for transportation, and there is no picture that represents the weariness and laggard progress of life like an ox-train bound for Santa Fé or Denver. The prairie-schooner might set out freshly painted, but it soon became gray with layer upon layer of alkali dust. The oxen—well, nothing save a snail can move more slowly, and the exhaustion of these beasts, after weeks of travel, was pitiful. Imagine, also, the unending vigil when the trains were insecurely guarded; for in those days there was an immense unprotected frontier, and seemingly only a handful of cavalry.

“The Indians were, unfortunately, located on the great highway of Western travel; and commerce, not less than emigration, demanded their removal.” There are many conflicting opinions as to the course pursued to clear the way; but I only wish to speak now of the impression the trains made upon me, as we constantly saw the long, dusty column wending its serpentine way over the sun-baked earth. A group of cavalry, with their drooping horses, rode in front and at the rear. The wagon-master was usually the very spirit of valor. It is true he formed such a habit of shooting that

he grew indiscriminate, and should any of the lawless desperadoes whom he hired as teamsters ruffle his blood, kept up to boiling-heat by suspense, physical exposure, and exasperating employees, he knew no way of settling troubles except the effectual quietus that a bullet secures.

It seemed to be expected that the train-master would be a villain. Whatever was their record as to the manner of arranging private disputes, a braver class of men never followed a trail, and some of them were far superior to their lot. Their tender care of women who crossed in these ox-trains, to join their husbands, ought to be commemorated. I have somewhere read one of their remarks when a girl, going to her mother, had been secreted in a private wagon, and there was no knowledge of her presence until the Indians were discovered to be near. " 'Tain't no time to be teamin' women folks over the trail with sech a fearsom sperit for Injuns as I be." He, like some of the bravest men I have known, spoke of himself as timid, while he knew no fear. It certainly unnerved the most valiant man when Indians were lurking near, to realize the fate that hung over women intrusted to their care. It makes the heart beat, even to look at a picture of the old mode

of traversing the highway of Western travel. The sight of the pictured train, peacefully lumbering on its sleepy way, the scarcely revolving wheels, creaking out a protest against even that effort, recalls the agony, the suspense, the horror with which every inch of that long route has been made. The heaps of stones by the wayside, or the buffalo bones, collected to mark the spot where some man fell from an Indian arrow, are now disappearing. The hurricanes beating upon the hastily prepared memorials have scattered the bleached bones of the bison, and rolled into the tufted grass the few stones with which the train-men, at risk of their own lives, delayed long enough to mark their comrade's grave.

The faded photographs or the old prints of those overland trains speak to me but one story. Instantly I recall the hourly vigilance, the restless eyes scanning the horizon, the breathless suspense, when the pioneers or soldiers knew from unmistakable signs that the Indian was lying in wait. In what contrast to the dull, scarcely moving oxen were these keen-eyed heroes, with every nerve strained, every sense on the alert. And how they were maddened by the fate that consigned them, at such moments, to the mercy of "dull, driven cattle."



When I have seen officers and soldiers lay their hands lovingly on the neck of their favorite horse, and say, "He saved my life," I knew well what a man felt when his horse took fire at knowledge of danger, and sped on the wings of the wind, till he was lost to his pursuers, a tiny black speck on the horizon. The pathos of a soldier's parting with his horse moved us to quick sympathy. It often happens that a trooper retains the same animal through his entire enlistment, and it comes to be his most intimate friend. There is nothing he will not do to provide him with food; if the forage runs low or the grazing is insufficient, stealing for his horse is reckoned a virtue among soldiers. Imagine, then, the anxiety, the real suffering, with which a soldier watches his faithful beast growing weaker day by day, from exhaustion or partial starvation. He walks beside him to spare his strength, and finally, when it is no longer possible to keep up with the column, and the soldier knows how fatal the least delay may be in an Indian country, it is more pitiful than almost any sight I recall, the sadness of his departure from the skeleton, whose eyes follow his master in wondering affection, as he walks away with the saddle and accoutrements.

If the wagons held merchandise only, by

which the pioneer hoped to grow rich, the risk and suspense attending these endless marches were not worth commemorating; but the bulk of the freight was the actual necessaries of life. Conceive, if you can, how these brave men felt themselves chained, as they drove or guarded the food for those living far in advance. There were not enough to admit of a charge on the enemy, and the defensive is an exasperating position for a soldier or frontiersman. He longs to advance on the foe; but no such privilege was allowed them, for in these toilsome journeys they had often to use precautions to hide themselves. If Indians were discovered to be roaming near, the camp was established, trains corralled, animals secured inside a temporary stockade; the fires for coffee were forbidden, for smoke rises like a funnel, and hangs out an instant signal in that clear air. Even the consoling pipe was smoked under a sagebush. Few words were spoken, the loud oaths sank into low mutterings, and the bray of a hungry mule, the clank of wagon-chains, or the stamping of cattle on the baked earth, sounded like thunder in the ears of the anxious, expectant men.

Fortunately, our journey in these trains was not at once forced upon us at Leavenworth.

The Kansas Pacific Railroad, projected to Denver, was built within ten miles of Fort Riley, and it was to be the future duty of the Seventh Cavalry to guard the engineers in building the remainder of the road out to the Rocky Mountains. It did not take us long to purchase an outfit in the shops, for, as usual, our finances were low. We had the sense to listen to a hint from some practical officer who had been far beyond railroads, and buy a cook-stove the first thing, and this proved to be the most important of our possessions when we reached our post, so far from the land of shops. Not many hours after we left Leavenworth the settlements became farther and farther apart, and we began to realize that we were actual pioneers. Kansas City was then but a small town, seemingly with a hopeless future, as the bluffs rose steep from the river, and even when the summit was reached, the ups and downs of the streets were discouraging. It seemed, then, as if it would never be worth while to use it as a site for a town; there would be a lifetime of grading. It is very easy to become a city forefather in such a town, for in the twenty-one years since then, it has grown into a city of over 132,000 inhabitants—but they are still grading. The lots which we could have had almost for the asking, sell now for

\$1,000 a front foot. Topeka, the capital, showed no evidence of its importance, except the little circle of stars that surrounded it on our atlas. There were but three towns beyond Fort Riley then, and those were built, if I may so express it, of canvas and dug-outs.

Our railroad journey came to an end about ten miles from Fort Riley. The laborers were laying track from that point. It had been a sort of gala day, for General Sherman had been asked by railroad officials to drive the final spike of the division of the road then finished. We found a wagon waiting for our luggage, and an ambulance to carry us the rest of the journey. These vehicles are not uncomfortable when the long seats on either side are so arranged that they make a bed for the ill or wounded by spreading them out, but as traveling conveyances I could not call them a success. The seats are narrow, with no back to speak of, and covered with carriage-cloth, which can keep you occupied, if the country is rough, in regaining the slippery surface for any number of miles at a stretch. Fort Riley came in sight when we were pretty well tired out. It was my first view of a frontier post, and came upon me as a great surprise. I supposed, of course, it would be exactly like Fortress Monroe, with

stone walls, turrets for the sentinels, and a deep moat. I could scarcely believe that the buildings, a story and a half high, placed around a parade-ground, were all there was of Fort Riley. No trees, and hardly any signs of vegetation except the buffalo-grass that curled its sweet blades close to the ground, as if to protect the nourishment it held from the blazing sun. The post was beautifully situated on a wide plateau, at the junction of the Republican and Smoky Hill rivers. The Plains, as they waved away on all sides of us, like the surface of a vast ocean, had the charm of great novelty, and the absence of trees was at first forgotten in the fascination of seeing such an immense stretch of country, with the soft undulations of green turf rolling on, seemingly, to the setting sun. The eye was relieved by the fringe of cottonwood that bordered the rivers below us.

Though we came afterward to know, on toilsome marches under the sweltering sun, that enthusiasm would not outlast such trials, still, a rarely exultant feeling takes possession of one in the gallops over the Plains, when in early spring they are a trackless sea of soft verdure. And the enthusiasm returns when the campaign for the summer is over, and riding is taken up for pleasure. My husband was full of

delight over the exquisite haze that covered the land with a faint purple light. But we had little time to take in atmospheric effects, as evening was coming on and we were yet to be housed, while servants, horses, dogs, and all of us were hungry after our long drive. The General halted the wagon outside the post, and left us to go and report to the commanding officer.

I knew nothing of the hospitality of a frontier post, and I begged to remain in the wagon until our quarters were assigned us in the garrison. Up to this time we had all been in splendid spirits; the novelty, the lovely day and exhilarating air, and all the possibilities of a future with a house of our own, or, rather, one lent to us by Uncle Sam, seemed to fill up a delightful cup to the brim. We sat outside the post a long time growing hungrier and thirstier. Eliza sat on the seat with the driver, and both muttered occasional hungry words, but our Diana and I had the worst of it. We had bumped over the country, sometimes violently jammed against the framework of the canvas cover, and most of the time sliding off from the slippery cushions upon the insulted dogs—for of course the General had begged a place for two of them. He had kept them in order all

the way from the termination of the railroad; but now that he was absent, Turk and Byron renewed hostilities, and in the narrow space they scrambled and snarled and sprang at each other. When the General came back he found the little hands of our curly-headed girl clinched over the collar of Byron at one end of the ambulance, while Turk sat on my lap, swelling with rage because my fingers were twisted in the chain that held him, as I sat at the door shaking with terror. It was quick work to end our troubles for the time; but the General threw us into a new panic by saying we must make up our minds to be the guests of the commanding officer. Tired and travel-stained we were driven to one of the quarters and made our entrance among strangers. I then realized that we had reached a spot where the comforts of life could not be had for love or money.

It is a strange sensation to arrive at a place where money is of little use in providing shelter, and here we were beyond even the commonest railroad hotel. Mrs. Gibbs, who received us, was put to a severe test that night. Already a room in her small house had been prepared for General Sherman, who had arrived earlier in the day, and now there were five of us bearing

down upon her. I told her how I had begged to be allowed to go into quarters, even though there were no preparations, not even a fireplace where Eliza could have cooked us food enough over the coals to stay hunger ; but she assured me that she was quite accustomed to a state of affairs where there was nothing to do but quarter yourself upon strangers, and then gave up her own room to our use.

The next day my husband assumed command of the garrison, and our few effects were moved into a large double house built for the commanding officer. There were parlors on one side, whose huge folding doors were flung open, and made our few articles of furniture look lonely and meagre. We had but six wooden chairs to begin with, and when, a few miles more of the railroad being completed, a party of one hundred and fifty excursionists arrived, I seated six of them—yes, seven, for one was tired enough to sit on a trunk—and then concluded I would own up that in the larger rooms of the house, into which they looked significantly, there were no more chairs concealed. I had done my best, and tried to make up for not seating or feeding them, by very busy talking. Meanwhile there were incessant inquiries for the General. It seems



that he had begun that little trick of hiding from strangers, even then. He had seen the advancing column of tourists, and fled.

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## CHAPTER IV

### AN EXPEDITION AGAINST THE INDIANS

ONE of the hardest trials, in our first winter with the regiment, was that arising from the constantly developing tendency to hard drinking.

While General Custer steadily fought against drunkenness, he was not remorseless or unjust. I could cite one instance after another, to prove with what patience he strove to reclaim some who were hopeless when they joined us. His greatest battles were not fought in the tented field; his most glorious combats were those waged in daily, hourly fights on a more hotly contested field than was ever known in common warfare. The truest heroism is not that which goes out supported by strong battalions and reserve artillery.

I have known my husband to stand almost alone in his opinion regarding temperance, in a garrison containing enough people to make a

good-sized village. He was thoroughly unostentatious about his convictions, and rarely said much ; but he stood to his fixed purpose, purely from horror of the results of drinking. Without preaching or parading his own strength, General Custer stood among the officers and men as firm an advocate of temperance as any evangelist whose life is devoted to the cause.

An expedition was to leave Fort Riley commanded by General Hancock, then at the head of the Department of the Missouri. He arrived at our post with seven companies of infantry and a battery of artillery. His letters to the Indian agents of the various tribes give the objects of the march into the Indian country. He wrote :

“ I have the honor to state that I am at present preparing an expedition to the Plains, which will soon be ready to move. My object in doing so at this time is, to convince the Indians within the limits of this Department that we are able to punish any of them who may molest travellers across the Plains, or who may commit other hostilities against the whites. We desire to avoid, if possible, any troubles with the Indians, and to treat them with justice, and according to the requirements of our treaties with them ; and I wish especially, in my deal-

ings with them, to act through the agents of the Indian Department as far as it is possible to do so. If you, as their agent, can arrange these matters satisfactorily with them, we shall be pleased to defer the whole subject to you. In case of your inability to do so, I would be pleased to have you accompany me when I visit the country of your tribes, to show that the officers of the Government are acting in harmony. I shall be pleased to talk with any of the chiefs whom we may meet. I do not expect to make war against any of the Indians of your agency, unless they commence war against us."

In General Custer's account, he says that "the Indians had been guilty of numerous thefts and murders during the preceding summer and autumn. They had attacked the stations of the overland mail-route, killed the employees, burned the stations and captured the stock. Citizens had been murdered in their homes on the frontier of Kansas; and murders had been committed on the Arkansas route. The principal perpetrators of these acts were the Cheyennes and Sioux. The agent of the former, if not a party to the murder on the Arkansas, knew who the guilty persons were, yet took no steps to bring the murderers to punishment.

Such a course would have interfered with his trade. It was not to punish for these sins of the past that the expedition was set on foot, but rather, by its imposing appearance and its early presence in the Indian country, to check or intimidate the Indians from a repetition of their late conduct. During the winter the leading chiefs and warriors had threatened that, as soon as the grass was up, the tribes would combine in a united outbreak along the entire frontier."

There had been little opportunity to put the expedition out of our minds for some time previous to its departure. The sound from the blacksmith's shop, of the shoeing of horses, the drilling on the level ground outside of the post, and the loading of wagons about the quartermaster and commissary storehouses, went on all day long. At that time the sabre was more in use than it was later, and it seemed to me that I could never again shut my ears to the sound of the grindstone, when I found that the sabres were being sharpened. The troopers, when mounted, were curiosities, and a decided disappointment to me. The horse, when prepared for the march, barely showed head and tail. My ideas of the dashing trooper going out to war, clad in gay uniform and curbing a curveting steed, faded before the reality.

Though the wrapping together of the blanket, overcoat, and shelter-tent is made a study of the tactics, it could not be reduced to anything but a good-sized roll at the back of the saddle. The carbine rattled on one side of the soldier, slung from the broad strap over his shoulder, while a frying-pan, a tin cup, a canteen, and a haversack of hardtack clattered and knocked about on his other side. There were possibly a hundred rounds of ammunition in his cartridge-belt, which took away all the symmetry that his waist might otherwise have had. If the company commander was not too strict, a short butcher-knife, thrust into a home-made leather case, kept company with the pistol. It was not a murderous weapon, but was used to cut up game or slice off the bacon, which, sputtering in the skillet at evening camp-fire, was the main feature of the soldier's supper. The tin utensils, the carbine, and the sabre kept up a continual din, as the horses seemingly crept over the trail at the rate of three to four miles an hour. In addition to the cumbersome load, there were sometimes lariats and iron pins slung on one side of the saddle, to tether the animals when they grazed at night. There was nothing picturesque about this lumbering cavalryman, and our men did not then sit their

horses with the serenity that they eventually attained. If the beast shied or kicked—for the poor thing was itself learning to do soldiering, and occasionally flung out his heels—it was a question whether the newly made Mars would land on the crupper or hang helplessly among the domestic utensils suspended to his saddle. How sorry I was for them, they were so bruised and lamed by their first lessons in horsemanship. Every one laughed at every one else, and this made it seem doubly trying to me. I remembered my own first lessons among fearless cavalymen—a trembling figure, about as uncertain in the saddle as if it were a wave of the sea, the hands cold and nerveless, and, I regret to add, the tears streaming down my cheeks! These recollections made me writhe when I saw a soldier describing an arc in the air, and his self-freed horse galloping off to the music of tin and steel in concert. Just in proportion as I had suffered for their misfortunes, did I enjoy the men when, after the campaign, they returned, perfect horsemen and with such physiques as might serve for a sculptor's model.

At the time the expedition formed at Fort Riley, I had little realization what a serious affair an Indian campaign was. We had heard of the outrages committed on the settlers, the

attacking of the overland supply-trains, and the burning of the stage-stations; but the rumors seemed to come from so far away that the reality was never brought home to me until I saw for myself what horror attends Indian depredations.

As the days drew nearer for the expedition to set out, my husband tried to keep my spirits up by reminding me that the council to be held with the chiefs of the warlike tribes, when they reached that part of the country infested with the marauding Indians, was something he hoped might result in our speedy reunion. He endeavored to induce me to think, as he did, that the Indians would be so impressed with the magnitude of the expedition, that after the council, they would accept terms and abandon the war-path. Eight companies of our own regiment were going out, and these, with infantry and artillery, made a force of fourteen hundred men. It was really a large expedition, for the Plains; but the recollections of the thousands of men in the Third Cavalry Division, which was the General's command during the war, made the expedition seem too small, even for safety.

No one can enumerate the terrors that filled the hearts of women on the border in those des-

perate days. The band played its usual departing tune, "The Girl I Left Behind Me," but the expedition did not go out with song and shout, for it left loving, weeping women behind.

There was silence as the column left the garrison. Alas! the closed houses they left were as still as if death had set its seal upon the door.

We had not been long alone when a great danger threatened us. The level plateau about our post, and the valley along the river near us, were covered with dry prairie grass, which grows thick and is matted down into close clumps. It was discovered one day, that a narrow thread of fire was creeping on in our direction, scorching these tufts into shrivelled brown patches. People generally regard descriptions of prairie-fires as exaggerated, and I have seen a mild type of fire and know that a horseman rides through such quiet conflagrations in safety. The trains on some of our Western roads pass harmless through belts of country when the flames are about them; there is no impending peril because the winds are moderate. When a tiny flame is discovered in Kansas, where the wind blows a hurricane so much of the time, there is not a moment to lose. Although we saw what was hardly more than a



suspicion of smoke, and the slender, sinuous, red tongue along the ground, we knew that our lives were in jeopardy. Most of us were unacquainted with those precautions which the experienced Plainsman takes, and we had no ranchmen near us to set us the example of caution. We should have had furrows ploughed around the entire post in double lines, a certain distance apart, to check the approach of fire. There was no time to fight the foe with a like weapon, by burning over a portion of the grass between the advancing blaze and our post. The smoke rose higher and higher beyond us, and curling, creeping fire began to ascend into waves of flame with alarming rapidity, and in an incredibly short time we were overshadowed with a dark pall of smoke.

The Plains were then new to us. It is impossible to appreciate their vastness at first. The very idea was hard to realize, that from where we lived we looked on an uninterrupted horizon. It fills the soul with wonder and awe to look upon the vastness of that sea of land for the first time. As the sky became lurid, and the blaze swept on toward us, surging to and fro in waving lines as it approached nearer and nearer, it seemed that the end of the world had really come. The whole earth appeared to be

on fire. The sky was a sombre canopy above us, on which flashes of brilliant light suddenly appeared as the flames rose. There were no screams nor cries, simply silent terror and shiverings of horror, as we women huddled together to watch the remorseless fiend advancing. The river was half a mile away, and our feet could not fly fast enough to reach the water before the enemy would be upon us. There was no such a thing as a fire-engine.

In the midst of this appalling scene we were startled anew by a roar and shout from the soldiers' barracks. Some one had, at last, presence of mind to marshal the men into line, and assuming a commanding tone give imperative orders. Every one—citizen employees, soldiers, and officers—seized gunny-sacks, blankets, poles, anything available that came in their way, and raced wildly beyond the post into the midst of the blazing grass. Forming a line, they beat and lashed the flames with the blankets, so twisted as to deal powerful blows. It was a frenzied fight. The soldiers yelled and leaped frantically upon beds of blazing grass, condensing a lifetime of riotous energy into these perilous moments. We women were breathless; our hearts were filled with terror for the brave men who were working for our deliverance.

They were men to whom we had never spoken, nor were we likely ever to speak to them, so separated are the soldiers from an officer's household. Sometimes we saw their eyes following us respectfully, as we rode about the garrison, seeming to have in them an air of possession, as if saying, "That's our Captain's or our Colonel's wife." Now, they were showing their loyalty.

No sooner had the flames been stamped out of one portion of the plain, than the whole body of men were obliged to rush off in another direction and begin the thrashing and tramping anew. But the wind, that had been the cause of our danger, saved us at last. Suddenly veering, it swept the long tongues of flame over the bluffs beyond us, where the lonely coyote and its mate were driven into their lair. With faces begrimed and blistered, their clothes black with soot and smoke, their hands burnt and numb from violent effort, the soldiers dragged their exhausted bodies back to garrison, and dropped down anywhere to rest.

The first letters, sent back from the expedition by scouts, made red-letter days for us. The official envelope, stained with rain and mud, bursting open with the many pages crowded in, sometimes even tied with a string by some

messenger through whose hands the parcel passed, told stories of the vicissitudes of the missive in the difficult journey to our post. These letters gave accounts of the march to Fort Larned, where a great camp was established, to await the arrival of the chiefs with whom the council was to be held. While the runners were absent on their messages to the tribes, some effort was made to protect the troops against the still sharp winds of early spring. The halt and partly permanent camp was most fortunate; for had the troops been on the march, a terrible snow-storm that ensued would have wrought havoc. The animals were given an extra ration of oats, while the guards were obliged to whip the horses on the picket-line, to keep them in motion and prevent them from freezing.

In my husband's letters there was a description of his lending his dog to keep a friend warm. The officer came into his tent declaring that no amount of bedding had any effect in keeping out the cold, and he had come to borrow a dog, to see if he could have one night's rest. Our old hound was offered, because he could cover such a surface, for he was a big brute, and when he once located himself he rarely moved until morning. My husband for-

got, in lending Rover, to mention a habit he had of sleeping audibly, besides a little fashion of twitching his legs and thumping his cumbrous tail. He was taken into the neighbor's tent, and induced to settle for the night, after the General's coaxing and pretence of going to sleep beside him. Later, when he went back to see how Rover worked as a furnace, he found the officer sound asleep on his back, emitting such nasal notes as only a stout man is equal to, while Rover lay sprawled over the broad chest of his host, where he had crept after he was asleep, snoring with an occasional interlude of a long-drawn snort, introduced in a manner peculiar to fox-hounds. The next morning my husband was not in the least surprised to receive a call from the officer, who presented a request to exchange dogs. He said that he did not expect to have a bedfellow that would climb up over his lungs and crush all the breath out of his body.

All these camp incidents brightened up the long letters, and kept me from realizing, as I read, what were the realities of that dreadful march.

