

King Charles

A Soldier's Trial: An Episode of the Canteen Crusade



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CHAPTER I

TWO ANNOUNCEMENTS

The war with Spain was at an end, and so were the hopes and aspirations of many a warrior. For several reasons Colonel Ray of the – th Kentucky was a disappointed man. One of the best soldiers doing duty with the volunteers, he had had some of the worst luck. Through long years of service in the regular cavalry he had borne the reputation of being a most energetic and valuable officer. He had won a name as an Indian fighter the Indians themselves respected. He had campaigned all over the frontier before the railways came and conquered. He knew Arizona and New Mexico even better than his native State, and was known from the upper Missouri to the lower Colorado far more generally than in the "blue grass" country of his boy days. Apache and Arapahoe, Comanche and Cheyenne, Sioux and Shoshone, they all had met, and many had measured spear with, the dark-eyed, curly-headed Kentucky light-horseman. He bore the scars of more than one sharp encounter; had given more than he had received, yet found himself in no wise blessed with profit or promotion. The Civil War was fairly ended when he stepped from the Point into his first commission. Over thirty years had he done valiant and faithful duty in the line, yet was he only just wearing the gold leaves as junior major of his regiment, when the long-expected happened in the spring of '98, and the nation called out its first levy of volunteers. Slow as had been his advancement, it was phenomenally swift as compared with that of classmates who, choosing the artillery arm, had languished those thirty years in the line of file closers. Ray had no complaint to make. He was even rejoiceful in his luck when called to Kentucky to command one of her regiments of volunteer infantry. He was, indeed, among the few envied men in the army where so very few have anything to excite the cupidity of their kind. His record and reputation were things no man could undermine, though some might underestimate. His temperament was sweet and sunny. He had long been happily, most happily, married. His wife was charming, admired, and beloved. His children were all a father's heart could wish. Health and competence had always been theirs. They had, indeed, for years known the joys of moderate wealth, for Mrs. Ray had brought her husband something besides beauty and grace, physical and spiritual. The Marion Sanford of the Centennial year of '76 was reputed an heiress, and the children that had come in course of time to bless their union were certainly born to the purple. But army people of those days lived long years in the far West, had to trust their business affairs to agents in the far East, and some agents could not stand such prosperity. Mrs. Ray's property was mainly in real estate, some of which became gradually unproductive. Then there came the financial storm of '93, and a subsequent flitting of financial agents, some to the convenient Canadas, some to the Spanish Main.

Then another thing happened, almost whimsical in the way of retributive justice where Mrs. Ray's relatives were concerned. That the resultant burden should have been saddled on her cavalry husband was perhaps not quite so diverting. There were several of Mrs. Ray's nearest of kin who had by no means approved of her marriage in the army, and to a nameless, moneyless subaltern at that. "He will make ducks and drakes of her fortune," said they. "He will drink and gamble it away," said certain others. Ray had possibly heard, had probably expected this. At all events he had steadfastly declined to use his wife's money. He had gone so far as to grieve her not a little by very gently, but very firmly, declining to undertake the management of her property. That was all left in the hands of her people. It was the agent of their choice who made ducks and drakes of much of it, as well as of

their own, and, at the time the Spanish War broke out, from his pay as major in the line of the army "Billy" Ray was contributing to the support of certain of the children of his former detractors.

Then came partial relief. "Sandy" Ray, their eldest son, commissioned like his father in the cavalry, was no longer to be provided for. Indeed, he was sending every month a certain quarter of his salary direct to his mother to repay her for moneys advanced for him when they were much needed. Maidie Ray, their lovely dark-eyed daughter, had married the man of her choice, a well-to-do young New Yorker of most excellent family. There was only Billy, Junior, among their olive branches now to be provided for until he could look out for himself. There was even prospect of his being sent to West Point within the year to make a try at that which had proved too hard a problem for his unmathematical elder brother, for Sandy had worn cadet gray long enough to get much of the practical teaching of our famous school, though he could not assimilate the requisite amount of the theoretical. It was the year after the surrender of Santiago and the muster out of most of the State volunteers that, in the goodness of his heart, Colonel Ray turned to Marion, his wife, and said:

"Why not have Beth and 'Cilla come to us?" – and thereby hangs very much of this tale.