Succeeding letters from my husband gave an account of his first experience with the perfidy of the Indians. The council had been held, and

it was hoped that effectual steps were taken to establish peace. But, as is afterward related, the chiefs gave them the slip and deserted the village. The General pressed the retreating Indians so closely, the very night of their departure, that they were obliged to divide into smaller detachments, and even the experienced Plainsmen could no longer trace a trail.

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## CHAPTER V

### THE NEGRO AS A SOLDIER

MEANWHILE, as our officers were experiencing all sorts of new phases in life on their first march over the Plains, our vicissitudes were increasing at the peaceful Fort Riley. The cavalry were replaced by negro infantry. I had never seen negroes as soldiers, and these raw recruits had come from plantations, where I had known enough of their life, while in Texas and Louisiana, to realize what an irresponsible, child's existence it was. Further, it was very soon discovered that the officer who commanded them was for the first time accustoming himself to colored troops, and did not know how to keep in check the undisciplined

creatures. He was a quiet man, of scholarly tastes, and evidently entertained the belief that moral suasion would effect any purpose. The negroes, discovering what they could do under so mild a commander, grew each day more lawless. They used the parade-ground for a play-ground, turning hand-springs all over the sprouting grass, and vaulting in leap-frog over the bent back of a comrade. When one patted "juba" and a group danced, we seemed transformed into a minstrel show. There was not a trace of the well-conducted post of a short time before.

All this frivolity was but the prelude to serious trouble. The joy with which the negroes came into possession of a gun for the first time in their lives would have been ludicrous had it not been extremely dangerous. This was exhibited in their attempts to make themselves marksmen in a single day. They had no sort of idea how to care for their health. The ration of a soldier is so large that a man who can eat it all in a day is renowned as a glutton. I think but few instances ever occur where the entire ration is consumed by one man. It is not expected, and, fortunately, with all the economy of the Government, the supply has never been cut down; but the surplus is sold

and a company fund established. By this means the variety is increased by buying vegetables, if it happen to be a land where they can be obtained. The negroes, for the first time in possession of all the coffee, pork, sugar, and hardtack they wanted, ate inordinately. There was no one to compel them to cleanliness. Pestilence broke out among them. Smallpox, black measles, and other contagious diseases raged, while the soldier's enemy, scurvy, took possession.

Added to this there was much indiscriminate firing. One evening a few women were walking outside the garrison. Our limits were not so circumscribed, at that time, as they were in almost all the places where I was stationed afterward. A sentinel always walked a beat in front of a small arsenal outside of the post, and, overcome with the grandeur of carrying a gun and wearing a uniform, he sought to impress his soldierly qualities on any one approaching by a stentorian "Who comes thar?" It was entirely unnecessary, as it was light enough to see the fluttering skirts of women, for the winds kept our drapery in constant motion. Almost instantly after his challenge, the flash of his gun and the whizz of a bullet past us made us aware that our lives were



spared only because of his inaccurate aim. Of course that ended our evening walks.

There was one person who profited by the presence of the negro troops. Our Eliza was a great belle. The colored beaux waited on her assiduously, and I suspect they dined daily in our kitchen, as long as their brief season of favor lasted. They even sought to curry favor with Eliza by gifts to me—snaring quail, imprisoning them in cages made of cracker-boxes, or wild-flowers as they appeared in the dells. For all these gifts I was duly grateful, but I was much afraid of a negro soldier, nevertheless.

At last our perplexities and frights reached a climax. One night we heard the measured tramp of feet over the road in front of our quarters, and they halted almost opposite our windows, where we could hear the voices. No loud "Halt, who comes there!" rang out on the air, for the sentinel was enjoined to silence. Being frightened, I called to Eliza. She ran upstairs in response to my cry, and we watched with terror what went on. It soon was discovered to be a mutiny. The men growled and swore, and we could see by their threatening movements that they were in a state of exasperation. They demanded

the commanding officer, and as he did not appear, they clenched their fists, and looked at the house as if they would tear it down, or at least break in the doors. It seemed a desperate situation to us.

At last Eliza realized how terrified I was and gave an explanation of this alarming outbreak. The men had for some time been demanding the entire ration, and were especially clamorous for all the sugar that was issued. Very naturally, the Captain had withheld the supernumerary supplies, in order to make company savings for the purpose of buying vegetables. A mutiny over sugar may seem a small affair, but it assumes threatening proportions when a mob of menacing, furious men tramp up and down in front of one's house, and there is no safe place of refuge, nor any one to whom appeal can be made. Eliza kept up a continuous comforting and reassuring, but when I reminded her that our door had no locks, or, rather, no keys, for it was not the custom to lock army quarters, she said, "La, Miss Libbie, they won't tech you; you dun wrote too many letters for 'em, and they'se got too many good vittels in your kitchen ever to 'sturb you." The infuriated men had to quiet down, for no response came from the

commanding officer. They found out, I suppose, from the investigations of one acting as spy, and going to the rear of the quarters, that he had disappeared. They straggled off until their growling and muttering were lost in the barracks, where they went to bed. No steps were taken to punish them, and at any imaginary wrong, they might feel, from the success of this first attempt at insurrection, that it was safe to repeat the experiment. We women had little expectation but that the summer would be one of open rebellion against military rule. The commanding officer, though very retiring, was so courteous to all the women left in the garrison, that it was difficult to be angry with him for his failure to control the troops.

Meanwhile my letters, on which I wrote every day, made mention of our frights and uncertainties. Each mail carried out letters from the women to the expedition, narrating their fears. We had not the slightest idea that there was a remedy. It took a long time for our letters to reach the expedition, and a correspondingly long time for replies; but the descriptions of the night of mutiny brought the officers together in council, and the best disciplinarian of our regiment was immediate-

ly despatched to our relief. I knew but little of General Gibbs at that time; my husband had served with him during the war, and valued his soldierly ability and sincere friendship. He had been terribly wounded in the Indian wars before the Civil War, and was really unfit for hard service, but too soldierly to be willing to remain at the rear. In a week after his arrival at our post there was a marked difference in the state of affairs. Out of the seemingly hopeless material, General Gibbs made soldiers who were used as guards over Government property through the worst of the Indian country, and whose courage was put to the test by frequent attacks, where they had to defend themselves as well as the supplies.

Life in Kansas is full of surprises, but there was one that we would gladly have been spared. One quiet day I heard a great rumbling in the direction of the plateau where we had ridden so much, as if many prairie-schooners, heavily laden, were being spirited away by the stampede of mules. Next, our house began to rock, the bell to ring, and the pictures to vibrate on the wall. The mystery was solved when we ran to the gallery, and found the garrison rushing out of barracks

and quarters; women and children ran to the parade-ground, all hatless, some half-dressed. Everybody stared at everyone else, turned pale, and gasped with fright. It was an earthquake, sufficiently serious to shake our stone quarters and overturn the lighter articles, while farther down the gully the great stove at the sutler's store was tumbled over and the side of the building broken in by the shock. There was a deep fissure in the side of the bank, and the waters of the Big Blue were so agitated that the bed of the river twelve feet deep was plainly visible.

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## CHAPTER VI

### THE HOME OF THE BUFFALO

THE buffaloes were in such enormous herds all about us in Kansas, that it seemed as if nothing could diminish their numbers. General Sherman told me that from the time we were there until the date of their almost total annihilation, 9,000,000, had been killed. After the Pacific railroads were completed the Indian was partially subdued, and civilization spread along the routes of travel; the frontiers-

men were more daring, and buffalo-hunting became a slaughter. The skin-hunters carried on a great traffic. Wherever the steamers stopped to wood along the Missouri the river was lined with heaps of hides, tied in bales ready for shipment. At the railroad stations in Kansas the same thing was true. Seven hundred and fifty thousand hides were shipped from one station about 1874. The skin-hunters used this plan: One of the number still-hunted, singling out his animal, and firing at long range so that the sound of the bullet did not disturb the herd. The smell of the blood drew perhaps twenty about the slain animal, and the hunter fired at them from behind the carcass, where he had hidden himself on coming up to his dead game. The rest of the party skinned the carcasses, and then proceeded to follow up the herd. One man, an expert, has thus shot over a hundred in a day. The bones were gathered and shipped East also. In this systematic killing it is no wonder that now only a small herd in the Black Hills is reported to be in existence. While we were in Kansas the Indians were on the war-path, and men were not sufficiently daring in the pursuit of pelf to make hunting a business. The fearful destruction of buffaloes is a cause of national regret.

All the wide plains about us for thousands of miles were stamped with the presence of the American bison. Innumerable proofs that they had long been monarchs in that great desert were encountered on our long marches, no matter in what direction we moved. No other animal impressed itself so on the land as to have its trail become a feature of the vast country. The most noticeable of these evidences of their presence were the interminable trails to the streams. Many a desert mariner, guiding his canvas-covered wagon across the trackless Western sea of prairie, has saved his life by following these unfailing guides. The ruts were sometimes in four parallel lines, and so deeply cut by the huge monsters that patiently plodded through them, that we often had to check our horses to cross safely. The narrowness of these paths—for they were not much wider than the impression of a cart-wheel—was a surprise, until I saw how closely, how evenly, each hoof seemed to replace the other as the steady march went on. We learned very soon that we need not count on finding a stream near, by following the trail. It might be a journey of hours—for with a buffalo what was time? He lived but to eat and drink. There was never the wild, exultant

run of deer or antelope, which flew over the Plains apparently from joy and excess of life. The solemn, practical existence of the lumbering buffalo seemed to have begun before calfdom was fairly over.

It is true there was much fighting for leadership, and the heartless conduct toward the old bachelors of the herd is well known. When they showed signs of age, the stronger, younger bulls drove them out into a dreary existence, which was soon ended by the wolves that pursued the solitary tramps until exhaustion gave them up as prey. Occasionally several of the outcasts from the different herds met, and concluded to join forces and defy their joint enemy, the wolves. With us, unaccustomed that summer to the habits of the buffalo, the sight of a single animal browsing contentedly, augured an approaching herd ; and great was our disappointment, when he was allowed to gallop off at sight of us and escape, to find that he was not the forerunner of a herd, but only an outcast.

Many combats occurred among the bulls because two selected the same cow for a wife, and the painter who could have portrayed these monsters while they were raging with the fierceness of rivalry would have made his



mark. The heads bent forward to the ground in attempts to gore each other, the burning eyeballs, the desperate plunges which they made, apparently oblivious of their great weight, the turf torn with their maddened hoofs, the air thick with dust and bits of loosened sod, the temporary retreats of the contestants only to enable them to rush at one another with renewed force, afforded the most magnificent example of jealous fury. Meanwhile, the cow over which this war was waged, quietly browsed near by. When domestic life began, the winner of the hard-fought battle became a good defender of his family. In the great herds the cows were always in the centre, and a cordon of bulls surrounded them and their young, while outside them all were the pickets, which kept watch, and whose warnings were heeded at once if danger threatened.

The circles, perhaps fifteen feet in circumference, that I saw were one of the mysteries of that strange land. When the officers told me that the rut was made by the buffalo mother's walking round and round to protect her newly born and sleeping calf from the wolves at night, I listened, only to smile incredulously. I had been so often "guyed" with ridiculous stories, that I did not believe the tale. In time,

however, I found that it was true, and I never came across these pathetic circles without a sentiment of deepest sympathy for the anxious mother whose vigilance kept up the ceaseless tramp during the long night.

At first the bleaching bones of thousands of buffaloes were rather a melancholy sight, but I soon became as much accustomed to the ghastly sockets of an upturned skull as the field-mouse which ran in and out with food for her nest of little ones inside. The bones were often very old, for the bone collectors did not dare carry on their traffic at that dangerous time. The buffaloes were a singularly pitiful prey. They fought terribly when brought to bay, but when simply startled by the enemy, they ambled off as if saying, "This place is surely big enough for all of us; we'll get out of the way." Then when they were pursued, and the herd broke into a stampede, my heart was wrung with sympathy, especially if I chanced to spy calves. I hardly need say how careful the officers were not to shoot the cows. The reverence for motherhood is an instinct that is seldom absent from educated men. I know many instances in proof of the poet's words, "the bravest are the tenderest." Our officers taught the coarsest

soldier, in time, to regard maternity as something sacred.

It was only by the merest chance that I heard something of the gentleness of one of our officers, whose brave heart ceased to beat on the battle-field of the Little Big Horn. In marching on a scouting expedition one day he went in advance a short distance with his sergeant, and when his ten men caught up with him he found that they had shot the mothers of some young antelopes. Captain Yates indignantly ordered the men to return to the young, and each take a baby antelope in his arms and care for it until they reached the post. For two days the men marched on, bearing the tender little things, cushioning them as best they could in their folded blouses. One man had twins to look out for, and as a baby antelope is all legs and head, this squirming collection of tiny hoofs and legs stuck out from all sides as the soldier guided his horse as best he could with one hand, the arm of which encircled the bleating little orphans.

I also heard, only a year or so since, of an incident that happened perhaps fifteen years ago. A representative of the press was sent for scientific purposes with our regiment during the summer campaign. He told me that Gen-

eral Custer, riding at the head of the column, seeing the nest of a meadow-lark, with birdlings in it, in the grass, guided his horse around it, and resumed the straight course again without saying a word or giving a direction. The whole command of many hundred cavalymen made the same detour, each detachment coming up to the place where the preceding horsemen had turned out, and looking down into the nest to find the reason for the unusual departure from the straight line of march.

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## CHAPTER VII

### THE FIRST FIGHT OF THE SEVENTH CAVALRY

THE first fight of the Seventh Cavalry was at Fort Wallace on the road to Denver. In June, 1867, a band of three hundred Cheyennes, under Roman Nose, attacked the stage-station near that fort, and ran off the stock. Elated with this success, they proceeded to Fort Wallace, that poor little group of log huts and mud cabins having apparently no power of resistance. Only the simplest devices could be resorted to for defence. The commissary stores and ammunition were partly protected by a

low wall of gunny-sacks filled with sand. There were no logs near enough, and no time if there had been, to build a stockade. But our splendid cavalry charged out as boldly as if they were leaving behind them reserve troops and a battery of artillery. They were met by the Indians, with lances poised and arrows on the string, coming on swiftly in overwhelming numbers. It was a hand-to-hand fight. Roman Nose was about to throw his javelin at one of our men, when the cavalryman gave him a sabre-thrust and with his Spencer rifle wounded the chief, and saw him fall forward on his horse.

The post had been so short of men that a dozen negro soldiers, who had come with their wagon from an outpost for supplies, were placed near the garrison on picket duty. While the fight was going on, the two officers in command found themselves on the skirmish-line, and observed a wagon with four mules tearing out to the line of battle. It was filled with negroes, standing up, all firing in the direction of the Indians. The driver lashed the mules with his black-snake, and roared at them as they ran. When the skirmish-line was reached, the colored men leaped out and began firing again. No one had ordered them to

leave their picket-station, but they were determined that no soldiering should be carried on in which their valor was not proved.

Poor Fort Wallace! In another attack on the post, where several of our men were killed, there chanced to be some engineers stopping at the garrison, on their way to New Mexico. One of them, carrying a small camera, photographed a sergeant lying on the battle-ground after the enemy had retreated. The body was gashed and pierced by twenty-three arrows. Everything combined to keep that little garrison in a state of siege, and a gloomy pall hung over the beleaguered spot.

As the stage-stations were one after another attacked, burned, the men murdered, and the stock driven off for a distance of three hundred miles, the difficulty of sending mail became almost insurmountable. Denver lay out there at the foot of the mountains, as isolated as if it had been a lone island in the Pacific Ocean. Whenever a coach went out with the mail, a second one was filled with soldiers and led the advance. The Seventh Cavalry endeavored to fortify some of the deserted stage-stations; but the only means of defence consisted in burrowing underground. After the holes were dug, barely large enough for four men standing, and

a barrel of water and a week's provision, it was covered over with logs and turf, leaving an aperture for firing. Where the men had warning, they could "stand off" many Indians, and save the horses in another dug-out adjacent.

At one of the stage-stations nearest Denver a woman had endeavored to brave it out; but her nerve deserted her at last, and she implored our officer to take her as far as he went on her way into the States. Her husband, trying to protect the stage company's interests, elected to remain, but begged that his wife might be taken away from the deadly peril. Our officer frankly said there was little chance that the stage would ever reach Fort Wallace. She replied that she had been frightened half to death all summer, and was sure to be murdered if she remained, and might as well die in the stage, as there was no chance for her at the station.

Every revolution of the wheels brought them into greater danger. Three soldiers on the top of the stage kept a lookout on every side, while the officer inside sat with rifle in hand, looking from the door on either side the trail. Even with all this vigilance, the attack, when it came, was a surprise. The Indians had hidden in a wash-out near the road. Their

first shot fatally wounded one of the soldiers, who, dropping his gun, fell over the coach railing, and with dying energy, half swung himself into the door of the stage, gasping out a message to his mother. Our officer replied that he would listen to the parting words later, helped the man to get upon the seat, and, without a preliminary, pushed the woman down into the deep body of the coach, bidding her, as she valued the small hope of life, not to let herself be seen. Those familiar with Indian warfare know well with what ferocity the savage fights, if he finds that a white woman is likely to fall into his hands. It is well known, also, that the squaws are ignored if the chiefs have a white woman in their power, and it brings a more fearful agony to her lot, for when the warriors are absent from the village, the squaws, wild with jealousy, heap cruelty and exhausting labor upon the helpless victim. All this the frontier woman knew and it needed no second command to keep her head on the floor of the coach.

The instant the dying soldier had dropped his gun, the driver—ah, what cool heads those stage-drivers had!—seized the weapon, thrusting his lines between his agile and muscular knees, inciting his mules, and every shot had a



deadly aim. The soldiers fired one volley, and then leaped to the ground as the officer sprang from the stage-door, and following beside the vehicle, continued to fire as they walked. The first two shots from the roof of the coach had killed two Indians hidden in the hole made by the wash-out. By that means our men got the upper hand of them, and they pursued at a greater distance.

This running fire continued for five miles, when, fortunately, one of the stage-stations, where a few men had been posted, was reached. Here a halt was made, as the Indians congregated on a bluff where they could watch safely. The coach was a wreck. The large lamps on either side of the driver's seat were shattered, and there were six bullet-holes between the roof and the wooden body of the coach. When the door of the stage was opened, the crouching woman lifted her face from the floor and was helped out. She looked about, and said, "I don't see any Indians yet." The officer told her that if she would take the trouble to look over on the bluff, she would find them on dress parade. Then she told him about her experience in the stage. The dying soldier had breathed his last soon after he fell into the coach, and all the five miles his dead

body kept slipping from the seat on to her. In vain she pushed it one side; the violence with which the vehicle rocked from side to side, as the driver urged his animals to their utmost speed, made it impossible for her to protect herself from contact with the heavy corpse, that rolled about with the plunging of the coach.

One troop of the Seventh Cavalry was left to garrison Fort Wallace, while the remainder of the regiment was scouting. The post was then about as dreary as any spot on earth. There were no trees; only the arid plain surrounded it, and the sirocco winds drove the sands of that desolate desert into the dug-outs that served for the habitation of officers and men. The supplies were of the worst description. It was impossible to get vegetables and there was, therefore, no preventing the soldier's scourge, scurvy, which the heat aggravated, inflaming the already burning flesh. Even the medical supplies were limited. None of the posts at that time were provided with decent food—that is, none beyond the railroad. The bacon issued to the soldiers was not only rancid, but was supplied by dishonest contractors, who slipped in any foreign substance they could, to make the weight come up to the required amount; and thus the soldiers were

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cheated out of the quantity due them, as well as imposed upon in the quality of their rations. It was the privilege of the enlisted men to make their complaints to the commanding officer, and some of them sent to ask the General to come and see what frauds were being practised. I went with him, and saw a flat stone, the size of the slices of bacon as they were packed together, sandwiched between the layers. My husband was justly incensed, but could promise no immediate redress. The route of travel was so dangerous that it was necessary to detail a larger number of men to guard any train of supplies that attempted to reach those distant posts. The soldiers felt that it was an outrage that preparations for the arrival of so large a number of troops had not been perfected in the spring, before the whole country was in a state of siege. The supplies provided for those troops operating in the field or stationed at the posts had been sent out during the war. It was then 1867, and they had lain in the poor, ill-protected adobe or dug-out storehouse all the intervening time—more than two years. At Forts Wallace and Hays there were no storehouses, and the flour and bacon were only protected by tarpaulins. Both became rancid and mouldy, and were at the

mercy of the rats and mice. A larger quantity of supplies was forwarded to that portion of the country the last year of the war than was needed for the volunteer troops sent out there, and consequently our Seventh Cavalry, scouting day and night all through that eventful summer, were compelled to subsist on the food already on hand. The desertions were unceasing. The nearer the troops approached the mountains, the more the men took themselves off to the mines.

In April of that year no deaths had occurred at Fort Wallace, but by November there were sixty mounds outside the garrison, covering the brave hearts of soldiers who had either succumbed to illness or been shot by Indians. It was a fearful mortality for a garrison of fewer than two hundred souls. If the soldiers, hungry for fresh meat, went out to shoot buffalo, the half of them mounted guard to protect those who literally took their lives in their hands to provide a few meals of wholesome food for themselves and their comrades. At one company post on the South Platte a troop of our Seventh Cavalry was stationed. In the mining excitement that ran so high in 1866 and 1867, the Captain woke one morning to find that his first sergeant and forty out of sixty men had

decamped, with horses and equipments, for the mines. This left the handful of men in imminent peril from Indian assaults.

Our regiment was now passing through its worst days. Constant scouting over the sun-baked, cactus-bedded Plains, by men who were learning by the severest lessons to inure themselves to hardships, made terrible havoc in the ranks. The horses grew gaunt, and dragged their miserably fed bodies over the blistering trail. Here and there along the line a trooper walked beside his beast, wetting, when he could, the flesh that was raw from the chafing of the saddle.

Insubordination among the men was the certain consequence of the half-starved, discouraged state they were in. One good fight would have put heart into them, for the hopelessness of following such a will-o'-the-wisp as the Indians were that year, made them think their scouting did no good. In its early days the Seventh Cavalry was not the fine regiment it afterward became.

There were troopers who had entered the service from a romantic love of adventure, with little idea of the stuff a man must be made of if he is hourly in peril, or continually called upon to endure privation.

The mines were evidently the great object that induced the soldier to enlist that year. The Eastern papers had wild accounts of the enormous yield in the Rocky Mountains, and free transportation by Government could be gained by enlisting. At that time, when the railroad was incomplete, and travel almost given up on account of danger to the stages; when the telegraph, which now reaches the destination of the rogue with its warning far in advance of him, had not even been projected over the Plains—it was the easiest sort of escape for a man, for when once he reached the mines he was lost for years.

In one night, while I was at Fort Hays, forty men deserted, and in so bold and deliberate a manner, taking arms, ammunition, horses, and quantities of food, that the officers were roused to action, for it looked as if not enough men would be left to protect the fort. A conspiracy was formed among the men, by which a third of the whole command planned to desert at one time. Had not their plotting been discovered, there would not have been a safe hour for those who remained, as the Indians lay in wait constantly.

After weary marches, the regiment found itself nearing Fort Wallace with a sense of relief,

feeling that they might recruit in that miserable but comparatively safe post. They were met by the news of the ravages of the cholera. No time could be worse for the soldiers to encounter it. The long, trying campaign had fatigued and disheartened the command. Exhaustion and semi-starvation made the men an easy prey. The climate, though so hot in summer, had heretofore been in their favor, as the air was pure, and, in ordinary weather, bracing. But with cholera, even the high altitude was no protection. No one could account for the appearance of the pestilence; never before had it been known in so elevated a part of our country. There were those who attributed the scourge to the upturning of the earth in building the Kansas Pacific Railroad; but the engineers had not even been able to prospect as far as Wallace on account of the Indians. An infantry regiment, on its march to New Mexico, halted at Fort Wallace, and even in their brief stay the men were stricken down.

It was a hard fate for our Seventh Cavalry men. Their camp, outside the garrison, had no protection from the remorseless sun, and the poor fellows rolled on the hot earth in their small tents, without a cup of cold water or a morsel of decent food. The surgeons fought

day and night to stay the spread of the disease, but everything was against them. The exhausted soldiers, disheartened by long, hard, unsuccessful marching, had little desire to live when seized by the awful disease.

Though the mails were so uncertain, the story of the illness and desperate condition of our regiment reached us, and many an exaggerated tale came with the true ones. Day after day I sat on the gallery of the quarters watching for the first sign of the cavalryman who brought our mail. Doubtless he thought himself a winged Mercury. In reality, no snail ever crept so slowly. When he began his walk toward me, measuring his steps with military precision, a world of fretful impatience possessed me. I wished with all my soul that I might pick up my skirts and fly over the grass, and snatch the parcel from his hand. When he finally reached the gallery, and swung himself into position to salute, my heart thumped like the infantry drum. Day after day came the same pompous, maddening words: "I have the honor to report there are no letters for Mrs. Major-General George Armstrong Custer." Not caring at last whether the man saw the flush of disappointment, the choking breath, and the rising tears, I fled in the midst of his



slow announcement, to plunge my wretched head into my pillow. After days of such gloom, my leaden heart one morning quickened its beats at an unusual sound—the clank of a sabre on our gallery and with it the quick, springing steps of feet unlike the quiet infantry around us. The door, behind which I paced uneasily, opened, and with a flood of sunshine that poured in, came a vision far brighter than even the brilliant Kansas sun. There before me, blithe and buoyant, stood my husband! What had I to ask more? The General, as usual when happy, talked so rapidly that the words jumbled themselves into hopeless tangles, but my ears were keen enough to extract from the medley the fact that I was to return at once with him.

Eliza, half crying, scolding as she did when overjoyed, vibrated between kitchen and parlor, and finally fell to cooking, as a safety-valve for her overcharged spirits. The General ordered everything she had in the house, determined to have, for once in that summer, one “good, square meal,” as the soldiers term it.

When my reason was again enthroned, I began to ask what good fortune had brought him. It seems that my husband, after reaching Fort Wallace, was overwhelmed with the discour-

agements that met him. His men dying about him, without his being able to afford them relief, was something impossible for him to face without a struggle for their assistance. A greater danger than all was yet to be encountered, if the right measures were not taken immediately. There was not enough food left to ration the men, and unless more came they would starve. If a scout was sent, his progress was so slow, hiding all day and travelling only by night, it would take so long that there might be men dying from hunger as well as cholera, before he could return with aid. And, besides this scarcity of food, the medical supplies were insufficient. The General, prompt always in action, suddenly determined to relieve the beleaguered place by going himself for medicines and rations. He took a hundred men to guard the wagons, and in fifty-five hours they were at Fort Hays, one hundred and fifty miles distant. It was a terrible journey.

My little valise was filled long before it was necessary for us to take the return train that evening. With the joy, the relief, the gratitude, of knowing that God had spared my husband through an Indian campaign, and averted from him the cholera; and that I was to be given reprieve from days of anxiety, and nights of

hideous dreams, and that I should be taken back to camp—could more be crowded into one day? Was there room for a thought, save one of devout thankfulness, and such happiness as I find no words to describe?

There was in that summer of 1867 one long, perfect day—it is still mine, for time and for eternity.

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## CHAPTER VIII

### BATTLE OF THE WASHITA

THE orders for moving toward the Indian village were issued on the evening of November 22, 1868. It began to snow and our men stood round the camp-fire for their breakfast at five o'clock the next morning, the snow almost up to their knees. The Seventh, consisting of nine hundred men, was to leave General Sheridan and the infantry, and all the extra wagons and supplies, and strike out into this blinding storm. General Sheridan, awake with anxiety at reveille, called out to ask what General Custer thought about the snow and the storm. The reply was, "All the better for us; we can move, the Indians cannot." The packing was soon done, as every ounce of super-

fluous baggage was left behind, and forward our brave fellows pushed into the dawn.

The air was so filled with the fine snow that it was perilous to separate one's self even a short distance from the column. The Indian guides could not see any landmarks, and had it not been for the compass of the commanding officer, an advance would have been impossible. At night, camp was made in some timber bordering a creek, and the snow still fell so fast that the officers themselves helped to shovel it away while the soldiers stretched the small amount of canvas that was spread. Fortunately, even at that late season, fresh meat was secured for all the command, for in the underbrush of the streams one out of a group of benumbed buffaloes was easily killed.

In crossing the Canadian River, the quicksands, the floating snow and ice, were faced uncomplainingly, and the nine hundred wet soldiers started up the opposite side without a murmur.

Finally the Indian trail, so long looked for, was struck, and the few wagons were ordered to halt; and only such supplies as could be carried on the person or the horse, consisting of rations, forage, and a hundred rounds of ammunition for each trooper, were taken.

The first hours of following the trail were terribly hard. Men and horses suffered for food, for from four in the morning till nine at night no halt could be made. Then by hiding under the deep banks of the stream, fires were lighted, and the men had coffee and the horses oats; but no bugle sounded, no voice was raised, as the Indians might be dangerously near. The advance was taken up again with the Indian guides creeping stealthily along in front, tracing as best they could the route of their foes. The soldier was even deprived of his beloved pipe, for a spark might, at that moment, lose all which such superhuman efforts had been put forth to gain.

After what seemed an interminable time, the ashes of a fire lately extinguished were discovered; then farther on a dog barked, and finally the long-looked-for Indian village was discovered by the cry of a baby.

The rest of the night was spent in posting the command on different sides of the village, in snatching a brief sleep, stretched out on the snow, and in longing for daybreak. Excitement kept the ardent soldiers warm, and when the band put their cold lips to the still colder metal, and struck up "Garryowen," the soldiers' hearts were bursting with enthusiasm.

At the sound of the bugles blowing on the still morning air—the few spirited notes of the call to “charge”—in went the few hundred men as confidently as if there had been thousands of them, and a reserve corps at the rear.

Often as this battle has been talked over before me, I do not feel myself especially impressed with its military details; womanlike, the cry of the Indian baby, the capture of a white woman, the storm that drenched our brave men, are all fresher in my memory, and come to my pen more readily, than the actual charging and fighting.

Many of the squaws and children fought like the Indians, darting in and out and firing with cool aim from the opening of the tepees. Some of these squaws followed in the retreat, but there were some still prudent enough to remain out of sight. While the fight was going on they sang dirges in a minor key, all believing their own last hour had come.

The attention of Captain Yates was attracted to the glittering of something bright in the underbrush. In a moment a shot from a pistol explained that the glistening object was the barrel of a pistol, and he was warned by his soldiers that it was a squaw who had aimed for him, and was preparing to fire again. He then

went round a short distance to investigate, and found a squaw standing in the stream, one leg broken, but holding her pappoose closely to her. She resisted most vigorously every attempt to capture her, though the agony of her shattered limb must have been extreme. When she found that her pistol was likely to be taken, she threw it in the stream, and fought fiercely again. At last they succeeded in getting her pappoose, and she surrendered. She was carried forward to a tepee, where our surgeon took charge of her.

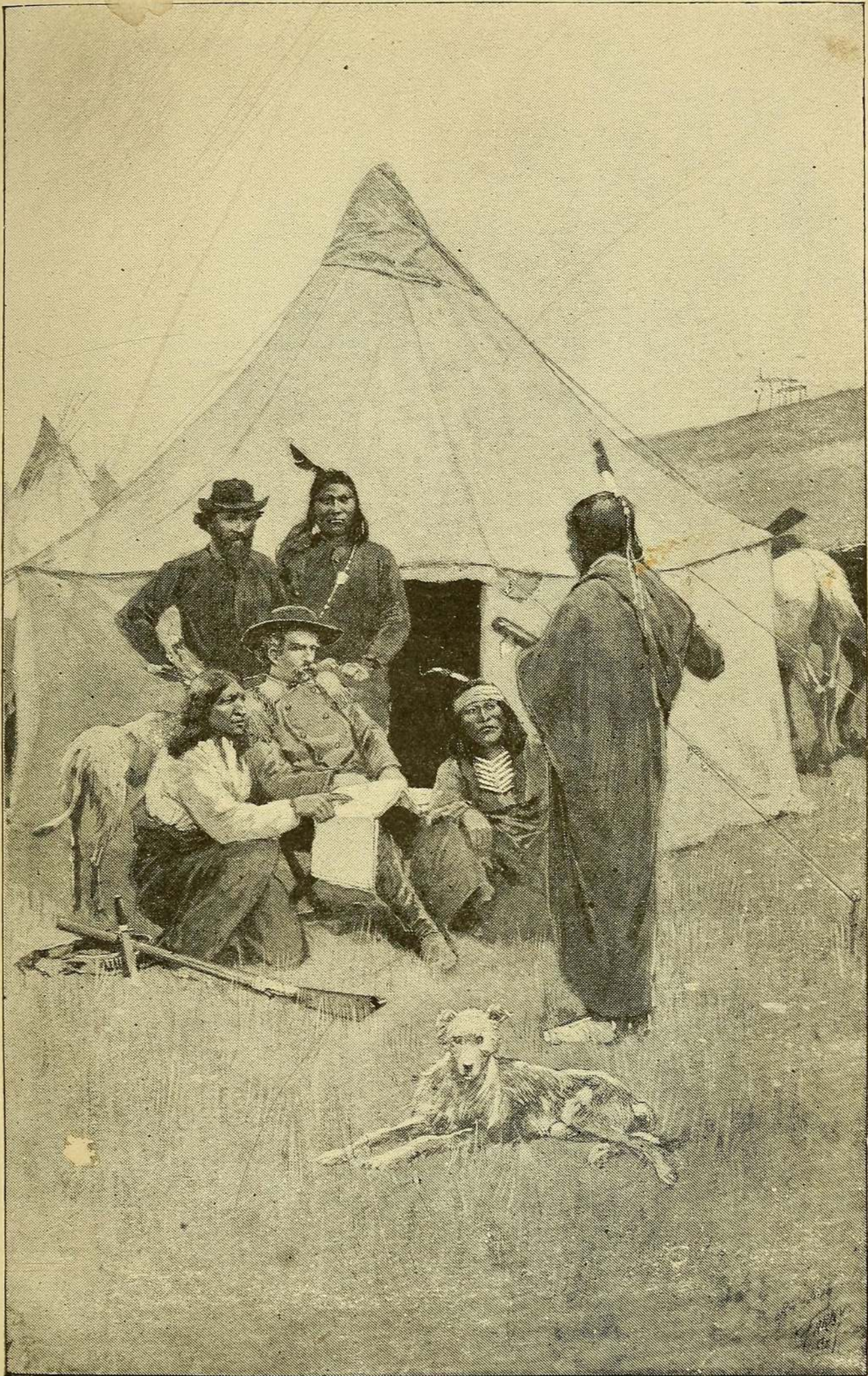
As soon as the warriors were driven out, "Romeo," who spoke the dialect, was sent by the commanding officer to set the fears of the self-imprisoned women at rest, and they were then all gathered in some of the larger lodges.

Before leaving the battle-ground it was necessary, if our troops hoped really to cripple the enemy and prevent further invasion, to destroy the property, for it was impossible to carry away much of what had been captured. The contents of the village were collected in heaps and burned. The ponies were crowded together and shot. It took three companies an hour and a half to kill the eight hundred ponies. This last duty was something the officers never

forgot. Nothing but the exigencies of war could have driven them to it. But they could not be driven away in the deep snow, and with so small a command it was impossible to spare men to attempt the rescue of the poor, dumb, helpless beasts.

In order to escape from the situation, which was most threatening, for the Indians were assembling on the bluffs overlooking the command, General Custer put on a brave front, and ordered the band to play "Garryowen," and the colors to be unfurled; the skirmishers were sent on in advance, and the command set out in the direction of the other villages. The Indians, perceiving not only the determined advance, but appreciating that every sign of past victory was apparent, supposed the triumphant troops were about to march on the villages below, and they fled before the column. After dark the order to countermarch was given, and as rapidly as possible the tired troopers rode back to the train of supplies that had been endeavoring for days to make its way to the regiment.





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GENERAL CUSTER AND HIS INDIAN SCOUTS.

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## CHAPTER IX

### THE BOY GENERAL IN THE NORTHWEST

WE remained in Kansas five years, during which time I was the only officer's wife who always followed the regiment. We were then ordered, with the regiment, to Kentucky. After being there two years, we went to Dakota in the spring of 1873.

When orders came for the Seventh Cavalry to go into the field again, General Custer was delighted. The regiment was stationed in various parts of the South, on the very disagreeable duty of breaking up illicit distilleries and suppressing the Ku-Klux. Fortunately for us, being in Kentucky, we knew very little of this service. It seemed an unsoldierly life, for a true cavalryman feels that a life in the saddle on the free open plain is his legitimate existence.

Not an hour elapsed after the official document announcing our change of station had arrived, before our house was torn up. In the confusion I managed to retire to a corner with an atlas, and on the sly look up the territory to which we were going. I hardly liked to own

that I had forgotten its location. When my finger traced our route from Kentucky almost up to the border of the British possessions, it seemed as if we were going to Lapland.

From the first days of our marriage, General Custer celebrated every order to move with wild demonstrations of joy. His exuberance of spirits always found expression in some boyish pranks, before he could set to work seriously to prepare for duty. As soon as the officer announcing the order to move had disappeared, all sorts of hilarity began. I had learned to take up a safe position on top of the table; that is, if I had not already been placed there as a spectator. The most disastrous result of the proceedings was possibly a broken chair, which the master of ceremonies would crash, and, perhaps, throw into the kitchen by way of informing the cook that good news had come. We had so few household effects that it was something of a loss when we chanced to be in a country where they could not be replaced. I can see Eliza's woolly head now, as she thrust it through the door to reprimand her master, and say, "Chairs don't grow on trees in these yere parts, Gen'l." As for me, I was tossed about the room, and all sorts of jokes were played upon me before the frolic was ended.

I know that it would surprise a well-regulated mover to see what short work it was for us to prepare for our journeys. We began by having a supply of gunny-sacks and hay brought in from the stables. The saddler appeared, and all our old traps were once more tied and sewed up. The kitchen utensils were plunged into barrels, generally left uncovered in the hurry; rolls of bedding encased in waterproof cloth or canvas were strapped and roped, and the few pictures and books were crowded into chests and boxes. When these possessions were loaded upon the wagon, at the last moment there always appeared the cook's bedding to surmount the motley pile. Her property was invariably tied up in a flaming quilt representing souvenirs of her friends' dresses. She followed that last instalment with anxious eyes, and, true to her early training, grasped her red bandanna, containing a few last things, while the satchel she scorned to use hung empty on her arm.

Steamers were ready for us at Memphis, and we went thither by rail to embark. When the regiment was gathered together, after a separation of two years, there were hearty greetings, and exchanges of troublous or droll experiences; thankful to be reunited, we entered again, heart and soul, into the minutest detail of one another's

lives. We went into camp for a few days on the outskirts of Memphis, and exchanged hospitalities with the citizens. The bachelors found an elysium in the society of many pretty girls, and love-making went on in parlors or in the open air as they rode in the warm spring weather to and from our camp. Three steamers were at last loaded and we went on to Cairo, where we found the trains prepared to take us into Dakota.

The regiment was never up to its maximum of twelve hundred, but there may have been eight or nine hundred soldiers and as many horses. The property of the companies—saddles, equipments, arms, ammunition, and forage—together with the personal luggage of the officers, made the trains very heavy, and we travelled slowly. We were a week or more on the route. Our days were varied by the long stops necessary to water the horses, and occasionally to take them out of the cars for exercise. My husband and I always went on these occasions to loose the dogs and have a frolic and a little visit with our own horses. The youth and gamins of the village gathered about us as if we had been some travelling show. While on the journey one of our family had a birthday. This was always a day of frolic and

fun, and even when we were on the extreme frontier, presents were sent for into the States, and we had a little dinner and a birthday-cake. This birthday that came during the journey did not leave utterly without resources the minds of those whose ingenuity was quickened by affection. The train was delayed that day for a long time, and our colored cook, Mary, successor to Eliza who had married and gone South, determined on a feast. She slyly took a basket and filled it at the shops in the village street. She had already made friends with a woman who had a little cabin tucked in between the rails and the embankment, and there the never-absent "eureka" coffee-pot was produced and most delicious coffee dripped. Returning to the car-stove, which she had discovered was filled with a bed of coals, she broiled us a steak, and baked some potatoes. The General and I were made to sit down opposite each other in one of the compartments. A board was brought covered with a clean towel, and we did table-legs to this impromptu table. We did not dare move for fear we should overturn the laden board. For dessert, a large plate of macaroons was brought out as a surprise. Mary told me, with great glee, how she had seen the General prowling in the bakers' shops to buy

them, and described the train of small boys who followed him when he came back with his brown paper parcel. "Miss Libby," she said, "they thought a sure enough gen'l always went on horseback and carried his sword in his hand."

We were so hungry we scarcely realized that we were not the embodiment of picturesque grace. No one could be otherwise than awkward in trying to cut food on such an uncertain base, while Mary had taken the last scrap of dignity away from the General's appearance by enveloping him in a kitchen-towel as a substitute for a napkin. With their usual independence, troops of curious citizens stalked through the car to stare at my husband. We went on eating calmly, unconscious that they thought the picture hardly in keeping with their preconceived ideas of a commanding officer. When we thanked Mary for our feast, her face beamed with a combination of joy at our delight and heat from the stove. When she lifted up our frugal board and set us free, we had a long stroll, talking over other birthdays and those yet to come, until the train was ready to start.



## CHAPTER X

## AN APRIL BLIZZARD

AFTER so many days in the car, we were glad to stop on an open plain about a mile from the town of Yankton, where the road ended.

The three chief considerations for a camp are wood, water, and good ground. The latter we had, but we were at some distance from the water, and neither trees nor brushwood were in sight.

The long trains were unloaded and the plains about us seemed to swarm with men and horses. I was helped down from the Pullman car, where inlaid woods, mirrors, and plush surrounded us, to the ground, perfectly bare of every earthly comfort. The other ladies of the regiment went on to the hotel in the town. The General suggested that I should go with them, but I had been in camp so many summers it was not a formidable matter for me to remain, and fortunately for what followed I did so. The household belongings were gathered together. A family of new

puppies, some half-grown dogs, the cages of mocking-birds and canaries, were all corralled safely in a little stockade made of chests and trunks, and we set ourselves about making a temporary home. The General and a number of soldiers were obliged to go at once to lay out the main camp and assign the companies to their places. Later on our tents were to be pitched. While I sat on a chest waiting, the air grew suddenly chilly, the bright sun of the morning disappeared, and the rain began to fall. Had we been accustomed to the climate we should have known that these changes were the precursors of a snow-storm.

When we left Memphis, we wore muslin gowns and were then uncomfortably warm ; it seemed impossible that even so far north there could be winter in the middle of April. On the bluffs beyond us was a signal-station, but they sent us no warning. Each new country has its peculiarities, and it seemed we had reached one where all the others were out-done. As the afternoon of that first day advanced, the wind blew colder, and I found myself eying with envy a little half-finished cabin without an enclosure, standing by itself. Years of encountering the winds of Kansas, when our tents were torn and blown down so often,

had taught me to appreciate any kind of house, even though it were built upon the sand as this one was. A dug-out, which the tornado swept over, but could not harm, was even more of a treasure. The change of climate from the extreme south to the far north had made a number of the men ill, and even the superb health of the General had suffered. He continued to superintend the camp, however, though I begged him from time to time to give up. I felt sure he needed a shelter and some comfort at once, so I took courage to plan for myself. Before this I had always waited, as the General preferred to prepare everything for me. After he had consented that we should try for the little house, some of the kind-hearted soldiers found the owner in a distant cabin, and he rented it to us for a few days. The place was equal to a palace to me. There was no plastering, and the house seemed hardly weather-proof. It had a floor, however, and an upper story divided off by beams; over these Mary and I stretched blankets and shawls and so made two rooms. It did not take long to settle our few things, and when wood and water were brought from a distance we were quite ready for housekeeping, except that we lacked a stove and some supplies. Mary

walked into the town to get a small cooking-stove, but she could not induce the merchant to bring it out that night. She was thoughtful enough to take along a basket and brought with her a little marketing. On her return, the snow was falling so fast it was with difficulty that she found her way.

Meanwhile the General had returned completely exhausted and very ill. I sent for the surgeon, who, like all of his profession in the army, came promptly. He gave me some powerful medicine to administer every hour, and forbade the General to leave his bed. It was growing dark, and we were in the midst of a Dakota blizzard. The snow was so fine that it penetrated the smallest cracks, and soon we found white lines appearing all around us, where the roof joined the walls, on the windows and under the doors. Outside, the air was so thick with the whirling, tiny particles that it was almost impossible to see one's hand held out before one. The snow was fluffy and thick, like wool, and fell so rapidly, and seemingly from all directions, that it gave me a feeling of suffocation. Mary was not easily discouraged, and piling a few light fagots outside the door, she tried to light a fire. The wind and the muffling snow put out every lit-

tle blaze that started, however, and so, giving it up, she went into the house and found the luncheon-basket we had brought from the car, in which remained some sandwiches, and these composed our supper.