"Beth," be it said at once, did not come, for, even in her reduced circumstances and somewhat mature years, this excellent woman was sought by an old admirer, once deemed ineligible. Beth wrote thankfully and appreciatively to Uncle Will and dear Aunt Marion: "The Doctor has returned to New Jersey and – the old subject." There was now no stern parent to say him nay, and she – could not. But Priscilla would gladly and gratefully come, and, whether or no Priscilla was grateful, Priscilla proved assuredly glad, for Priscilla was a woman with a mission and long in search of a field. Priscilla had often marveled at Aunt Marion's blindness in not having earlier looked to her as the best possible guide, example, and companion for Aunt Marion's most interesting if much-indulged brood. Priscilla never doubted her powers, and never dreamed of the instant protests developed when, in mischievous mood, probably, papa had suggested having Cousin 'Cilla come to the frontier to help mother school the little Rays. All their recollections of that prematurely mature young kinswoman were somewhat appalling. They regarded her as healthy children are sure to look upon an elder cousin who seeks ever to improve her opportunities and their moral nature. Life had had no greater trial to the trio than those rare and even regrettable visits to mother's home and kindred where first they learned to know the superior gifts and graces of Cousin 'Cil.

It has been said that Colonel Ray, the Spanish part of the war ended, was a disappointed man, and that so was many another. Never waiting to see what might result from the general rally of the Filipino insurgents, following speedily the first general scatter, the government swiftly mustered out all the State volunteers not actually on duty in the distant islands, filled up the regulars with raw recruits, and shipped them straightway, undisciplined, undrilled, across the wide Pacific. Then new regiments of volunteers were authorized, – National volunteers, instead of State, – and, though their field officers as a rule were chosen from the regular service, there were by no means enough to go around among the many deserving applicants. The forty odd colonelcies went, in most cases, to the right men, but there were many "left," and Billy Ray was one. He had had no luck whatever with his Kentucky regiment. He had been sent to Chickamauga, and thence to Florida, and thence nowhere worth mentioning. They saw no service without the States; heard no hostile bullets whistle; found, like most of the State volunteers, they were to have no part in the Cuban campaign, and, that being the case, they wished to go home. They hadn't enlisted to play soldier, said they, and much as they admired and honored Colonel Ray, they could not be made to love soldier life that had no fighting. "Give us a chance to *do* something," was their cry, "and we'll stay till hell freezes over; but no more of this sort of thing for us." Ray had tried hard to keep alive regimental interest and enthusiasm, but few could feel either interest or enthusiasm in a daily routine of drill, parade, and police duty in a hot, malarious Southern camp under Southern summer skies. Other regiments about them were getting orders to go home for muster out, and some of these individual Kentuckians had begun to go, too. If Ray could have moved them a few miles away from the other camps, and close to the sparkling sea

water, things might have gone better, but his original brigade commander, a regular whom he knew, and who knew him, had gotten orders for the Philippines, and gone.