The night had almost settled down upon us when the Adjutant came for orders. Knowing the scarcity of fuel and the danger to the horses from exposure to the rigor of such weather after their removal from a warm climate, the General ordered the breaking of camp. All the soldiers were directed to take their horses and go into Yankton, and ask the citizens to give them shelter in their homes, cow-sheds, and stables. In a short time the camp was nearly deserted, only the laundresses, two or three officers, and a few dismounted soldiers remaining. The towns-people, true to the unvarying Western hospitality, gave everything they could to the use of the regiment; the officers found places in the hotels. The sounds of the hoofs of the hurrying horses flying by our cabin on their way to the town had hardly died out before the black night closed in and left us alone on that wide, deserted plain. The servants, Mary and Ham, did what they could to make the room below-stairs comfortable by stopping the cracks and

barricading the frail door. The thirty-six hours of our imprisonment there seems now a frightful nightmare. The wind grew higher and higher, and shrieked about the little house dismally. It was built without a foundation, and was so rickety it seemed as it rocked in a great gust of wind that it surely would be unroofed or overturned. The General was too ill for me to venture to find my usual comfort from his reassuring voice. I dressed in my heaviest gown and jacket, and remained under the blankets as much as I could to keep warm. Occasionally I crept out to shake off the snow from the counterpane. I hardly dared take the little phial in my benumbed fingers to drop the precious medicine for fear it would fall. I realized, as the night advanced, that we were as isolated from the town, and even the camp, not a mile distant, as if we had been on an island in the river. The doctor had intended to return to us, but his serious face and impressive injunctions made me certain that he considered the life of the General dependent on the medicine being regularly given.

During the night I was startled by hearing a dull sound, as of something falling heavily. Flying down the stairs, I found the servants prying open the frozen and snow-packed door,

to admit a half dozen soldiers who, becoming bewildered by the snow, had been saved by the faint light we had placed in the window. After that several came, and two were badly frozen. We were in despair of finding any way of warming them, as there was no bedding, and, of course, no fire, until I remembered the carpets which were sewed up in bundles and heaped in one corner, where the boxes were, and which we were not to use until the garrison was reached. Spreading them out, we had enough to roll up each wanderer as he came. The frozen men were in so exhausted a condition that they required immediate attention. Their sufferings were intense, and I could not forgive myself for not having something with which to revive them. The General never tasted liquor, and we were both so well always we did not even keep it for use in case of sickness.

I saw symptoms of that deadly stupor which is the sure precursor of freezing, when I remembered a bottle of alcohol which had been brought for the spirit-lamps. Mary hated to use the only means by which we could make coffee for ourselves, but the groans and haggard faces of the men won her over, and we saw them revive under the influence of the fiery

liquid. Poor fellows! They afterward lost their feet, and some of their fingers had also to be amputated. The first soldier who had reached us explained that they had all attempted to find their way to town, and the storm had completely overcome them. Fortunately one had clung to a bag of hard-tack, which was all they had had to eat.

At last the day came, but so darkened by the snow it seemed rather a twilight. The drifts were on three sides of us like a wall. The long hours dragged themselves away, leaving the General too weak to rise, and in great need of hot, nourishing food. I grew more and more terrified at our utterly desolate condition and his continued illness. He was too ill, and I too anxious, to eat the fragments that remained in the luncheon-basket. The snow continued to come down in great swirling sheets, while the wind shook the loose window-casings and sometimes broke in the door. When night came again and the cold increased, I believed that our hours were numbered. I missed the voice of the courageous Mary, for she had sunk down in a corner exhausted for want of sleep, while Ham had been completely demoralized from the first. Occasionally I melted a little place on the frozen window-pane, and saw that the



drifts were almost level with the upper windows on either side, but that the wind had swept a clear space before the door. During the night the sound of the tramping of many feet rose above the roar of the storm. A great drove of mules rushed up to the sheltered side of the house. Their brays had a sound of terror as they pushed, kicked, and crowded themselves against our little cabin. For a time they huddled together, hoping for warmth, and then despairing, they made a mad rush away, and were soon lost in the white wall of snow beyond. All night long the neigh of a distressed horse, almost human in its appeal, came to us at intervals. The door was pried open once, thinking it might be some suffering fellow-creature in distress. The strange, wild eyes of the horse peering in for help, haunted me long afterward. Occasionally a lost dog lifted up a howl of distress under our window. When the night was nearly spent I sprang again to the window with a new horror, for no one, until he hears it for himself, can realize what varied sounds animals make in the excitement of peril. A drove of hogs, squealing and grunting, were pushing against the house, and the door, which had withstood so much, had to be held to keep it from being broken in.

It was almost unbearable to hear the groans of the soldiers over their swollen and painful feet, and know that we could do nothing to ease them. Every minute seemed a day; every hour a year. When daylight came I dropped into an exhausted slumber, and was awakened by Mary standing over our bed with a tray of hot breakfast. I asked if help had come, and finding it had not, of course, I could not understand the smoking food. She told me that feeling the necessity of the General's eating, it had come to her in the night-watches that she would cut up the large candles she had brought along, and try if she could cook over the many short pieces placed close together, so as to make a large flame. The result was hot coffee and some bits of the steak she had brought from town, fried with a few slices of potatoes.

The breakfast revived the General so much that he began to make light of danger. The snow had ceased to fall, but for all that it still seemed that we were castaways, hidden under the drifts that nearly surrounded us. Help was near at hand, however, at even this darkest hour. A knock at the door, and the cheery voices of men came up to our ears. Some citizens of Yankton had found their way

to our relief, and the officers, who neither knew the way nor how to travel over such a country, had gladly followed. They told us that they had made several attempts to get to us, but the snow was so soft and light that they could make no headway. They floundered and sank down almost out of sight, even in the streets of the town. Of course no horse could travel, but they told me of their intense anxiety, and said that, fearing I might be in need of immediate help, they had dragged a cutter over the drifts, which now had a crust of ice formed from the sleet and the moisture of the damp night-air. Of course I declined to go without the General, but I was deeply touched by their thought of me. I made some excuse to go upstairs, where, with my head buried in the shawl partition, I tried to smother the sobs that had been suppressed during the terrors of our desolation. Here the General found me, and though comforting me by tender words, he still reminded me that he would not like any one to know that I had lost my pluck when all the danger I had passed through was ended.

## CHAPTER XI

## ON TO FORT LINCOLN

WHEN the day came for us to begin our march, the sun shone and the towns-people wished us good-luck with their good-by.

The length of each day's march varied according to the streams on which we relied for water, or the arrival of the boat. The steamer that carried the forage for the horses and the supplies for the command, was tied up to the river-bank every night, as near to us as was possible. The laundresses and ladies of the regiment were on board, except the General's sister, Margaret, who made her first march with her husband, riding all the way on horse-back. As usual, I rode beside the General. Our first few days were pleasant, and we began at once to enjoy the plover. The land was so covered with them that the hunters shot them with all sorts of arms. We counted eighty birds in the gunny-sack that three of the soldiers brought in. Fortunately there were several shot-guns in the possession of our family, and the little things, therefore, were not torn

to pieces, but could be broiled over the coals of the camp-fire. They were so plump that their legs were like tiny points coming from beneath the rounded outline that swept the grass as they walked. No butter was needed in cooking them, for they were very fat. How good the plover and sandwiches tasted, while we quenched our thirst with cold coffee or tea! Since we were named "The Great Grab Mess," we all dared to reach over and help ourselves, and the one most agile and with the longest arms was the best fed.

No great ceremony is to be expected when one rises before four, and takes a hurried breakfast by the light of a tallow-candle; the soldiers waiting outside to take down the tent, the servants hastily and suggestively rattling the kettles and gridiron as they packed them, made it an irresistible temptation for one hungry to "grab."

We had a very satisfactory little cook-stove. It began its career with legs, but the wind used to lift it up from the ground with such violence it was finally dismembered, and afterward placed flat on the ground. Being of sheet-iron it cooled quickly, was very light, and could be put in the wagon in a few moments after the morning meal was cooked. When we came

out from breakfast the wagon stood near, partly packed, and bristling with kitchen utensils; buckets and baskets tied outside the cover, axe and spade lashed to the side, while the little stove looked out from the end. The mess-chest stood open on the ground to receive the dishes we had used. At a given signal the dining-tent went down with all those along the line, and they were stowed away in the wagons in an incredibly short time. The wagon-train then drew out and formed in order at the rear of the column.

At the bugle-call, "Boots and Saddles," each soldier mounted and took his place in line, all riding two abreast. First came the General and his staff, with whom Sister Margaret and I were permitted to ride; the private orderlies and head-quarters detail rode in our rear; and then came the companies according to the places assigned them for the day; finally the wagon-train, with the rear-guard. We made a long cavalcade that stretched over a great distance. When we reached some high bluff we never tired of watching the command advancing, with the long line of supply wagons, with their white covers, winding around bends in the road and climbing over the hills. Every day the breaking of camp went more smoothly and

quickly, until, as the days advanced, the General used to call me to his side to notice by his watch how few moments it took after the tents were ordered down to set the whole machinery for the march in motion; and I remember the regiment grew so skilful in preparation that in one campaign the hour for starting never varied five minutes during the whole summer.

The column was always halted once during the day's march to water the horses, then the luncheons were brought forth.

When the stream was narrow, and the hundreds of horses had to be ranged along its banks to be watered, there was time for a nap. I soon acquired the General's habit of sleeping readily. He would throw himself down anywhere and fall asleep instantly, even with the sun beating on his head. It only takes a little training to learn to sleep without a pillow on uneven ground and without shade. I learned, the moment I was helped out of the saddle, to drop upon the grass and lose myself in a twinkling. I think I never got quite over wishing for the shade of a tree; but there was often a little strip of shadow on one side of the travelling wagon, which was always near us on the journey. I was not above selfishly appropriating the space under the wagon, if it had not been

taken by somebody else. Even then I had to dislodge a whole collection of dogs, who soon find the best places for their comfort.

We had a citizen-guide with us, who, having been long in the country, knew the streams, and the General and I, following his instructions, often rode in advance as we neared the night's camp. It was always a mild excitement and new pleasure to select camp. The General delighted to unsaddle his favorite horse, Dandy, and turn him loose, for his attachment was so strong he never grazed far from us. He was not even tethered, and after giving himself the luxury of a roll in the grass, he ate his dinner of oats, and browsed about the tent, as tame as a kitten. He whinnied when my husband patted his sleek neck, and looked jealously at the dogs when they all followed us into the tent.

After tramping down the grass, to prevent the fire from spreading, my husband would carry dry sticks and underbrush, and place them against a fallen tree. That made an admirable back-log, and in a little while we had a glorious fire, the General having a peculiar gift of starting a flame on the wildest day. The next thing was to throw himself down on the sod, cover his eyes with his white felt hat, and be sound asleep in no time. The dogs came at once to



lie beside him. I have seen them stretched at his back and curled around his head, while the nose and paws of one rested on his breast. And yet he was quite unconscious of their crowding. They growled and scrambled for the best place, but he slept placidly through it all.

When the command arrived, the guidons pointed out the location for each company; the horses were unsaddled and picketed out; the wagons unloaded and the tents pitched. The hewing of wood and the hauling of water came next, and after the cook-fires were lighted, the air was full of savory odors of the soldiers' dinner. After I had changed my riding-habit for my one other gown, I came out to join the General under the tent-fly, where he lay alternately watching the scene and reading one of his well-thumbed books. I always had sewing—either a bit of needle-work that was destined to make our garrison quarters more attractive, or more often, some necessary stitches to take in our hard-worn clothes. As we sat there it would have been difficult for a stranger to believe that it was merely the home of a day.

Our camps along the river were much alike, and each day when we entered the tent our few things were placed exactly as they were the day before. The only articles of furniture we had

with us were two folding-chairs, a bed, a wash-bowl, with bucket and tin dipper, and a little mirror. This last, fastened to the tent-pole, swayed to and fro with the never-ceasing wind, and made it a superfluous luxury, for we learned to dress without it. The camp-chairs were a great comfort; they were made by a soldier out of oak, with leather backs, seats, and arms, the latter so arranged with straps and buckles that one could recline or sit upright at will.

An ineffaceable picture remains with me even now of those lovely camps, as we dreamily watched them by the fading light of the afternoon. The General and I used to think there was no bit of color equal to the delicate blue line of smoke which rose from the camp-fire, where the soldiers' suppers were being cooked. The effect of light and shade, and the varying tints of that perfect sky, were a great delight to him. The mellow air brought us sounds that had become dear by long and happy association—the low notes of the bugle in the hands of the musician practising the calls; the click of the currycomb as the soldiers groomed their horses; the whistle or song of a happy trooper. And even the irrepressible accordeon at that distance made a melody. It used to amuse us to find with what persistent ingenuity the soldiers

smuggled that melancholy instrument. No matter how limited the transportation, after a few days' march it was brought out from a roll of blankets, or the teamster who had been bribed to keep it under the seat, produced the prized possession. The bay of the hounds was always music to the General.

Mingling with the melodies of the negro servants, as they swung the blacking-brushes at the rear of the tents, were the buoyant voices of the officers lying under the tent-flies, smoking the consoling pipe. The twilight almost always found many of us gathered together, some idling on the grass in front of the camp-fire, or lounging on the buffalo robes. The one with the best voice sang, while all joined in the chorus.

We all had much patience in listening to what must necessarily be "twice-told tales," for it would have taken the author of "The Arabian Nights" to supply fresh anecdotes for people who had been so many years together. These stories usually varied somewhat from time to time, and the more Munchausen-like they became the more attentive was the audience.

The territories are settled by people who live an intense, exaggerated sort of existence, and nothing tame attracts them. In order to com-

pel a listener, I myself fell into the habit of adding a cipher or two to stories that had been first told in the States with moderate numbers.

The teamsters mess together on the march as the officers do, with rarely more than four or five in the circle. One of the number buys the supplies, takes charge of the rations, and keeps the accounts. The sum of expenses is divided at the end of the month, and each pays his portion. They take turns in doing the cooking, which, being necessarily simple, gives each a share of the labor. Sometimes we found a more ambitious member of the mess endeavoring to rise superior to the tiresome hard-tack; he had bared his brawny arms and was mixing biscuit on the tail-board of the wagon, let down for the purpose. He whistled away as he moulded the dough with his horny hands, and it would have seemed that he had a Delmonico supper to anticipate.

We had not left Yankton far behind us before we were surprised to see one of its most hospitable citizens drive up; he acknowledged that he had missed us, and described the tameness of life after the departure of the cavalry as something quite past endurance.

The weather changed, and we began our march with a dull, gray morning and stinging

cold. The General wound me up in all the outside wraps I had until I was a shapeless mass of fur and wool as I sat in the saddle. We could talk but little to each other, for the wind cut our faces and stiffened the flesh until it ached. My hands became too numb to hold my horse, so I gave him his own way. As we rode along like automatons, I was keeping my spirits up with the thought of the camp we should make in the underbrush of a sheltered valley by some stream, and the coming camp-fire rose brightly in my imagination. We went slowly, as the usual time a cavalry command makes is barely four miles an hour. It was a discouraging spot where we finally halted; it was on a stream, but the ice was thick along the edges, and all we could see was the opposite bank, about thirty feet high, so frozen over that it looked like a wall of solid ice. It was difficult to pitch the tent, for the wind twisted and tore the canvas; the ground was already so frozen that it took a long time to drive in the iron pins by which the ropes holding the tents are secured. All the tying and pinning of the opening was of little avail, for the wind twisted off the tapes and flung the great brass pins I had brought on purpose for canvas far and wide.

No camp-fire would burn, of course, in such

a gale, but I remembered thankfully the Sibley stove that we always carried. The saddler had cut a hole in the roof of the tent for the pipe, and fastened zinc around it to make it safe from fire. I shall never think about a Sibley stove without gratitude, nor cease to wonder how so simple an invention can be the means of such comfort. It is only a cone of sheet-iron, open at the top and bottom; the broader part rests on the ground, while the little pipe fits on the top. The wood is put through a door cut in the side; only billets can be used, for the door is small. It requires almost constant attention to keep the insatiable little thing filled. The stove is so light that, in marching, the pipe is removed and a rope run through the openings, which enables it to be tied underneath the wagon, beside the bucket which is always suspended there to be used to water the horses.

The General was busy in the Adjutant's tent, so I sent for the sergeant, who was our factotum, and asked him to hunt up the Sibley stove, but he told me it had been forgotten, and so I crept into bed to keep warm.

## CHAPTER XII

### CAMPING AMONG THE SIOUX

OUR march to Fort Lincoln took us through the grounds set apart by the Government for the use of the Sioux Indians at peace with our country. We had not made much progress before we began to see their graves. They do not bury their dead, but place them on boards lashed to the limbs of trees, or on high platforms raised from the ground by four poles perhaps twenty feet. The body is wound round and round with clothing or blankets, like a mummy, and inside the layers are placed fire-arms, tobacco, and jerked beef, to supply them on the imaginary journey to the happy hunting-grounds. In the early morning, when it was not quite light, as we filed by these solitary sepulchres, it was uncanny and weird, and the sun, when it came, was doubly welcome. Our first visitor from the Agency Indians was Fool-Dog, a Sioux chief. He was tall, commanding, and had really a fine face. When he was ready to go home he invited us to come to his village before we left on our next march.

At twilight my husband and I walked over. The village was a collection of tepees of all sizes, the largest being what is called the Medicine Lodge, where the councils are held. It was formed of tanned buffalo-hides, sewed together with buckskin thongs, and stretched over a collection of thirty-six poles. These poles are of great value to the Indians, for in a sparsely timbered country like Dakota it is difficult to find suitable trees. It is necessary to go a great distance to procure the kind of sapling that is light and pliable and yet sufficiently strong for the purpose. The poles are lashed together at the tops and radiate in a circle below. The smoke was pouring out of the opening above, and the only entrance to the tepee was a round aperture near the ground, sufficiently large to allow a person to crawl in. Around the lodge were poles from which were suspended rags; in these were tied their medicines of roots and herbs, supposed to be a charm to keep off evil spirits. The sound of music came from within; I crept tremblingly in after the General, not entirely quieted by his keeping my hand in his, and whispering something to calm my fears as I sat on the buffalo-robe beside him. In the first place, I knew how resolute the Indians were in never admitting



one of their own women to council, and their curious eyes and forbidding expressions toward me did not add to my comfort. The dust, smoke, and noise in the fading light were not reassuring. Fool-Dog arose from the circle of what composed their nobility, and solemnly shook hands with the General; those next in rank followed his example. The pipe was then smoked, and the General had to take a whiff when it came his turn. Fortunately, we escaped the speeches, for we had not brought an interpreter.

Most of the country passed over in our route belonged to the Indian Reservation, and the Government was endeavoring to teach the tribes settled there to cultivate the soil.

As we approached an Indian village the chiefs came out to receive us. There were many high-sounding words of welcome, translated by our guide, who, having lived among them many years, knew the different dialects. The Government had built some comfortable log-houses for them, in many of which I would have lived gladly. The Indians did not care for them, complaining that they had coughs if they occupied a house. A tepee was put up alongside, in which one or two families lived, while little low lodges, looking like the soldiers' shelter-tents, were used for the young

men to sleep in. The tools and stores given by the Government were packed away in the otherwise empty houses.

A Sioux chief, called Two Bears, had the most picturesque village that we saw. The lodges were placed in a circle, as this was judged the most defensive position; the ponies were herded inside the enclosure at night. This precaution was necessary, for the neighboring tribes swept down on them after dark and ran off the stock if they were not secured. As we dismounted, we saw an old man standing alone in the circle, apparently unconscious of everything, as he recounted some war-tale, in loud, monotonous tones. He had no listeners—all were intently watching the approaching regiment; still the venerable Sioux went on as persistently as if he were looking “upon a sea of upturned faces.” He was the “medicine-man,” or oracle, of the tribe, or possibly the “poet-laureate” of the village, for the guide told us he sang of the deeds of valor of his people far back in history.

Just outside of the village the chiefs sat in a circle awaiting us. Two Bears arose to welcome the General, and asked him to go with him to his lodge. I was asked to go also and be presented to Miss Two Bears; for she

was too royal in birth to be permitted outside, and it was not in keeping with the dignity of her rank to mingle with the others, the guide afterward explained to us.

The honor of going alone into the tepee was one that I could have foregone, for my courage was much greater if I did my Indian sight-seeing surrounded by the regiment. The General, fearing their ideas of hospitality might be offended if I declined the invitation, whispered an encouraging word, and we dipped our heads and crept into the tepee. The chief was a dignified old man, wrapped in his blanket, without the usual addition of some portion of citizen's dress which the Indians believe adds to their grandeur. His daughter also was in complete squaw's costume; her feet were moccasined, her legs and ankles wound round with beaded leggings, and she had on the one buckskin garment which never varies in cut through all the tribes. A blanket drawn over her head was belted at her waist. To crown all this, however, she had an open parasol, brought to her, doubtless, as a present by some Indian returning from a council at Washington. She held it with dignity, as if it might be to her as much an insignia of state as the mace of the lord-mayor.

Fortunately, they did not ask us to sit down and partake of jerked beef, or to smoke the never-ending pipe, so we soon got through our compliments and returned to the outer entrance of the village.

Here the tribe was assembled, and evidently attired in gala-dress in our honor. We were most interested in the village belle, and the placid manner in which she permitted us to walk around her, gazing and talking her good points over, showed that she expected homage. She sat on a scarlet blanket spread on the ground, and over her, stretched from poles, was another for an awning. She was loaded with ornaments, row after row of beads about her neck, broad armlets and anklets of brass, pinchbeck rings, and a soft buckskin dress and leggings, heavily embroidered. Her ears were pierced twice—on the side as well as in the lobe—and from these holes were suspended circles of gilt. Her bright eyes, the satin smoothness of her hair, and the clear brown of the skin made a pretty picture. There was no attempt to blend into the brown the bright patch of carmine on each cheek.

Only extreme youth and its ever attractive charms can make one forget the heavy square shape of Indian faces and their coarse features.

It was surprising to see all the other squaws giving up the field to this one so completely. They crouched near, with a sort of "every-dog-must-have-its-day" look, and did not even dispute her sway by making coy eyes as we spoke to them.

There were but few young men. Their absence was always excused by the same reason—they were out hunting. We knew how little game there was, and surmised—what we afterward found to be true—that they had joined the hostile tribes, and only came in to the distribution of supplies and presents in the fall. A few rods from the village a tripod of poles was set in the ground, and lashed to it the Indian's shield, made of the hide of the buffalo where it is thickest about the neck. There were rude paintings and Indian hieroglyphics covering it. The shield is an heirloom with the Indian, and the one selected to hang out in this manner has always the greatest war record. One of their superstitions is that it keeps away enemies. These nomads had some idea of luxury, for I recollect seeing some of them reclining on a kind of rest made of a framework of pliable rods, over which was stretched buckskin.

When we had reached camp and were tak-

ing our afternoon siesta the same day, with the tent walls raised for air, we were roused by the sound of music. Looking off over the bluffs we saw a large body of Indians approaching on ponies, while squaws and children ran beside them. It was the prompt response of Two Bears to the General's invitation to return his call. The warriors stopped near camp, and dismounting, advanced toward us. The squaws unbridled and picketed the ponies, and made themselves comfortable by arranging shades of the bright blankets. They staked down two corners closely to the ground, and propped up the others with poles stuck in the sod.

When the Indians came up to us, the council was, as usual, begun. The pipe being smoked, Two Bears gave us a eulogy of himself. He then demanded, in behalf of the tribe, payment for the use of the ground on which we were encamped, and also for the grass consumed, though it was too short to get more than an occasional tuft. He ended, as they all do, with a request for food. The General, in reply, vaguely referred them to the Great Father in payment for the use of their land, but presented them with a beef in return for their hospitality. Only half-satisfied, they stalked away one by one. We watched them at a

distance kill and divide the beef. It surprised us to see how they despatched it, and that hardly a vestige of it was left.

The interpreter kept constantly before us the fine post that we were approaching, and the last day before we reached there it was visible for a long distance. The atmosphere of Dakota was so deceptive that we imagined ourselves within a few miles of the garrison, when, in reality, there was a march of twenty-nine long miles before us.

Our road led up from the river valley on the high bluffs, and sometimes followed along the backbone of hills from which on either side we looked down a great distance. There was barely room for the travelling-wagon. Occasionally I had been obliged to take refuge from the cold for a little while and drive. Our lead-mules were tiny, quick-moving little dots, and I soon discovered that they were completely demoralized at the sight of an Indian. They could see one in advance long before the driver could. A sudden shying and quick turning of these agile little brutes, a general tangle of themselves in the harness and legs of the wheelers, loud shouts of the driver, and a quick downfall of his foot on the brake, to keep us from overturning, made an exciting confusion.

Nothing would get them righted and started again. They would have to be unharnessed, and the rebellious pair tied to the rear of the wagon until we had gone far beyond the object of terror. Part of the day that we were following the road alongside hills and over the narrow, smooth level of the hill-tops, I was compelled to drive, and I watched anxiously the ears of these wretched little beasts to see if they expressed any sentiment of fright. We came to such steep descents that the brake holding the wheels seemed of no use. Looking down from the wagon on to the mules below us, we appeared to be in the position of flies on a wall.

As we came to one descent more awful than the rest, the General, who was always near, rode up to the carriage and told me not to be afraid, for he would order the wheels manned. Over a hundred men, dismounting, attached ropes to the wheels, and held on with all their strength while I went down the steepest declivity I had ever descended. After that I begged to get out, and the General carried me to a bank and set me down where I could watch the repairing of the road.

He took off his coat and joined the soldiers in carrying logs and shovelling earth, for they



were obliged to fill up the soft bed of the stream before the command could cross. It took a long time and much patience; but the General enjoyed it. When the logs were all laid, I had to laugh at the energy he showed in cracking a whip he borrowed from a teamster, and shouting to the mules to urge them to pull through where there was danger of their stalling. When the road was completed, the soldiers again manned the wheels to prevent the carriage sliding back, the mules scrambled, and with the aid of language prepared expressly for them, we reached the summit.

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## CHAPTER XIII

### ADVENTURES DURING THE MARCH

My husband and I kept up our little side-trips by ourselves as we neared the hour for camping each day. One day one of the officers accompanied us. We left the higher ground to go down by the water and have the luxury of wandering through the cottonwood-trees that sometimes fringed the river for several miles. As usual, we had a number of dogs leaping and racing around us. Two of

them started a deer, and the General bounded after them, encouraging the others with his voice to follow. He had left his friend with me, and we rode leisurely along to see that the younger dogs did not get lost. Without the least warning, in the dead stillness of that desolate spot, we suddenly came upon a group of young Indian warriors seated in their motionless way in the underbrush. I became perfectly cold and numb with terror. My danger in connection with the Indians was twofold. I was in peril from death or capture by the savages, and liable to be killed by my own friends to prevent my capture. During the five years I had been with the regiment in Kansas, I had marched many hundred miles. Sometimes I had to join my husband going across a dangerous country, and the exposure from Indians all those years had been constant. I had been a subject of conversation among the officers, being the only woman who, as a rule, followed the regiment, and without discussing it much in my presence, the universal understanding was that any one having me in charge in an emergency where there was imminent danger of my capture, should shoot me instantly. While I knew that I was defended by strong hands and brave hearts, the

thought of the double danger always flashed into my mind when we were in jeopardy.

If time could have been measured by sensations, a cycle seemed to have passed in those few seconds. The Indians snatched up their guns, leaped upon their ponies, and prepared for attack. The officer with me was perfectly calm, spoke to them coolly without a change of voice, and rode quickly beside me, telling me to advance. My horse reared violently at first sight of the Indians, and started to run. Gladly would I have put him to his mettle then, except for the instinct of obedience, which any one following a regiment acquires in all that pertains to military directions. The General was just visible ascending a bluff beyond. To avoid showing fear when every nerve is strung to its utmost and your heart leaps into your throat, requires superhuman effort. I managed to check my horse and did not scream. No amount of telling over to myself what I had been told, that all the tribes on this side were peaceable and that only those on the other side of the river were warlike, could quell the throbbing of my pulses. Indians were Indians to me, and I knew well that it was a matter of no time to cross and recross on their little tub-like boats that shoot madly down the current.

What made me sure that these warriors whom we had just met were from the fighting bands was the recollection of some significant signs we had come upon in the road a few days previous. Stakes had been set in the ground, with bits of red flannel fastened on them. This, the guide explained, meant warnings from the tribes at war to frighten us from any farther advance into their country. Whether because of the coolness of the officer, or because the warriors knew of the size of the advancing column, we were allowed to proceed unharmed. How interminable the distance seemed to where the General awaited us, unconscious of what we had encountered! I was lifted out of the saddle a very limp and unconscious thing.

Encouraged by references to other dangers I had lived through without flinching, I mounted again and followed the leader closely. He took us through some rough country, where the ambitious horses, finding that by bending their heads they could squeeze through, forgot to seek openings high enough to admit those sitting in the saddle. We crashed through underbrush, and I, with habit torn and hands scratched, was sometimes almost lifted up, Absalom-like, by the resisting branches. Often we had no path, and the General's horse, "Vic," would start

straight up steep banks after we had forded streams. It never occurred to his rider, until after the ascent was made, and a faint voice arose from the valley, that all horses would not do willingly what his thoroughbred did. He finally turned to look back and tell me how to manage my horse. I abandoned the bridle when we came to those ascents, and wound my hands in the horse's mane to keep from sliding entirely off, while the animal took his own way. All this was such variety and excitement that I forgot my terror.

We found a bit of lovely road, which only those who go hundreds of miles under a blazing sun can appreciate fully. The sunshine came flickering down through the branches of the trees and covered the short grass with checkered light and shade. Here we dawdled, and enjoyed looking up at the patches of blue sky through great grown-up tree-tops. It was like a bit of woods at home, where I never thought to be grateful for foliage, but took it as a matter of course. My husband remembered my having put some biscuit in the leather pocket on my saddle, and invited himself to luncheon at once. We dismounted, and threw ourselves on the ground to eat the very frugal fare.

After resting, we gave ourselves the privilege

of a swift gallop over the stretch of smooth ground before us. We were laughing and talking so busily I never noticed the surroundings until I found we were almost in the midst of an Indian village, quite hidden under a bluff. My heart literally stood still. I watched the General furtively. He was, as usual, perfectly unmoved. There were but few occupants of the village, but they glowered and growled, and I could see the venomous glances they cast on us as I meekly followed. I trembled so I could barely keep my seat as we slowly advanced, for the General even slackened his speed, to demonstrate to them, I suppose, that we felt ourselves perfectly at home. He said "How," of course, which was his usual salutation to them. An echoing "How" beside him proved that I still had power of utterance. When we came to one Indian, who looked menacingly at us and doggedly stood in our road, the officer with us declared that I accompanied my "How" with a salaam so deep that it bent my head down to the pommel of my saddle!

In a few moments, which seemed however a lifetime, we saw the reason why the village appeared so empty. Men, women, and children had gone nearly to the top of the bluff, and

there, with their bodies hidden, were looking off at a faint cloud of dust in the distance.

My husband, appreciating my terror, quickly assured me it was the Seventh Cavalry. Even then, what a stretch of country it seemed between us and that blessed veil of sand, through which we perceived dimly that succor was at hand.

My horse was rather given to snuggling, and pressed so against the General that he made his leg very uncomfortable sometimes. But it seemed to me an ocean of space was dividing us. I longed for the old Puritan days, when a wife rode on a pillion behind her liege.

I found courage to look back at last. The bluff was crowned with little irregularities, so still that they seemed like tufts of grass or stones. They represented many pairs of bead-like eyes, that peered over the country at the advancing troops.

The next day the General thought I might rather not go with him than run the risk of such frights; but I gladly consented to be taken along every day, although there never seemed a time when it was not necessary to get accustomed to some new terror.

The rattlesnakes were so numerous on this march that all Texas and Kansas experience

seemed dwarfed in contrast. My horse was over sixteen hands high, but I would gladly have exchanged him for a camelopard when I rode suddenly almost upon a snake coiled in the grass, and looked down into the eyes of the upraised head. We counted those we encountered in one day's journey until we were tired. The men became very expert and systematic in clearing the camp of these reptiles. If we halted at night in the underbrush, they cut and tore away the reeds and grass, and began at once to beat the ground and kill the snakes. As many as forty were killed in one night. After that, when the ground was selected for our camp in the low part of the valley, I was loath to lie down and sleep until the soldiers had come up to prepare the ground.

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## CHAPTER XIV

### THE YELLOWSTONE EXPEDITION

THE day at last came for our march of five hundred miles to terminate. A rickety old ferryboat that took us over the river made a halt near Fort Rice, and there we established ourselves. Strange to say, the river was no nar-



rower there than we had found it many hundred miles below, where we started. Muddy and full of sand-bars as it was, we began bravely to drink the water, when the glass had been filled long enough for the sediment partially to settle, and to take our bath in what at first seemed liquid mud. We learned after a time to settle the water with alum, and we finally became accustomed to the taste.

The Commandant at Fort Rice was most hospitable, and his wife charming. The quarters were very ordinary frame buildings, with no modern improvements. They were painted a funereal tint, but one warranted to last. The interior showed the presence of a tasteful woman. She met us as cheerfully as if she were in the luxurious home from which we knew she had gone as a girl to follow a soldier's life. The dinner was excellent, and our entertainers were the happy possessors of a good cook. Rarely do army people have two good servants at the same time on the frontier. Our host and hostess made no apologies, but quietly waited on the table themselves, and a merry time we had over the blunders of the head of the house, who was a distinguished general, in his endeavors to find necessary dishes in the china-closet.

A steamer that arrived a day or two after we had reached Fort Rice brought the regimental property. Our household effects and trunks were delivered to us in a very sorry condition. They had been carelessly stored on the wharf at Yankton, near the Government warehouse, without any covering, during all the storms that drenched us coming up the river. Almost everything was mildewed and ruined. We tried to dry our clothing in the sun. Many a little bit of silken finery that we had cherished since our marriage days was suspended from the tent-ropes, stained and dull. Our sister's husband helped her to unpack her clothes and his own soaked uniform. He was dignified and reserved by nature, but on that occasion the barriers were broken. I heard him ask Margaret to excuse him while he went outside the tent to make some remarks to himself. There were furious people on all sides, and savage speeches about the thoughtlessness of those who had left our property exposed to snow and rain, when we were no longer there to care for it. I endured everything with patience until my pretty wedding-dress was taken out, crushed, and spotted with mildew.

All thought began now to centre on the coming events of the summer. It was decided that

the regiment was to go out to guard the engineers of the Northern Pacific Railroad while they surveyed the route from Bismarck to the Yellowstone River. The ladies necessarily were to be left behind. Now began the summer of my discontent. I longed to remain in Dakota, for I knew it would take much longer for our letters to reach us if we went East. Besides, it was far more comforting to stay at a military post, where everyone was interested in the expedition, and talked about it as the chief topic of concern. I remembered when I had gone East before, during a summer when our regiment was fighting Indians, and my idea was that the whole country would be almost as absorbed as we were, how shocked I was to be asked, when I spoke of the regiment, "Ah, is there a campaign, and for what purpose has it gone out?"

I was willing to live in a tent alone at the post, but there were not even tents to be had. Then we all looked with envious eyes at the quarters at Fort Rice. The post was small, and there were no vacant rooms except in the bachelor quarters.

There was nothing left for us, then, but to go home. It was a sore disappointment. We were put on the steamer that was to take us to Bis-

marck, a heart-broken little group. I hated Dakota, the ugly river, and even my native land. We were nearly devoured with mosquitoes at once. Only the strongest ammonia on our faces and hands served to alleviate the torment. The journey was wretchedness itself. I had thrown myself on the berth in one of the little suffocating state-rooms, exhausted with weeping, and too utterly overcome with the anguish of parting to know much of the surroundings.

At last the slow, wearisome journey was over, and we went into the little town of Bismarck to take the cars, and soon found ourselves welcomed by dear father and mother Custer, at Monroe.

For several slow, irksome months I did little else than wait for the tardy mails, and count each day that passed again. I had very interesting letters from my husband, sometimes thirty and forty pages in length. He wrote of his delight at having again his whole regiment with him, his interest in the country, his hunting exploits, and the renewal of his friendship with General Rosser. The Seventh Cavalry were sent out to guard the engineers of the Northern Pacific, while they surveyed the route to the Yellowstone. This party of citizens

joined the command a few days out from Fort Rice. The General wrote me that he was lying on the buffalo-robe in his tent, resting after the march, when he heard a voice outside asking the sentinel which was General Custer's tent. The General called out, "Halloo, old fellow! I haven't heard that voice in thirteen years, but I know it. Come in and welcome!"

General Rosser walked in, and such a reunion as they had! These two had been classmates and warm friends at West Point, and parted with sorrow when General Rosser went into the Southern Army. Afterward they had fought each other in the Shenandoah Valley time and time again. Both of them lay on the robe for hours talking over the campaigns in Virginia. In the varying fortunes of war, sometimes one had got possession of the wagon-train belonging to the other. I knew of several occasions when they had captured each other's head-quarters wagons with the private luggage. If one drove the other back in retreat, before he went into camp he wrote a note addressing the other as "dear friend," and saying, "you may have made me take a few steps this way to-day, but I'll be even with you to-morrow. Please accept my good wishes and this little gift." These notes and presents were left at

the house of some Southern woman, as they retreated out of the village.

Once General Custer took all of his friend's luggage, and found in it a new uniform coat of Confederate gray. He wrote a humorous letter that night thanking General Rosser for setting him up in so many new things, but audaciously asking if he "would direct his tailor to make the coat-tails of his next uniform a little shorter," as there was a difference in the height of the two men. General Custer captured his herd of cattle at one time, but he was so hotly pursued by General Rosser that he had to dismount, cut a whip, and drive them himself until they were secured.

To return to the Yellowstone expedition—the hour for starting never varied more than a few moments during the summer, and it was so early the civilians connected with the engineering party could not become reconciled to it. In the afternoon my husband sometimes walked out on the outskirts of camp, and threw himself down in the grass to rest with his dogs beside him.

It was a source of amusement to him if he accidentally overheard the grumbling. His campaigning dress was so like that of an enlisted man, and his insignia of rank so unnotice-

able, that the tongues ran on, indifferent to his presence. Sometimes, in their growling, the civilians accused him of having something on his conscience, and declared that, not being able to sleep himself, he woke every one else to an unearthly reveille. At this he choked with laughter, and to their dismay they discovered who he was.

I remember his telling me of another occasion, when he unavoidably heard a soldier exclaim, "There goes taps, and before we get a mouthful to eat, reveille will sound, and 'Old Curley' will hike us out for the march." The soldier was slightly discomfited to find the subject of his remarks was within hearing.

The enlisted men were constantly finding new names for the General, which I should never have known—thereby losing some amusement—if Mary had not occasionally told me of them. A favorite was "Jack," the letters G. A. C. on his valise having served as a suggestion.

When the expedition returned from the Yellowstone, a despatch came to me in Michigan, saying the regiment had reached Fort Lincoln in safety. Another soon followed, informing me that my husband was on his way home. The relief from constant anxiety and suspense, together with all the excitement into which I

was thrown, made me almost unfit to make preparation to meet him. There was to be an army reunion in the city nearest us, and in my impatience I took the first train, thinking to reach there in advance of General Custer. As I walked along the street, looking into shop-windows, I felt, rather than saw, a sudden rush from a door, and I was taken off my feet and set dancing in air. Before I could resent what I thought was an indignity, I discovered that it was my husband, who seemed utterly regardless of the passers-by. He was sunburnt and mottled, for the flesh was quite fair where he had cut his beard, the growth of the summer. He told me the officers with whom he had travelled in the Pullman car had teased him, and declared that no man would shave in a car going at forty miles an hour, except to prepare to meet his sweetheart.

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## CHAPTER XV

### THE RETURN TO FORT LINCOLN

IN a few days we were ready to return to Dakota, and very glad to go, except for leaving the old parents.



The hardest trial of my husband's life was parting with his mother. Such partings were the only occasions when I ever saw him lose entire control of himself.

For hours before we started, I saw him follow his mother about, whispering some comforting word to her; or, opening the closed door of her own room, where, womanlike, she fought out her grief alone, sit beside her as long as he could endure it. She had been an invalid for so many years that each parting seemed to her the final one. Her groans and sobs were heart-rending. She clung to him every step when he started to go, and was led back, half-fainting, to her couch.

The General would rush out of the house, sobbing like a child, and then throw himself into the carriage completely unnerved. I could only give silent comfort. My heart bled for him, and in the long silence that followed as we journeyed on, I knew that his thoughts were with his mother. At our first stop he was out of the cars in an instant, buying fruit to send back to her. Before we were even unpacked in the hotel, where we made our first stay, he had dashed off a letter. I have since seen those missives. No matter how hurriedly he wrote, they were proofs of the tenderest,

most filial love, and full of the prophecies he never failed to make, of the reunion that he felt would soon come.

When we finally reached the termination of the road at Bismarck, another train was about starting back to St. Paul. The street was full of people, wildly expostulating and talking loudly and fiercely. It appeared that this was the last train of the season, as the cars were not to run during the winter. The passengers were mostly Bismarck citizens, whose lawless life as gamblers and murderers had so outraged the sentiments of the few law-abiding residents that they had forced them to depart. We could see these outlaws crowding at the door, hanging out of the windows, swearing and menacing, and finally firing on the retreating crowd as the cars passed out of town. We were quietly slipped out on the other side of the depot, hurried into the ambulance, and driven to the river.

The ice was already thick enough to bear our weight part way over; then came a swift rushing torrent of water which had to be crossed in a small boat. Some of the soldiers rowed, while one kept the huge cakes of floating ice from our frail boat with a long, iron-pointed pole. As I stepped into the little craft, I

dropped upon the bottom and hid my eyes, and no amount of reference to dangers I had encountered before induced me to look up. The current of the Missouri is so swift it is something dreadful to encounter. We were lifted out upon the ice again, and walked to the bank. Once more on shore, I said to myself, here will I live and die, and never go on that river again.

Our brother, Lieutenant Tom, met us, and drove us to our new home. In the dim light I could see the great post of Fort Lincoln, where only a few months before we had left a barren plain. Our quarters were lighted, and as we approached, the regimental band played "Home, Sweet Home," followed by the General's favorite, "Garryowen."

The General had completely settled the house before he left for the East, but he had kept this fact secret, as a surprise. Our friends had lighted it all, and built fires in the fireplaces. The garrison had gathered to welcome us, and Mary had a grand supper ready. How we chattered and gloried over the regiment having a home at last. It seemed too good to believe that the Seventh Cavalry had a post of its own, with room for the half of the regiment assigned to duty there. In other garrisons,

when we had come in late in the fall from campaigns, the officers, in order to get places for themselves, had been obliged to turn some one else out. There is a disagreeable, though probably necessary law in the army regulations, which directs officers to take their quarters according to rank.

Fort Lincoln was built with quarters for six companies. The barracks for the soldiers were on the side of the parade-ground nearest the river, while seven detached houses for officers faced the river opposite. On the left of the parade-ground was the long granary and the little military prison, called the "guard-house." Outside the garrison proper, near the river, were the stables for six hundred horses. Still farther beyond were the quarters for the laundresses, easily traced by the swinging clothes-lines in front, and dubbed for this reason "Suds Row." Some distance on from there were the log huts of the Indian scouts and their families, while on the same side also was the level plain used for parades and drill.

The post was located in a valley, while just back of us stretched a long chain of bluffs. On the summit of a hill, nearly a mile to the left, was a small infantry garrison, which had been established some time, and now belonged to

our post. When we went to return the visits of the infantry ladies, the mules dragged the ambulance up the steep hill with difficulty. We found living in this bleak place—in small, shabbily built quarters, such as a day-laborer would consider hardly good enough for his family—delicate women and children, who, as usual, made no complaint about their life. Afterward we were much indebted to one of the ladies, who, determined to conquer fate, varied our lives and gave us something to look forward to, by organizing a reading-club that met every week. She had sent to the East, before the trains ceased running, for the new books.

This little post had been built before the railroad was completed, and the houses were put together with as few materials as possible. There was no plastering, but the ceilings and partitions were of thick paper made for the purpose. In one set of quarters there chanced to be so many children and so little room that the parents had invented a three-story bed, where the little ones could be all stowed at night.

The soldiers asked the General's permission to put up a place in which they could give entertainments, and he gave them every assistance he could. They prepared the lumber in

the saw-mill that belonged to the post. The building was an ungainly looking structure, but large enough to hold them all. The unseasoned cotton-wood warped even while the house was being built, but by patching and lining with old torn tents, they managed to keep out the storm. The scenery was painted on condemned canvas stretched on a framework, and was lifted on and off as the plays required. The foot-lights in front of the rude stage were tallow candles that smoked and sputtered inside the clumsily cobbled casing of tin. The seats were narrow benches, without backs. The officers and ladies were always invited to take the front row at every new performance, and after they entered, the house filled up with soldiers. Some of the enlisted men played very well, and used great ingenuity in getting up their costumes. The General accepted every invitation, and enjoyed it all greatly. The clog-dancing and negro character-songs between the acts were excellent. Indeed, we sometimes had professionals, who, having been stranded in the States, had enlisted.