He was succeeded by a brigadier whom Ray had never heard of, nor apparently had anybody else outside the contracted limits of his commonwealth, and this gentleman, having never before served with troops, and knowing nothing about modern military conditions, had imbibed his impressions from foreign pictorial papers. His conception of the functions of a general officer found concrete form in a daily circuit of his camps, mounted and accompanied by his full staff and escort. When not so occupied he sat in much state under the fly of his marquee, and had his colonels come and stand attention and listen to his homilies on the military art, which differed from anything they had previously conceived upon the subject. It was this unschooled, unskilled brigadier who turned down Ray's appeal to march his regiment five miles over to the seashore. The colonel of over thirty years' practical experience was being lectured by the general who had none. The unterrified Kentucky rank and file took to guying their civilian star-bearer. There were presently demonstrations that Ray could neither foresee nor prevent. The general thought he could and should, and so informed him, and likewise the division commander. Ray demanded investigation. The division commander sought to smooth matters over, and failed. Ray resigned in disgust, sought orders to his own regiment, and found himself once again at the head of his squadron of regular troopers in the midst of scenes he loved. But his soul longed for action. He was offered a lieutenant-colonelcy of one of the national regiments of volunteers, but that was a step down, not up. It would have placed him under a colonel ten years younger than himself, and he said he preferred the gold leaves in the regulars to the silver in the volunteers, which ended for the present his prospects. Maidie's wedding, too, had something to do with the decision. But now that was over with, and here were he and Marion occupying delightful quarters at old Fort Minneconjou, with every prospect of soon being sent to the Philippines, where their colonel was commanding a division in the field, leaving Major Ray to look after the post, its men, and its military morals. Here it was, in the bracing air of the Dakotas and within range of the bold foothills and remoter pine-crested heights of the Sagamore, that they opened their hearts and doors to Mrs. Billy's niece, Priscilla Sanford, and affairs at Minneconjou, stagnant a while after the departure of the – d Infantry, once more became alive with interest, for Miss 'Cilla, as has been said, was a woman with a mission and, as perhaps should be said, with some thirty years to her credit, rather more than she had dollars.

Time had been when, with abundant means and few cares, Miss Sanford busied herself in local charities and became a social power in her community. But with loss of money came lack of appreciation. She who had long managed the Mission kindergarten, and mainly financed it, was presently superseded as president of the board. She who had ever been foremost in the counsels of the Infants' Home and the St. Mary's Guild found herself gradually slighted in the matter of entertainments, etc., though still graciously permitted to do most of the clerical work.

For nearly a dozen years she had served as secretary and treasurer of the Young Woman's Church Aid and Temperance Union, a beneficent organization that still held many meetings but few converts. It had the backing of three or four wealthy congregations, however, and the control of a generous fund. When the year '94 was ushered in and the victims of the panic of '93 were enumerated, the case of Priscilla Sanford had excited prompt and rather widespread interest; but the sympathy that might have been as readily accorded was tempered by the reflection that Miss Sanford had ever been what they termed "bossy," by which it was by no means meant to imply that bovine sluggishness and submission were Miss Sanford's marked characteristics, for Miss Sanford was energy personified in petticoats. It had been moved, seconded and carried, in a spasm of feminine generosity, that the secretary and treasurer should be paid a salary, small, to be sure, but something, and Priscilla Sanford, who had labored without fee or financial reward a dozen years, was permitted to hold the position as a salaried official just one year longer, by which time it was determined that Miss Sanford had really been secretary much too long, and, anyhow, that somebody else stood much more in need of

it. So Priscilla's party found itself outvoted at the annual election, and the Young Woman's Church Aid ceased, except in name, to be a temperance union. With much that was intemperate in tone and language, the union burst its bonds and flew to pieces, one or more to each congregation. Then Priscilla tried her hand at writing for the various journals of the clerical order. Some few published, but none paid for, her contributions. Then Aunt Marion began sending occasional drafts that were not to be mentioned to anybody. Then came Priscilla's bid to join Uncle Will and Aunt Marion at Minneconjou, and then – Priscilla herself.

She had been there barely forty-eight hours when there arrived from the Philippines a bulky letter from Lieutenant Sandy Ray, eldest son and hope and heir, dated "Camp Lawton, Benguet." It had been nearly three months on the way. It brought tidings that made his mother's soft cheek pale with anxiety and caused Colonel Ray to look up startled as he read it, to go over and take his wife in his arms, lead her to the sofa, and hold her close as he went on with the final pages – a boy's rhapsody over a boy's first love:

My Own Mummie: – Not until I could send you the inclosed, the portrait, and by no means flattering one, of the loveliest girl that ever lived, could I write to tell you of my almost delirious happiness. But *look* at her —*look* at her, and see for yourself and rejoice with me, best, blessedest, dearest of mothers, that this exquisite creature loves me —*me*, your no 'count, ranch boy Sandy – loves *me*, and will soon, please God, be my own wife. Mother, mother, I have hardly slept in my wild joy, and now I can hardly wait for your approval and blessing. Dad will love and admire her, I know, but mothers, they say, never think any woman good enough for their boys, while I – I could kiss the very ground she treads so lightly. I almost worship the very glove she left me for a souvenir.