## CHAPTER XVI

## LIFE AT FORT LINCOLN

THE companies each gave a ball in turn during the winter, and the preparations were begun long in advance. There was no place to buy anything, save the sutler's store and the shops in the little town of Bismarck, but they were well ransacked for materials for the supper. The bunks where the soldiers slept were removed from the barracks, and flags festooned around the room. Arms were stacked and guidons arranged in groups. A few pictures of distinguished men were wreathed in imitation laurel leaves cut out of green paper. Chandeliers and side brackets carved out of cracker-box boards into fantastic shapes were filled with candles, while at either end of the long room great logs in the wide fireplaces threw out a cheerful light.

The ball opened, headed by the first sergeant. After this the officers and their wives were invited to form a set at one end of the room, and we danced several times. One of the men whose voice was clear and loud sang

the calls. He was a comical genius, and improvised new ways of calling off. When the place came in the quadrille to "Turn your partners," his voice rose above the music, in the notes of the old song, "Oh, swing those girls, those pretty little girls, those girls you left behind you!" This was such an inspiration to the fun-lovers that the swinging usually ended in our being whirled in the air by the privileged members of our family.

The soldiers were a superb lot of men physically. The out-door life had developed them into perfect specimens of vigorous manhood. After the company tailor had cut over their uniforms, they were often the perfection of good fitting. The older soldiers wore, on the sleeves of their coats, the rows of braid that show the number of years in the service. Some had the army badges of the corps in which they fought during the war, while an occasional foreign decoration told that they had been brave soldiers in the fatherland. We were escorted out to the supper-room in the company-kitchen in advance of the enlisted men. The General delighted the hearts of the sergeant and ball-managers by sitting down to a great dish of potato-salad. It was always well flavored with the onion, as rare out there, and



more appreciated than pomegranates are in New York. We ladies took cake, of course, but sparingly, for it also was a great luxury.

When we returned to watch the dancing, the General was on nettles for fear we should look amused at the costumes of the women. There was but a sprinkling of them: several from Bismarck and a few white servants of the officers. Each company was allowed but three or four laundresses. These women were at the ball in full force, and each one brought her baby. When we removed our wraps in the room of the first sergeant, we usually found his bed quite full of curly headed infants sleeping, while the laundress mothers danced. The toilets of these women were something marvellous in construction. In low neck and short sleeves, their round, red arms and well-developed figures wheeled around the barracks all night long.

The hounds were an endless source of delight to the General. We had about forty: the stag-hounds that run by sight, and are on the whole the fleetest and most enduring dogs in the world, and the fox-hounds that follow the trail with their noses close to the ground. The first rarely bark, but the latter are very noisy. The General and I used to listen with amusement to their attempts to strike the key-note of

the bugler when he sounded the calls summoning the men to guard-mount, stables, or retreat. It rather destroyed the military effect to see, beside his soldierly figure, a hound sitting down absorbed in imitation, while with lifted head and rolling eyes there issued from the broad mouth notes most doleful.

I never tired of watching the start for the hunt. The General was a figure that would have fixed attention anywhere. He had marked individuality of appearance, and a certain un-studied carelessness in the wearing of his costume that gave a picturesque effect, not the least out of place on the frontier. He wore troop-boots reaching to his knees, buckskin breeches fringed on the sides, a dark navy blue shirt with a broad collar, a red necktie, whose ends floated over his shoulder exactly as they did when he and his entire division of cavalry had worn them during the war. On the broad felt hat, that was almost a sombrero, was fastened a slight mark of his rank.

He was at this time thirty-five years of age, weighed one hundred and seventy pounds, and was nearly six feet in height. His eyes were clear blue and deeply set, his hair short, wavy, and golden in tint. His mustache was long and tawny in color; his complexion was florid, ex-

cept where his forehead was shaded by his hat, for the sun always burned his skin ruthlessly.

He was the most agile, active man I ever knew, and so very strong and in such perfect physical condition that he rarely knew even an hour's indisposition.

Horse and man seemed one when the General vaulted into the saddle. His body was so lightly poised and so full of swinging, undulating motion, it almost seemed that the wind moved him as it blew over the plain. Yet every nerve was alert and like finely tempered steel, for the muscles and sinews that seemed so pliable were equal to the curbing of the most fiery animal. I do not think that he sat his horse with more grace than the other officers, for they rode superbly, but it was accounted by others almost an impossibility to dislodge the General from the saddle, no matter how vicious the horse might prove. With his own horses he needed neither spur nor whip. They were such friends of his, and his voice seemed so attuned to their natures, they knew as well by its inflections as by the slight pressure of the bridle on their necks what he wanted. By the merest inclination on the General's part, they either sped on the wings of the wind or adapted their spirited steps to the slow movement of the march. It

was a delight to see them together, they were so in unison, and when he talked to them, as though they had been human beings, their intelligent eyes seemed to reply.

After the hunts the dogs had often to be cared for. They would be lame, or cut in the chase through the tangle of vines and branches. These were so dense it was a constant wonder to the General how the deer could press through with its spreading antlers. The English hounds, unacquainted with our game, used to begin with a porcupine sometimes. It was pitiful to see their noses and lips looking like animated pin-cushions. There was nothing for us to do after such an encounter but to begin surgery at once. The General would not take time to get off his hunting-clothes or go near the fire until he had called the dog into his room and extracted the painful quills with the tweezers of his invaluable knife. I sat on the dog and held his paws. The quills being barbed cannot be withdrawn, but must be pulled through in the same direction in which they enter. The gums, lips, and roof of the mouth were full of little wounds, but the dogs were extremely sagacious and held still. When the painful operation was over they were very grateful, licking the General's hand as he praised them for their pluck.

The wolves in their desperate hunger used to come up on the bluffs almost within a stone's-throw of our quarters. It was far from pleasant to look out of the window and see them prowling about. Once when the stag-hounds were let out of the kennel for exercise, they flew over the hills after a coyote. The soldier who took care of them could only follow on foot, as the crust on the snow would not bear the weight of a horse. After a long, cold walk he found the dogs standing over the wolf they had killed. When he had dragged it back to our wood-shed he sent in to ask if the General would come and see what the dogs had done unaided, for he was very proud of them.

When the thermometer went down to 45° below zero, the utmost vigilance was exercised to prevent the men from being frozen. The General took off all the sentinels but two, and those were encased in buffalo overcoats and shoes, and required to walk their beat but fifteen minutes at a time. There were no wells or cisterns, and the quartermaster had no means of supplying the post with water, except with a water-wagon that required six mules to haul it around the garrison. The hole in the river through which the water was drawn was cut through five feet of ice. It was dreadful on those bitter days to

see the poor men distribute the supply. My husband used to turn away with a shudder from the window when they came in sight. The two barrels at the kitchen-door were all that we could have, and on some days the men and wagon could not go around at all.

We had hardly finished arranging our quarters when, one freezing night, I was awakened by a roaring sound in a chimney that had been defective from the first. The sound grew too loud to be mistaken, and I awakened my husband. He ran upstairs and found the room above us on fire. He called to me to bring him some water, believing he could extinguish it himself. While I hurried after the water, there came such a crash and explosion that my brain seemed to reel. I had no thought but that my husband was killed. Nothing can describe the relief with which I heard his voice again. His escape was very narrow; the chimney had burst, the whole side of the room was blown out, and he was covered with plaster and surrounded with fallen bricks. The gas from the petroleum paper put on between the plastering and the outer walls to keep out the cold had exploded. The roof had ignited at once, and was blown off with a noise like the report of artillery.

The sentinel at the guard-house sounded an alarm and in an incredibly short time the men were swarming about the house. The General had buttoned his vest, containing his watch and purse, over his long night-dress, and, unconscious of his appearance, gave just as cool orders to the soldiers as if it were a drill. They, also, were perfectly cool, and worked like beavers to remove our things; for with no engine and without water it was useless to try to save the house. The General stood upon the upper landing and forbade them to join him, as it was perilous, the floors being then on fire. He had insisted upon my going out of the house, but I was determined not to do so until he was safe. When I did leave I ran in my night-dress over the snow to our sister's. The house burned very quickly. Fortunately, it was a still, cold night, and there was no wind to spread the flames. Except for this the whole garrison must have been burned.

When the morning came we went to inspect the heap of household belongings that had been carried out on the parade-ground. It was a sorry collection of torn, broken, and marred effects! Most of my clothes were gone. I had lost silver and linen, and what laces and finery I had. The only loss I mourned, as it was real-

ly irreparable, was a collection of newspaper clippings regarding my husband that I had saved during and since the war. Besides these I lost a little wig that I had worn at a fancy-dress ball, made from the golden rings of curly hair cut from my husband's head after the war, when he had given up wearing long locks.

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## CHAPTER XVII

### CAPTURE AND ESCAPE OF RAIN-IN-THE-FACE

As the second winter progressed, an event happened that excited us all very much.

Two of the citizens attached to the Yellowstone expedition, one as the sutler, the other as the veterinary surgeon, were in the habit of riding by themselves a great deal. Not being enlisted men, much more liberty than soldiers have was allowed them. Many warnings were given, however, and an instance of the killing by Indians of two of their comrades the year before was repeatedly told to them. One day their last hour of lingering came. While they stopped to water their horses, some Indians concealed in a gully shot them within sight of our cavalry-men who were then fighting on the hill.



A year and a half afterward information came to our post, Fort Lincoln, that an Indian was then at the Agency at Standing Rock, drawing his rations, blankets, and ammunition from the Government, and at the same time boasting of the murder of these two men. This intelligence created indignation in our garrison. A detachment was quickly prepared, and started out with sealed orders. The day was bitter, for the wind cut like needle-points into the faces of the troopers. No one was aware even what direction they were to take. General Custer knew that it was necessary that caution and secrecy should be observed. At the next post, twenty miles below, there were scouts employed. They would not fail to send out a runner and warn the Standing Rock Indians of the coming of the command and its object, if they could learn what it was. When the runner carries important news he starts with an even gait in the morning and keeps it up all day, hardly stopping to drink at the streams he crosses. Such a courier would outstrip a command of cavalry.

Accordingly, Fort Rice was left behind many miles before the orders were opened. They contained directions to capture and bring back an Uncapapa Indian, called Rain-in-the-face, the

avowed murderer. The command consisted of a hundred men under Captain George Yates and Lieutenant Tom Custer. The General had selected his brother to assist in this delicate transaction. They arrived on the day that the Indians were drawing their rations of beef. There were five hundred at the Agency armed with long-range rifles. It was more and more clear that too much care could not be taken to prevent the object of the visit being known to the warriors. An expedition had been sent down once before, but news of its intentions had reached the Agency in time for the culprit to escape. He could not refrain, even after this warning, from openly vaunting his crime.

In order then to deceive as to the purport of their appearance at the Agency, Captain Yates, the captain in command resorted to a ruse. He sent fifty men to the camp ten miles away to make inquiries for three Indians who had murdered citizens on the Red River the year before. Lieutenant Custer was ordered to take five picked men and go to the traders' store, where the Indians resort constantly. This required great coolness and extreme patience, for they had to lounge about, seemingly indifferent, until they could be certain the right man was discovered. The cold made the Indians draw

their blankets around them and over their heads. There is never any individuality about their dress unless when arrayed for a council or a dance; it was therefore almost impossible to tell one from the other.

Lieutenant Tom had to wait for hours, only looking furtively when the sharp eyes of these wary creatures were off guard. At last one of them loosened his blanket, and with the meagre description that had been given him, Lieutenant Tom identified him as Rain-in-the-face. Coming suddenly from behind, he threw his arms about him, and seized the Winchester rifle that the savage attempted to cock. The Indian was taken entirely by surprise. No fear showed itself, but from the stolid face hate and revenge flashed out. He drew himself up in an independent manner, to show his brother warriors that he did not dread death.

Among them he had been considered brave beyond precedent, because he had dared to enter the Agency store at all, and so encounter the risk of arrest. The soldiers tied his hands and mounted guard over him. About thirty-Indians surrounded them instantly, and one old orator commenced an harangue to the others, inciting them to recapture their brother. Breathless excitement prevailed. At that mo-

ment the captain in command appeared among them, and spoke to them, through an interpreter. With prudence and tact he explained that they intended to give the prisoner exactly the treatment a white man would receive under like circumstances; that nothing would induce them to give him up; and the better plan, to save bloodshed, would be for the chiefs to withdraw and take with them their followers. Seeing that they could accomplish nothing by intimidation or by superior numbers, they had recourse to parley and proposed to compromise. They offered as a sacrifice two Indians of the tribe in exchange for Rain-in-the-face.

It was generosity like that of Artemus Ward, who offered his wife's relatives on the altar of his country, for they took care not to offer for sacrifice any Indians of equal rank. Rain-in-the-face was a very distinguished warrior among them, and belonged to a family of six brothers, one of whom, Iron Horse, was very influential. The officers prevailed in the end, and the prisoner was taken to the cavalry camp. During the time that the Indians were opposing his removal, the troopers had assembled around the entrance, ready for any emergency, and prepared to escort the murderer away. The Indians instantly vanished; all went to their

camp, ten miles distant. Our officers expected an attack when they began their homeward march ; to their surprise, they were unmolested.

After the command had returned, General Custer sent for Rain-in-the-face. He was tall, straight, and young. His face was quite stolid. In a subsequent interview the General locked himself in his room with him. Through an interpreter, and with every clever question and infinite patience he spent hours trying to induce the Indian to acknowledge his crime. The culprit's face finally lost its impervious look, and he showed some agitation. He gave a brief account of the murder, and the next day made a full confession before all the officers. He said neither of the white men was armed when attacked. He had shot the old man, but he did not die instantly, riding a short distance before falling from his horse. He then went to him and with his stone mallet beat out the last breath left. Before leaving him he shot his body full of arrows. The younger man signalled to them from among the bushes, and they knew that the manner in which he held up his hand was an overture of peace. When he reached him the white man gave him his hat as another and further petition for mercy, but he shot him at once, first with his

gun and then with arrows. One of the latter entering his back, the dying man struggled to pull it through. Neither man was scalped, as the elder was bald and the younger had closely cropped hair.

This cruel story set the blood of the officers flowing hotly. They had already heard from one of the white scouts a description of Rain-in-the-face at a sun-dance, when he had betrayed himself as the murderer of the veterinary surgeon, by describing in triumph his beating out the brains of the old man with his mallet. After all this, it is not to be wondered at that each officer strode out of the room with blazing eyes.

Two Indians, one of them Iron Horse, had followed the cavalry up from the Agency and asked to see their comrade. The General sent again for Rain-in-the-face. He came into the room with clanking chains and with the guard at his heels. He was dressed in mourning. His leggings were black, and his sable blanket was belted by a band of white beads. One black feather stood erect on his head. Iron Horse supposed that he was to be hanged at once, and that this would be the final interview. The elder brother, believing there was no hope, was very solemn. He removed his heavily beaded and embroidered buffalo-robe, and replaced it

with the plain one that Rain-in-the-face wore. He exchanged pipes also, giving him his highly ornamented one that he might present it to the General. Then finding that there was a prospect of Rain-in-the-face having his trial in Washington, he took off the medal that had been given to his father by a former President, whose likeness was in the medallion, and placed it over the neck of his brother, that it might be a silent argument in his favor when he confronted the "Great Father."

It was a melancholy scene. Iron Horse charged his brother not to attempt to escape. He believed that he would be kindly treated while a captive, and perhaps the white chief would intercede for him to obtain his pardon. After asking him not to lose courage, they smoked again, and silently withdrew. In about ten days Iron Horse returned, bringing a portion of his tribe with him.

A New York Charity Ball could bring out no more antique heirlooms, nor take more time in preparations than the costumes of Indians prepared for council. The war-bonnets, shields, and necklaces of bear's claws are all handed down from far-away grandfathers, and only aired on grand occasions. Every available bit of metal that could catch the light reflected and

shone in the morning sun. The belts were covered with brass nails, shining with many an hour's polishing. They had many weapons, all kept in a brilliant and glistening state. The tomahawk is one of the heirlooms of the collection of arms. It looks like a large ice-pick. The knife, pistol, and Henry rifle are very modern, and are always kept in the most perfect condition. Mrs. "Lo" is the Venus who prepares Mars for war, and many a long weary hour she spends in polishing the weapon and adorning the warrior.

The Indians with Iron Horse came directly to head-quarters and asked for a council. As many as could get into the General's room entered. There was time, while they were preparing, to send for the ladies, and a few of us were tucked away on the lounge, with injunctions not to move or whisper, for my husband treated these Indians as if they had been crowned heads. The Indians turned a surprised, rather scornful glance into the "ladies' gallery." In return for this we did not hesitate to criticise their toilets. They were gorgeous in full dress. Iron Horse wore an elaborately beaded and painted buckskin shirt, with masses of solid embroidery of porcupine quills. The sleeves and shoulders were ornamented with a



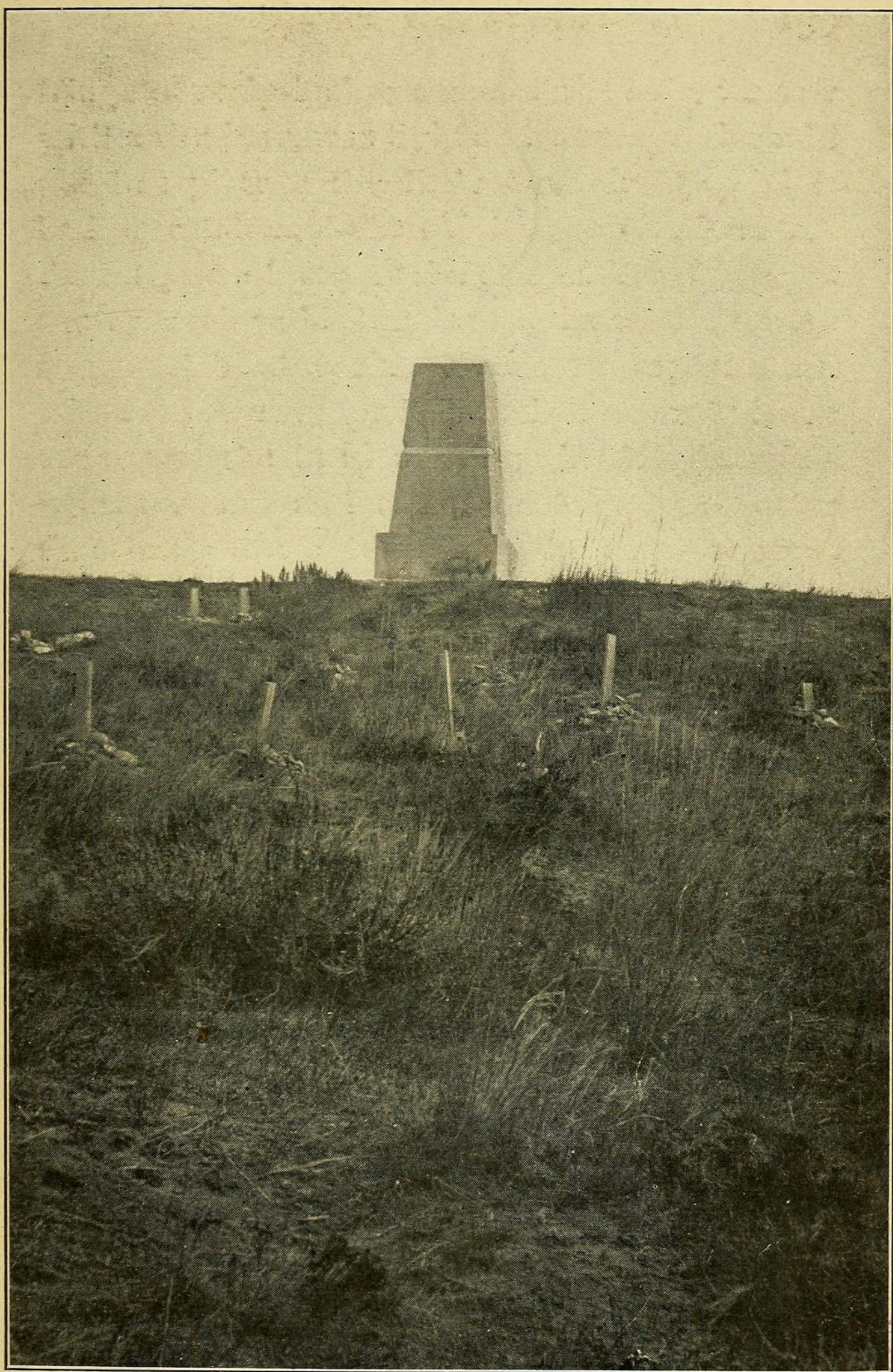
fringe of scalp-locks; some of the hair, we saw with a shudder, was light and waving. I could not but picture the little head from which it had been taken. The chief wore on his shoulders a sort of cape, trimmed with a fringe of snowy ermine; his leggings and moccasins were a mass of bead-work. He wore a cap of otter, without a crown, for it is their custom to leave the top of the head uncovered. His hair was wound round and round with strips of otter that hung down his back; the scalp-lock was also tightly wound. Three eagle feathers, that denote the number of warriors killed, were so fastened to the lock that they stood erect. There were several perforations in each ear from which depended bead ear-rings. He had armlets of burnished brass; thrown around him was a beaded blanket. The red clay pipe had the wooden stem inlaid with silver, and was embellished with the breast feathers of brilliantly plumaged birds. The tobacco-bag, about two feet long, had not an inch that was not decorated.

The next in rank had an immense buffalo-robe as the distinguishing feature of his dress. The inside was tanned almost white, and his history was painted on the surface. Whoever ran might read, for it represented only two scenes,

oft repeated—the killing and scalping of warriors and the capture of ponies.

The General's patience with Indians always surprised me. I have often wondered how he contained himself waiting an hour or more for them to get at the object of their visit. They took their places according to rank in a semi-circle about the General. The pipe was filled and a match lighted by one of their number of inferior grade, and then handed to Iron Horse, who took a few leisurely whiffs. Though we were so shut in, the smoke was not oppressive. Their tobacco is killikinick, prepared by drying the bark of the ozier and mixing it with sumach. After all in the first circle had smoked a little, the General included, they observed the Indian etiquette and passed the pipe back through each warrior's hand to the chief. It was then re-lighted, and he began again. It seemed to us that it went back and forth an endless number of times. No matter how pressing the emergency, every council begins in this manner.

When the pipe was finally put away, they asked to have Rain-in-the-face present. He came into the room, trying to hide his pleasure at seeing his friends and his grief at his imprisonment, but in an instant the stolid expression settled down on his face like a curtain. The



THE BATTLE-FIELD OF THE LITTLE BIG HORN.

BOSTON  
PUBLIC  
LIBRARY



officers present could scarcely believe their eyes when they saw his brother approach and kiss him. Only once before, among all the tribes they had been with, had they seen such an occurrence. The Indian kiss is not demonstrative; the lips are laid softly on the cheek, and no sound is heard or motion made. It was only this grave occasion that induced the chief to show such feeling. Several of the ranking Indians followed his example; then an old man among them stepped in front of Rain-in-the-face, lifted his hands, and raising his eyes reverentially said a few words of prayer to the Great Spirit in behalf of their unfortunate brother.

Iron Horse began his speech in the usual high-pitched, unchangeable key. He thanked the General for his care of his brother, and begged him to ask the Great Father in Washington to spare his life. He then slowly took off his elaborate buckskin shirt and presented it to my husband. He ended by making a singular request, which was worthy of Damon and Pythias: two shy young braves in the outer circle of the untitled asked permission, through their chief, to share the captivity of Rain-in-the-face.

Consent was given to the comrades to return to the guard-house, but they were required to

remain in confinement as he did until they were ready to return to the reservation. After all the ranking Indians had followed Iron Horse in speeches, with long, maundering sentences, the pipe was again produced. When it was smoked, the whole band filed out to eat the food the General had given them, and soon afterward disappeared down the valley.

After his two friends had left him, Rain-in-the-face occupied a part of the guard-house with a citizen who had been caught stealing grain from the storehouse. For several months they were chained together, and used to walk in front of the little prison for exercise and air. The guard-house was a poorly built wooden building. After a time the sentinels became less vigilant, and the citizen, with help from his friends outside, who were working in the same way, cut a hole in the wall at night and escaped. He broke the chain attaching him to the Indian, who was left free to follow. Rain-in-the-face did not dare to return to the reservation, but made his way to the hostile camp. In the spring of 1874 he sent word from there by an Agency Indian that he had joined Sitting Bull, and was awaiting his revenge.

The stained waters of the Little Big Horn, on June 25, 1876, told how deadly and fatal that

was. It was found on the battle-field that he had cut out the brave heart of that gallant, loyal, and lovable man, our brother Tom.

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## CHAPTER XVIII

### AN INDIAN COUNCIL

THE Indians came several times from the reservations for counsel, but the occasion that made the greatest impression upon me was toward the spring. They came to implore the General for food. In the fall the steamer bringing them supplies was detained in starting. It had hardly accomplished half the required distance before the ice impeded its progress, and it lay out in the channel, frozen in, all winter. The suffering among the Indians was great. They were compelled to eat their dogs and ponies to keep from starving. Believing a personal appeal would be effectual, they asked to come to our post for a council.

The Indian band brought their great orator, Running Antelope. He was intensely dignified and fine-looking. His face when he spoke was expressive and animated. As he stood

among them in the General's room, he made an indelible impression on my memory. The Indians' feet are usually small; sometimes their vanity induces them to put on women's shoes. The hands are slender and marvellously soft considering their life of exposure. Their speech is full of gesture, and the flexible wrist makes their movements expressive. A distinguished scholar, speaking of the aid the hand is to an orator, calls it the "second face." It certainly was so with Running Antelope. He described the distressing condition of the tribe with real eloquence. While he spoke, lifting his graceful hands toward Heaven in appeal, one of my husband's birds that was uncaged floated down and alighted on the venerable warrior's head. It maintained its poise, spreading its wings to keep its balance, as the Indian moved his head in gesture. Finally the bird whirled up to his favorite resting-place on the horn of the buffalo head, and the warrior understood the unusual sight of a smile from his people.

His whole appeal was most impressive, and touched the quick sympathies of my husband. The storehouses at our post were filled with supplies, and he promised to telegraph to the Great Father for permission to give them ra-



tions until spring. Meantime, he promised them all they could eat while they awaited at the post the answer to the despatch. Not content with a complaint of their present wrongs, Running Antelope denounced the agents, calling them dishonest.

One of the Indians, during the previous summer, with fox-like cunning had lain out on the dock all day apparently sleeping, while he watched the steamer unloading supplies intended for them. A mental estimate was carefully made of what came off the boat, and compared as carefully afterward with what was distributed. A portion that should have been theirs was detained, and they accused the agent of keeping it. The General interrupted, and asked the interpreter to say that the Great Father selected the agents from among good men before sending them out from Washington. Running Antelope quickly responded, "They may be good men when they leave the Great Father, but they get to be desperate cheats by the time they reach us."

When the council was ended and the Indians were preparing to leave, my husband asked me to have Mary put everything we had ready to eat on the dining-room table. The stately manner in which Running Antelope folded his robe

around him and strode down the long parlor was worthy of a Roman emperor.

I had been so impressed by his oratory and lordly mien that I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw him at table. After gorging himself, he emptied the plates and swept all the remains from before the places of the other chiefs into the capacious folds of his robe. This he rebelted at the waist, so that it formed a very good temporary haversack. With an air signifying to "the victor belong the spoils," he swept majestically out of the house.

The answer came next day from the Secretary of War that the Department of the Interior, which had the Indians in charge, refused to allow any army supplies to be distributed. They gave as a reason that it would involve complexities in their relations with other departments. It was a very difficult thing for the General to explain to the Indians. They knew that both army and Indians were fed from the same source, and they could not comprehend what difference it could make when a question of starvation was pending. They could not be told, what we all knew, that had the War Department made good the deficiencies it would have reflected discredit on the management of the Department of the Interior.

The chiefs were compelled to return to their reservations, where long ago all the game had been shot, and their famishing tribe were many of them driven to join the hostiles. We were not surprised that the warriors were discouraged and desperate, and that the depredations of Sitting Bull on the settlements increased with the new accessions to his numbers.

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## CHAPTER XIX

### LIFE ON THE RESERVATION

THE day of the final breaking up of the ice in the Missouri was one of great excitement to us. The roar and crash of the ice-fields could be heard a great distance. The sound of the tremendous report was the signal for the whole garrison to go out on the hill near the infantry post and watch the grand sight. Just above us was a bend in the river, and around this curve great floes of ice rushed, heaping up in huge masses as they swept down the furious current. All the lowlands that lay between Bismarck and the river were inundated, and the shore far in covered with blocks of ice. Just across the river from us was a wretched

little collection of huts, occupied by outlaws, into which the soldiers were decoyed to drink and gamble. The law forbidding liquor to be sold on the reservation was so strict that whiskey venders did not dare set foot on the Government land. The reservation was too large to permit them to place themselves on its other boundaries; they would have been at such a distance from the post that it would not have been worth while. Just on the water's edge opposite, these human fiends had perched to watch and entice the enlisted men.

These shanties were placed on a little rise of ground, with a precautionary thought of the usual spring floods. The day of the first ice-breaking we saw the water rise to such a height that cabin after cabin was abandoned. The occupants dragged their property to a little higher rise where one or two, more cautious than the rest, had built. On this narrow neck of land huddled together the whole of the group, in desperate peril. No one on our side of the river could help them, for the water was the maddest of whirlpools, while on the other side the overflow had made a great lake, cutting them off from Bismarck. As we watched them scrambling on the little knoll, like drowning men clinging to the upturned keel of a boat, we

suffered real distress at our powerlessness to help them. At last one of them stepped into the only small boat they had been able to retain, and standing bravely at the side of the one man at the bow, both were swept down the river out of sight among the gorge of ice-blocks and never again heard from. It was too exhausting watching these imperilled beings, knowing how incapable we were of helping them, and we went back to our quarters to spend hours of suspense. We could not set ourselves about doing anything while the lives of human beings so near us were in jeopardy. As day began to close, word came that the water was subsiding; not, alas, until some of them had been borne to their last home. Those that were left waded back to their huts, and, unheeding the warning of that fearful day, began again their same miserable existence.

Of all our happy days, the happiest presently came to us at Fort Lincoln. Life grew more enjoyable every day as we realized the blessings of our home. I have seen my husband, with all the abandon of a boy, throw himself on a rug in front of the fire and enumerate his blessings with real gratitude. Speaking of his regiment first, his district (for he then had five posts under his command), the

hunting, his dogs and horses, and his own room, which was an unceasing delight, he used to declare to me that he would not exchange places with any one—not even a friend in civil life who stood at the head of his profession as a journalist, who had wealth and youth, and who lived in almost princely luxury.

When spring came again, it is impossible to express the joy I felt that there was to be no summer campaign; and for the first time in many years I saw the grass grow without a shudder. The General began the improvement of the post with fresh energy, and from the drill-ground came the click of the horses' hoofs and the note of the bugles repeating the commands of the officers. As soon as it was warm enough, several charming girls came out from the States to our garrison to visit us. They gave every one pleasure, and effectually turned the heads of the young officers.

Almost our only exercise on summer evenings was walking on the outskirts of the garrison surrounded by the dogs. It was dangerous to go far, but we could walk with safety in the direction of the huts of the Indian scouts. Their life always interested us, and by degrees they became so accustomed to our

presence that they went on with all their occupations without heeding us.

There was a variety of articles among the litter tossed down in front of these Indian quarters; lariats, saddles, and worn-out robes were heaped about an arrangement for conveying their property from place to place. The construction was simple, and rendered wheels unnecessary. About midway on two long saplings, placed a short distance apart, is a foundation of leather thongs. Upon this the effects belonging to an Indian family are lashed. Two pole-ends are attached to either side of a rude harness on the pony, while the other two drag on the ground. In following an Indian trail, the indentation made by the poles, as they are pulled over the ground, traces the course of travel unmistakably.

Some of their boats lay upturned about the door. They were perfectly round, like a great bowl, and composed of a wicker frame over which buffalo hide was tightly drawn. The primitive shape and construction dates back to the ancient Egyptians, and these boats were called coracles in olden times. They seemed barely large enough to hold two Indians, who were obliged to crouch down as they paddled

their way with short, awkward oars through the rapid current of the Missouri.

One of the scouts, Bloody Knife, was naturally mournful ; his face still looked sad when he put on the presents given him. He was a perfect child about gifts, and the General studied to bring him something from the East that no other Indian had.

He had proved himself such an invaluable scout to the General that they often had long interviews. Seated on the grass, the dogs lying about them, they talked over portions of the country that the General had never seen, the scout drawing excellent maps in the sand with a pointed stick. He was sometimes petulant, often moody, and it required the utmost patience on my husband's part to submit to his humors ; but his fidelity and cleverness made it worth while to yield to his tempers.

I was always interested in the one pretty squaw among them, Medicine Mother. Her husband was young and she was devoted to him. I have seen him lounging on the floor of the hut while she made his toilet, combing and plaiting his hair, cutting and oiling the bangs which were trimmed to cover his forehead, and plucking the few scattered hairs from his chin—for they do not consider it an



honor to have a suspicion of a beard. She strapped on his leggings, buckled his belt, and finally lighted his pipe. Once the war-bonnet of her lord had to be rearranged. He deigned to put it on her head, readjusted the eagle-feathers, and then gave it to her to fasten them in securely. The faithful slave even used to accompany him to his bath. Indians do bathe — at long intervals; I have seen him, at a distance, running along the river-bank on his return, his wife waving a blanket behind him to keep off the mosquitoes!

If the Indians kill any game, they return home, order the squaws to take the ponies and bring back what they have killed, and then throw themselves down to sleep among the sprawling Indian babies, tailless dogs, and general filth. The squaws do all the labor, and every skin is tanned by their busy fingers. I never knew more than one Indian who worked. He was an object of interest to me, though he kept himself within the gloom of the cabin, and skulked around the fire when he cooked. This was the occupation forced upon him by the others. He had lacked the courage to endure the torture of the sun-dance; for when strips of flexible wood had been drawn through the gashes in his back, and he was hung up by

these, the poor creature had fainted. On reviving he begged to be cut down, and ever after was an object of scorn. He was condemned to wear squaw's clothing from that time on. They mocked and taunted him, and he led as separate an existence as if he were in a desert alone. The squaws disdained to notice him, except to heap work upon his already burdened shoulders.

Once my husband and I, in walking, came suddenly upon a queer little mound, that we concluded we would observe at a distance. An Indian was seen carrying buckets and creeping with difficulty into the small door. It was about six feet in diameter, and proved to be a kind of steam-bath, which they consider great medicine. A hole is first dug in the ground and filled with stones; a fire is kindled upon them long before, and they are heated red hot. The round framework of saplings over these is covered with layer upon layer of blankets and robes, so that no air can penetrate. The Indians, almost stripped of their clothing, crouch round them, while the one acting as servant brings water to pour on the heated rocks. The steam has no escape, and the Indians are thoroughly roasted. While we were looking at this curious bath-house a small

Indian boy crept out from under the edges of the blankets, and ashamed to have given in before the rest, drew his almost parboiled little body into a hiding-place.

We went one day into a tepee that was placed by itself to see an Indian who was only slightly ill. His father and friends were talking to him of his death as a certainty, and making all the plans in advance. They even took his measure for a coffin, assuring him that they would honor him by putting him in a box in imitation of the white man.

The Indians all seemed a melancholy people. They sometimes ask embarrassing questions. Once they inquired of the General if our young lady guest was his other wife. The blush of the girl so amused us that our laugh rang out among them, and seemed to be a sound they knew nothing of. They sat on the ground for hours, gambling for iron, brass, and silver rings, but always glum and taciturn. The tallest Indian of them all, Long Soldier, grew to be very cunning when he learned what a curiosity he was. He would crouch down at our approach, and only at the sight of a coin as a "tip" would he draw up his seven feet of height.

As the soldiers and citizens all knew the Gen-

eral's love of pets, we had constant presents. Many of them I would have gladly declined, but notwithstanding a badger, a porcupine, a raccoon, a prairie-dog, and a wild turkey, all served their brief time as members of our family. They were comparatively harmless, but a wild-cat was sent to us which the General shipped to the States, as a present to one of the zoological gardens; in its way it was a treasure. While it remained with us it was kept in the cellar. Mary used to make many retreats, tumbling up the stairs, when the cat flew at her the length of its chain. She was startled so often that at last she joined with me in requesting its removal as soon as convenient. The General regretted giving it up, but Keevan was called to chloroform and box it for the journey. Lieutenant Tom printed on the slats of the cover something like "Do not fondle." It was superfluous, for no one could approach the box, after the effects of the chloroform had passed away, without encountering the fiery-red eyes, and such scratchings and spitings and mad plunges as suggested keeping one's distance. Some detention kept the freight-train at a station over Sunday; the box with the wild-cat was put in the baggage-room. The violence of the animal as it leaped and

tore at the cover loosened the slats, and it escaped into the room. The freight agent spent a wretched day. Chloroform was again resorted to, and it was deemed a good riddance when the animal was sent off.

At one time the General tamed a tiny field-mouse, and kept it in a large, empty ink-stand on his desk. It grew very fond of him, and ran over his head and shoulders, and even through his hair. The General, thinking at last that it was cruel to detain the little thing in-doors when it belonged by nature to the fields, took it out and left it on the plain. The kindness was of no use; like the oft-quoted prisoner of the Bastille, it was back again at the steps in no time, and preferred captivity to freedom.

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## CHAPTER XX

### LEAVE OF ABSENCE

IN the autumn of 1875 we went into the States, and spent most of the winter delightfully in New York. We went out a great deal. Of course we were compelled to dress very plainly, and my husband made great sport of his only citizen overcoat—an ulster. He de-

clared that it belonged so to the past that he was the only man besides the car-drivers that wore one. It did not disturb him in the least; neither did going in the horse-cars to receptions and dinners. He used laughingly to say, "Our coachman wears our livery, Libbie," when the car-driver had on an army overcoat. No one so perfectly independent as he was could fail to enjoy everything.

Every one seemed to vie with every one else in showing appreciation of my husband during that winter. He dined often with men who learned to draw him out in talk of his Plains life. While in the midst of some story, the butler would pass him a dish that he especially liked. The host at once directed the man to pass on, and told my husband that he could not spare time for him to eat while they were impatient for the rest of the tale. After going hungry once or twice, the General learned to dine with me before he left the hotel, so that he might be free to give himself up to others.

He repeated a story to me about Ole Bull, who was asked to dinner and requested to bring his violin. He accepted for himself, but sent word that his violin did not dine. My husband made a personal application of the story, and threatened, playfully, to send word that his Ind-

ian stories did not dine. At the Century Club he received from distinguished men the most cordial congratulations on his essay into the literary field. They urged him to continue the work. Some of the authors he met there were twice his age, and he received each word they said with deep gratitude. My husband knew how I valued every expression of appreciation of him, and he used to awaken me, when he returned, to tell me what was said. He never failed to preface every such reluctant repetition by exacting promises of secrecy. He feared that in my wifely pride I might repeat what he told me, and it would look like conceit on his part. In February we had to say good-bye to New York life. Our friends asked us why we went so soon. In army life it is perfectly natural to speak of one's financial condition, and it did not occur to us that civilians do not do the same. I do not wonder now that they opened their eyes with well-bred astonishment when we said we were obliged to go because we had used all the money we had saved for leave of absence.

When we reached St. Paul the prospect before us was dismal, as the trains were not to begin running until April. The railroad officials, mindful of what the General had done for them

in protecting their advance workers in the building of the road, came and offered to open the route. Sending us through on a special train was a great undertaking, and we had to wait some time for the preparations to be completed. One of the officers of the road took an engine out some distance to investigate, and it looked discouraging enough when he sprang down from the cab on his return in a complete coating of ice.

The train on which we finally started was an immense one, and certainly a curiosity. There were two snow-ploughs and three enormous engines; freight-cars with coal supplies and baggage; several cattle-cars, with stock belonging to the Black Hills miners who filled the passenger-coaches. There was an eating-house, looming up above everything, built on a flat car. In this car the forty employees of the road, who were taken to shovel snow, etc., were fed. There were several day-coaches, with army recruits and a few passengers, and last of all the paymaster's car, which my husband and I occupied. This had a kitchen and a sitting-room. At first everything went smoothly. The cook on our car gave us excellent things to eat, and we slept soundly. It was intensely cold, but the little stove in the sitting-room was kept filled con-



stantly. Sometimes we came to drifts, and the train would stop with a violent jerk, start again, and once more come to a stand-still, with such force that the dishes would fall from the table. The train-men were ordered out, and after energetic work the track was again clear and we went on. One day the engines whistled, and we were shooting on finely when the speed was checked so suddenly that the little stove fairly danced, and our belongings flew through the car from end to end. After this there was an exodus from the cars; every one went to inquire as to the ominous stop. Before our train there seemed to be a wall of ice; we had come to a gully which was almost filled with drifts. The cars were all backed down some distance and detached; the snow-ploughs and engines having thus full sweep, all the steam possible was put on, and they began what they called "bucking the drifts." This did a little good at first, and we made some progress through the gully. After one tremendous dash, however, the ploughs and one engine were so deeply embedded that they could not be withdrawn. The employees dug and shovelled until they were exhausted. The Black Hills miners relieved them as long as they could endure it; then the officers and recruits worked until they

could do no more. The impenetrable bank of snow was the accumulation of the whole winter, first snowing, then freezing, until there were successive layers of ice and snow.

Night was descending, and my husband, after restlessly going in and out to the next car, showed me that he had some perplexity on his mind. He described to me the discomfort of the officers and Bismarck citizens in the other coach in not having any place to sleep. His meaning penetrated at last, and I said, "You are waiting for me to invite them all to room with us?" His "exactly" assured me it was what he intended me to do. So he hurried out to give them my compliments and the invitation. The officers are generally prepared for emergencies, and they brought in their blankets; the citizens left themselves to the General's planning. In order to make the car-blankets go further, he made two of the folding-beds into one broad one. Two little berths on each side, and rolls of bedding on the floor, left only room for the stove, always heated to the last degree. I was invited to take the place nearest the wall, in the large bed; then came my husband. After that I burrowed my head in my pillow, and the servant blew out some of the candles and brought in our guests. It is unnecessary for

me to say that I did not see the order in which they appeared. The audible sleeping in our bed, however, through the long nights that followed, convinced me that the General had assigned those places to the oldest and fattest. Every morning I awoke to find the room empty and all the beds folded away. The General brought me a tin basin with ice-water, and helped me to make a quick toilet; our eleven visitors waited in the other coach, to return to breakfast with us in the same room. Every one made the best of the situation, and my husband was as rollicking as ever. Though I tried to conceal it, I soon lost heart entirely.

The days seemed to stretch on endlessly; the snow was heaped up about us and falling steadily. All we could see was the trackless waste of white on every side. The wind whistled and moaned around the cars, and great gusts rocked our frail little refuge from side to side. The snow that had begun to fall with a few scattered flakes, now came down more thickly. I made the best effort I could to be brave, and deceive them as to my terrors—I had no other idea than that we must die there. We tried to be merry at our meals, and made light of the small supply. The increase at the table quickly diminished our

stores, and I knew by the careful manner in which the wood was husbanded that it was nearly gone. The General, always cool and never daunted by anything, was even more blithe, to keep me from alarm. During those anxious days it used to seem strange to hear a dinner-bell through the air, muffled with snow. For an instant I was deluded into the thought that by some strange necromancy we had been spirited on to a station, and that this was the clang of the eating-house bell. It was only the call from the car where the employees were fed. The lowing of the cattle and howling of our dogs in the forward cars were the only other sounds we heard. Finally the situation became desperate, and with all their efforts the officers could no longer conceal from me their concern for our safety.

Search was made throughout all the train to find if there was a man who understood anything about telegraphy, for among the fittings stowed away in the car a tiny battery had been found, with a pocket-relay. A man was finally discovered who knew something of operating, and it was decided to cut the main wire. Then the wires of the pocket-relay were carried out of our car and fastened to either end of the cut wire outside, so making

an unbroken circuit between us and our Lincoln friends, besides uniting us with Fargo station. In a little while the General had an answer from Lieutenant Tom: "Shall I come out for you?"

After that we kept the wires busy, devising plans for our relief. Our headlong brother went to Bismarck, and looked up the best stage-driver in all the territory, and hired him. This driver was cool, intrepid, and inured to every peril. At an old stage-station along the route he found relays of mules that belonged to the mail-sleigh.

At last a great whoop and yell, such as was peculiar to the Custers, was answered by the General, and made me aware for the first time that brother Tom was outside. I scolded him for coming before I thanked him, but he made light of the danger and hurried us to get ready, fearing a coming blizzard. His arms were full of wraps, and his pockets crowded with mufflers the ladies had sent out to me. We did ourselves up in everything we had, while the three hounds were being placed in the sleigh. The drifts were too deep to drive near the cars, so my husband carried me over the snow and deposited me in the straw with the dogs. They were such strangers they growled at be-

ing crowded. Then the two brothers followed, and thus packed in we began that terrible ride, amid the cheers of those we were leaving. It was understood that we were to send back help to those we left.

The suspense and alarm in the car had been great, but that journey through the drifts was simply terrible. I tried to be courageous, but every time we plunged into what appeared to be a bottomless white abyss, I believed that we were to be buried there. And so we should have been, I firmly believe, had it not been for the tenacity shown by the old driver. He had a peculiar yell that he reserved for supreme moments and that always incited the floundering mules to new efforts. The sleigh was covered, but I could look out in front and see the plucky creatures scrambling up a bank after they had extricated us from the great drift at the bottom of the gully. If there had been a tree to guide us, or had there been daylight, the journey would not have seemed so hopeless. The moon was waning, and the clouds obscured it entirely from time to time. There was nothing to serve as guide-posts except the telegraph-poles. Sometimes we had to leave them to find a road where the sleigh could be pulled through, and I believed we never

should reach them again. Divide after divide stretched before us, like the illimitable waves of a great white sea. The snow never ceased falling, and I knew too much of the Dakota blizzard not to fear hourly that it would settle into that driving, blinding, whirling atmosphere through which no eyes can penetrate and no foot make progress. It is fortunate that such hours of suspense come to an end before one is driven distracted.

When at last I saw the light shining out of our door at Fort Lincoln, I could not speak for joy and gratitude. Our friends gathered about us around the great log-fire in the General's room. No light ever seemed so bright, no haven so blessed, as our own fireside. The train remained in the spot where we had left it until the sun of the next spring melted down the great ice-banks and set free the buried engines. All the help that Bismarck could give was sent out at once, and even the few cattle that survived were at last driven over that long distance, and shelter found for them in the town.

Hardly had we arrived before a despatch came recalling the General to Washington. I had no thought but that I should be allowed to accompany him, and went at once to repack

my things. My husband found me thus employed, and took my breath away by telling me he could not endure the anxiety of having me go through such peril again.

Not the shadow of an anxiety, nor the faintest sign of dread of the coming journey over the snow again, came into his face. He left me with the same words with which he always comforted me: "Be sure, Libbie, it's all for the best; you know we always find it so in the end." With these farewell words he stepped into the sleigh—which he knew well might be his tomb.

It is not possible for me to speak in detail of the days that followed. Life seemed insupportable until I received a despatch saying that my husband had again passed safely over that two hundred and fifty miles of country where every hour life is in jeopardy.

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## CHAPTER XXI

### OUR LIFE'S LAST CHAPTER

OUR women's hearts fell when the fiat went forth that there was to be a summer campaign, and, probably, actual fighting with Indians.



Sitting Bull refused to make a treaty with the Government, and would not come in to live on a reservation. Besides his constant attacks on the white settlers, driving back even the most adventurous, he was incessantly invading and stealing from the land assigned to the peaceable Crows. They appealed for help to the government that had promised to shield them.

The preparations for the expedition were completed before my husband returned from the East. The troops had been sent out of barracks into a camp that was established a short distance down the valley. As soon as the General returned we left Fort Lincoln and went into camp.

The morning for the start came only too soon. My husband was to take Sister Margaret and me out for the first day's march, so I rode beside him out of camp. The column that followed seemed unending. The grass was not then suitable for grazing, and as the route of travel was through a barren country, immense quantities of forage had to be transported. The line of wagons seemed to stretch out interminably. There were pack-mules, the ponies already laden, and cavalry, artillery, and infantry followed, the cavalry being in advance

of all. The number of men, citizens, employees, Indian scouts, and soldiers was about twelve hundred. There were nearly seventeen hundred animals in all.

As we rode at the head of the column, we were the first to enter the confines of the garrison. About the Indian quarters, which we were obliged to pass, stood the squaws, the old men, and the children singing, or rather moaning, a minor tune that has been uttered on the going out of Indian warriors since time immemorial. Some of the squaws crouched on the ground, too burdened with their trouble to hold up their heads; others restrained the restless children who sought to follow their fathers.

The Indian scouts themselves beat their drums and kept up their peculiar monotonous tune, which is weird and melancholy beyond description. Their war-song is misnamed when called music. It is more of a dirge than an inspiration. This intoning they kept up for miles along the road. After we had passed the Indian quarters we came near Laundress Row. The wives and children of the soldiers lined the road. Mothers, with streaming eyes, held their little ones out at arm's-length for one last look at the departing father. The toddlers among the children had made a mimic column

of their own. With their handkerchiefs tied to sticks in lieu of flags, and beating old tin pans for drums, they strode lustily back and forth in imitation of the advancing soldiers. They were too young to realize why the mothers wailed out their farewells.

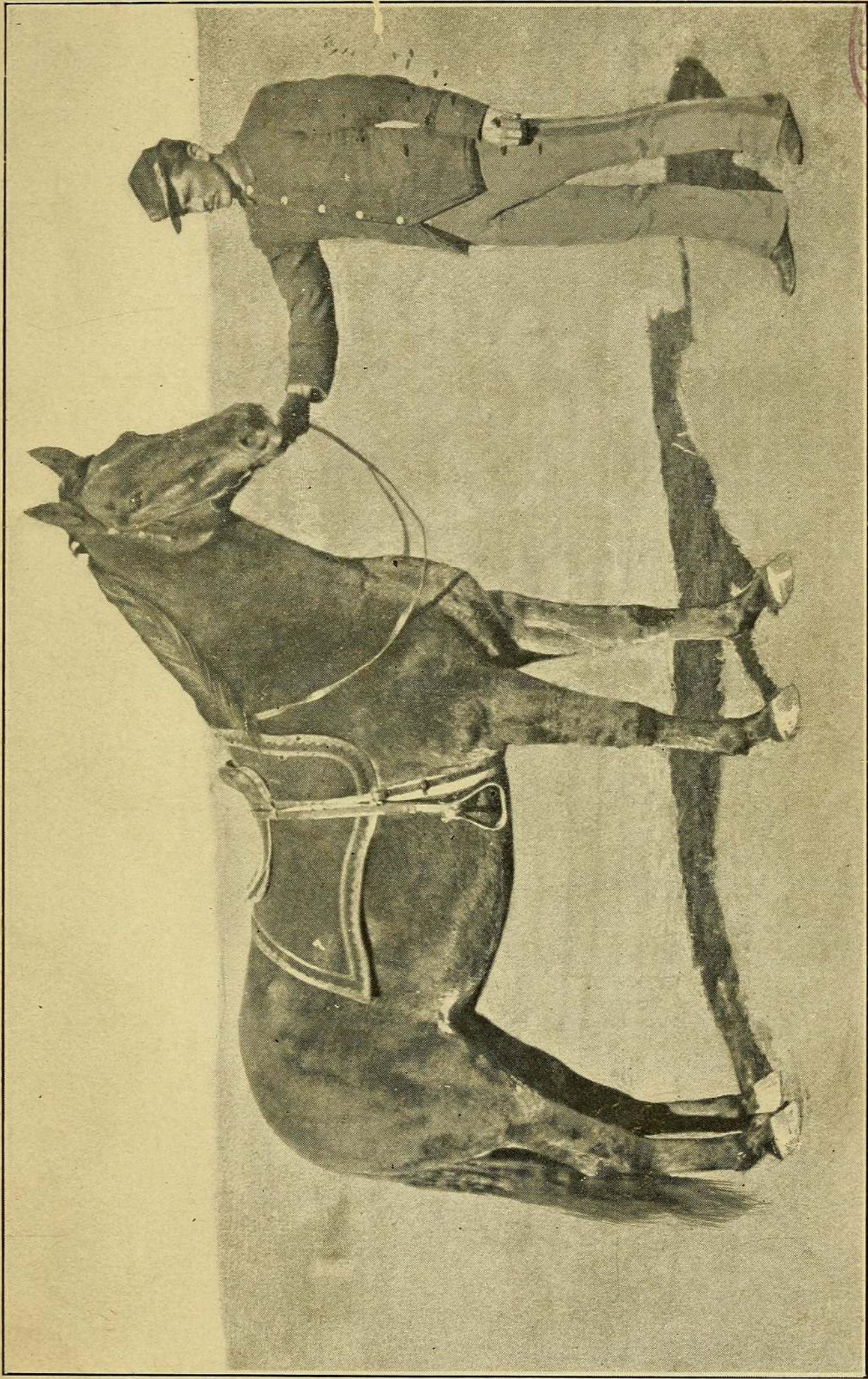
It was a relief to escape from them and enter the garrison, and yet, when our band struck up "The Girl I Left Behind Me," the most despairing hour seemed to have come. All the sad-faced wives of the officers who had forced themselves to their doors to try and wave a courageous farewell, and smile bravely to keep the ones they loved from knowing the anguish of their breaking hearts, gave up the struggle at the sound of the music.

From the hour of breaking camp, before the sun was up, a mist had enveloped everything. Soon the bright sun began to penetrate this veil and dispel the haze, and a scene of wonder and beauty appeared. The cavalry and infantry in the order named, the scouts, pack-mules, and artillery, and behind all the long line of white-covered wagons, made a column altogether some two miles in length. As the sun broke through the mist, a mirage appeared, which took up about half of the line of cavalry, and thenceforth for a little distance it marched,

equally plain to the sight, on the earth and in the sky. The future of the heroic band, whose days were even then numbered, seemed to be revealed, and already there seemed a premonition in the supernatural translation as their forms were reflected from the opaque mist of the early dawn.

At every bend of the road, as the column wound its way round and round the low hills, my husband glanced back to admire his men, and could not refrain from constantly calling my attention to their grand appearance. The soldiers, inured to many years of hardship, were the perfection of physical manhood. Their brawny limbs and lithe, well-poised bodies gave proof of the training their out-door life had given. Their resolute faces, brave and confident, inspired one with a feeling that they were going out aware of the momentous hours awaiting them, but inwardly assured of their capability to meet them.

The General could scarcely restrain his recurring joy at being again with his regiment, from which he had feared he might be separated by being detained on other duty. His buoyant spirits at the prospect of the activity and field-life that he so loved made him like a boy. He had made every plan to have me join



COMANCHE, CAPTAIN KEOUGH'S HORSE.  
The only thing found alive on the Custer battle-field.

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him later when they should have reached the Yellowstone. The steamers with supplies would be obliged to leave our post and follow the Missouri and Yellowstone to the point where the regiment was to make its first halt to renew the rations and forage; and so he was sanguine that but a few weeks would elapse before we should be reunited.

As usual we rode a little in advance and selected camp, and watched the approach of the regiment with real pride. There was a unity of movement about it that made the column at a distance seem like a broad dark ribbon stretched smoothly over the plains.

We made our camp the first night on a small river a few miles beyond the post. There the paymaster made his disbursements, in order that the debts of the soldiers might be liquidated with the sutler. In the morning the farewell was said, and the paymaster took sister and me back to the post. With my husband's departure my last happy days in garrison were ended. A premonition of disaster that I had never known before weighed me down. I could not shake off the baleful influence of depressing thoughts.

We heard constantly at the fort of the disaffection of the young Indians of the Reservation,

and of their joining the hostiles. We knew, for we had seen for ourselves, how admirably they were equipped. We even saw on a steamer touching at our landing its freight of Springfield rifles piled up on the decks on their way to the Indians up the river. There was unquestionable proof that they came into the trading-posts far above us and bought them, while our own brave Seventh Cavalry troopers were sent out with only the short-range carbines that grew foul after the second firing.

While we waited in untold suspense for some hopeful news, the garrison was suddenly thrown into a state of excitement by important despatches that were sent from Division Headquarters in the East. We women knew that eventful news had come, and could hardly restrain our curiosity, for it was of vital import to us. Indian scouts were fitted out at the fort with the greatest despatch, and had instructions to make the utmost speed they could in reaching the expedition on the Yellowstone. After their departure, when there was no longer any need for secrecy, we were told that the expedition which had started from the Department of the Platte, and encountered the hostile Indians on the head-waters of the Rosebud, had been compelled to retreat.



All those victorious Indians had gone to join Sitting Bull, and it was to warn our regiment that this news was sent to our post, which was at the extreme of telegraphic communication in the Northwest, and the orders given to transmit the information, that precautions might be taken against encountering so large a number of the enemy. The news of the failure of the campaign in the other department was a death-knell to our hopes. We felt that we had nothing to expect but that our troops would be overwhelmed with numbers, for it seemed to us an impossibility, as it really proved to be, that our Indian scouts should cross that vast extent of country in time to make the warning of use.

The first steamer that returned from the Yellowstone brought letters from my husband, with the permission, for which I had longed unutterably, to join him by the next boat. The Indians had fired into the steamer when it had passed under the high bluffs in the gorges of the river. I counted the hours until the second steamer was ready. They were obliged, after loading, to cover the pilot-house and other vulnerable portions of the upper deck with sheet-iron to repel attacks. Then sand-bags were placed around the guards as protection, and other precautions taken for the

safety of those on board. All these delays and preparations made me inexpressibly impatient, and it seemed as if the time would never come for the steamer to depart.

Meanwhile our own post was constantly surrounded by hostiles, and the outer pickets were continually subjected to attacks. It was no unusual sound to hear the long-roll calling out the infantry before dawn to defend the garrison. We saw the faces of the officers blanch, brave as they were, when the savages grew so bold as to make a day-time sortie upon our outer guards.

A picture of one day of our life in those disconsolate times is fixed indelibly in my memory.

On Sunday afternoon, the 25th of June, 1876, our little group of saddened women, borne down with one common weight of anxiety, sought solace in gathering together in our house. We tried to find some slight surcease from trouble in the old hymns; some of them dated back to our childhood's days, when our mothers rocked us to sleep to their soothing strains. All were absorbed in the same thoughts, and their eyes were filled with far-away visions and longings. Indescribable yearning for the absent, and untold terror for

their safety, engrossed each heart. The words of the hymn,

“ Still all my song shall be,  
Nearer, my God, to Thee,”

came forth with almost a sob from every throat. At that very hour the fears that our tortured minds had portrayed in imagination, were realities, and the souls of those we thought upon were ascending to meet their Maker.



INDIAN IN WAR-BONNET.

## CHAPTER XXII

## THE BATTLE OF THE LITTLE BIG HORN \*

Two days after the Battle of the Little Big Horn the sun rose bright and glorious over The Boy General as he lay in that long sleep from which no mortal wakes. A true leader to the last, he lay at the head of his army on the summit of a ridge overlooking the battle-field, surrounded by his heroic followers. Here, with him, were his two brothers, Tom Custer and Boston, and his nephew Armstrong Reed, Captain Yates, Lieutenants Cooke, Smith, and Reilly, all lying in a circle of a few yards, their horses beside them. The companies had successively thrown themselves across the path of the advancing enemy. The last stand had been made with Yates's company. Not a man escaped to tell the tale, but it was inscribed upon the surface of the barren hills in a language more eloquent than words.

In the ravine below lay the troops arranged in order of battle, as they had fought, line be-

\* Edited from a paper prepared by Annie Gibson Yates and end revised by Lieutenant-General Nelson A. Miles.

hind line, showing where defensive positions had been successively taken up and held till not a man was left to continue the fight. In a narrow compass horses and men were piled promiscuously. Lieutenant Smith's skirmishers, still holding their gray horses, were lying in groups of fours. Lieutenant Calhoun was on the skirmish-line, and Lieutenant Crittendon and each of the company had fallen in the place to which the tactics would have assigned them.

The true soldier asks no questions; he obeys, and Custer was a true soldier. He gave his life in carrying out the orders of his commanding general. He was sent out to fight and was expected to accomplish results. He had advanced carefully and cautiously upon the enemy, taking three times as much time for the approach as is regarded necessary in the marches of cavalry troops to-day. He often took counsel with his officers and halted to examine all abandoned camps and trails. He was instructed not to let any Indians escape, and was expected to compel them to settle down on their reservations. He had trained and exhorted his men and officers to loyalty, and with one exception they stood true to their trust, as was shown by the order in which they fell. A lieutenant

holding an important sheltered position, who should have kept the enemy at bay and could easily have done so, became excited and panic-stricken, gave confused orders and countermanded them, and finally led a stampede which allowed the Indians to concentrate on one point and advance on Custer's band with overwhelming numbers.

The Government, through its Indian agents, had unwittingly provided the savages with better rifles than it had given to its own soldiers. These reservation Indians had from time to time slipped away from their rightful grounds and joined the hostile red men. They should have been reported to the War Department by the agents employed to look after them. But these public servants were only too glad to have them gone that they might sell their supplies furnished by the Government and keep the profits, which amounted to thousands of dollars. They even invented fictitious names of Indians and kept them on their records to further increase their gains. Thus were the enemy's ranks swollen and no account made of it to the War Department. And so it happened that Custer went out to meet less than a thousand Indians and found himself face to face with three thousand, supplied with long-range rifles

with which they could stand at a safe distance and take effective aim, while his own men had to extract empty and corroded cartridge-shells, often with their knives, from their inferior short-range rifles. A few days previous to this General Crooke had been sent by the commanding general, Terry, to do battle with the Indians in another place. He was defeated, and the Indians, intoxicated with the victory, had come with greater courage against Custer, and this, with many other unavoidable circumstances, forced the battle before Terry and his men could come up and unite with Custer's forces. General Terry was new to Indian warfare and had to plan the battle as he put it, from "a conjectural map of an unexplored country," and without knowing positively the situation of the enemy. So was the brave Seventh Cavalry sent down to the Valley of Death, and the Thermopylæ of the western plains is on our national records.

When a relief corps was sent to look up Custer's trail, the column came to a part of the division that had been led by the runaway lieutenant. The men were still fighting in the timber. They gave cheer upon cheer to the soldiers who had come to their relief, and the Indians fell back. The relief pushed on to

find Custer and his men. They passed an Indian village which extended three miles along the stream. They saw funeral lodges containing the bodies of nine chiefs. When they came to the Custer field they were appalled. They set to work to bury the dead. There were only two spades, but the soldiers used tin plates, cups, and even their hands in digging the graves. They were buried exactly where they had fallen, each grave being carefully marked with a stake cut in two, the name burned inside, the two pieces wrapped with wire and driven out of sight at the head of each grave.

A year later General Sheridan sent his brother, Colonel Michael Sheridan, from Chicago to the Little Big Horn to go with an escort to the battle-field and bring the bodies back. He took a steamer on the Yellowstone and returned to Fort Lincoln with the coffins, which were placed in a storehouse. Colonel Joseph Tilford, of the Seventh Cavalry, locked himself in the room and opened Custer's casket and cut a lock of hair from his head, in order that his wife might have sure proof of his identity. No queen ever valued her crown jewels more highly. Thus was one ray of sunshine brought from the battle-field in the gleam of a golden curl.



Some of these heroes of the Little Big Horn were taken to their homes, others to the military cemetery at Fort Leavenworth; but General Custer, who had once asked his wife to lay him in the spot he loved the best, was buried at West Point. A bronze relief of The Boy General in battle, forever looks down across the hills and river over the most beautiful scene on all the Hudson.

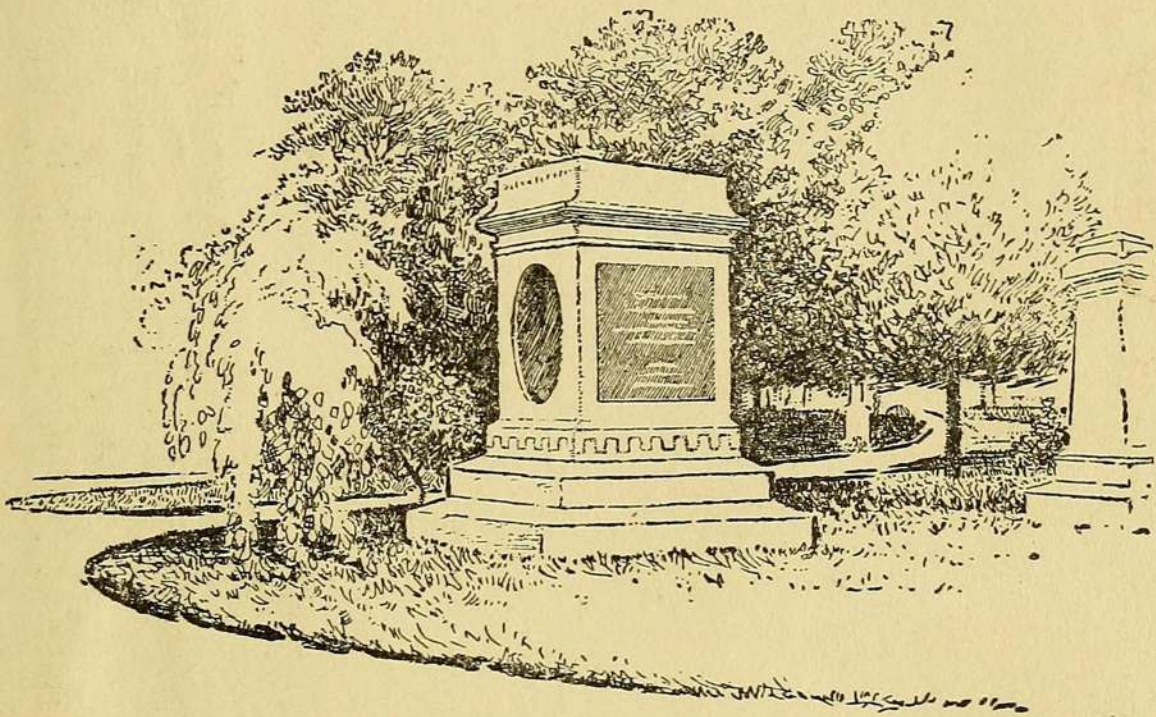
Captain Keough's thoroughbred horse, Comanche, was the only living thing found on the Custer battle-field. When General Terry's relief column arrived, Comanche staggered to his feet, having survived twenty-eight wounds. He was tenderly cared for, taken to Fort Lincoln, and orders were issued that no one should ever ride him again. Comanche always marched in the parades of the Seventh Cavalry, caparisoned with the military equipments of a cavalry officer, and led by the devoted soldiers who had him in charge. He died in 1893, and his funeral was attended with the honors of war. He was mounted by a taxidermist and is now in the Military Museum at Governor's Island.

A monument of granite in the form of an obelisk marks the field where General Custer fell. It overlooks the entire country occupied

by both forces during the action. On the west front is the inscription to the officers; on the three other sides is a list of the men who fell on that spot as well as those who were killed in the fight on the 26th.

A quarter of a century has elapsed since the Battle of the Little Big Horn. At that time Sitting Bull, in Dakota, and Crazy Horse, in Wyoming, with their allies, Crow King, Gall, Low Dog, Humph and Two Moons, kept a territory of 90,000 square miles in terror, slaying without mercy travellers, settlers, woodchoppers, and hunters. To-day hundreds of thousands of happy people in snug homes on well-tilled farms, or in pretty villages, rejoice in the peace and prosperity of the same country which still has room enough for as many Indians as ever lived there.

As a pioneer the name of George Armstrong Custer will live side by side with that of La Salle, Captain John Smith, Boone, and Miles Standish. And he has won unfading glory as a soldier, through his efficient zeal, devoted patriotism, and the high courage that counted death in loyal service, a victory. ✕



General Custer's Grave at West Point.









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