As yet I can't quite realize my wondrous luck. Why, Mummie, the other fellows were simply mad about her during her brief stay at Manila. Quite a lot of us, you know, were ordered there when poor Jack Bender was court-martialed. He got a stay of proceedings of some kind, so while the witnesses should have been back with General Young here, they were dancing attendance on her, and the way I got the inside track was, when her parents had to go over to Japan, I coaxed a ten days' leave out of the General and went with them – her father, mother and her own sweet self – on the *Hancock* to Nagasaki, and came back desolate on the – I don't know what.

I met her at a dance at the Club. She attracted me the instant I set eyes on her, so like is she to Maidie, only darker, perhaps, and taller, and a bit more slender. But her eyes, hair, teeth, coloring, are all so like Maidie's. Her features, perhaps, are more regular. Shannon, of the Twenty-third, was doing the devoted, and he presented me. She danced like a sylph, she danced right into my heart, Mummie, and there she lives and reigns and has her being – my queen! my queen!

Oh, what nonsense this must sound to you! All my wise resolutions as to young men marrying on lieutenant's pay thrown to the wind! That, however, need not worry us. The major, her father, is well-to-do, and she's an only child; but this is sordid. It is *she* that I love, and the man does not live who could see and know her and not worship. Why, even our old friend Captain Dwight was fascinated and didn't half like it that I should have gone with her to Nagasaki, and he was stiff as a ramrod when I came back. But to return to her father. He, of course, doesn't expect to remain in the army after the war. He was made major and quartermaster, I presume because of his financial experience and worth, and he was so patriotic he felt he had to get into the field as something. He is a Texan by long residence, if not birth; owns two or three ranches, and his wife, my darling's mother, is a Spanish lady whom he met years ago in Cuba, then Señorita de la Cruz y Mendoza y Fronteras, etc.,

etc., but she, my lady, never speaks of this. She is simplicity and sweetness itself. She bears her father's honored name, and that alone, except for her own Christian name, the sweetest ever – Inez.

The major's health has suffered much in Manila, but it is hoped that six weeks in Japan may restore him entirely. If not, they will take the homeward voyage by way of Vancouver in one of the fine ships of the Empress line instead of our crowded transports. Hundreds of State volunteers are going back by every one of these and, being discharged, or as good as discharged, they consider themselves relieved from all discipline – which makes it unpleasant for families of officers. They (the Farrells) may winter in 'Frisco, where I hope to join them in the spring, and where you will be sure to see them when you and Dad and the squadron embark for the Islands. There won't be anything left of the insurrection, or much of the insurrectos, at the rate things are going, by the time you come, but meanwhile, like the loving Mummie you are, write to them, especially to *her*, that your future daughter may know a loving welcome awaits her. She seems timid as to that and fears you may not like her, and Dad will, of course, write to Major Farrell, who is as keen a lover of horses as ever he was, and who owns some of the finest blooded stock ever seen in the South. This letter goes registered because of the priceless photograph, which was taken at Hong Kong, Inez tells me, just after their voyage over, when she was looking like a fright. Being registered, it must go slowly and may be long in reaching you, but fancy your Sandy's joy, if you can. Send this to Maidie, if you will, for I have no time to write to both. I am commanding my troop and we march at dawn for the mountains, and may be weeks now in the jungle, chasing Aguinaldo. Several of our fellows have broken down and had to go to the sea or back to Corregidor, even over to Japan, to recuperate, but I feel like a fighting cock and am going in now to win a name for myself, and for her, that you'll all be proud of. One thing I can tell you proudly, mother dear: never since that day at the Presidio, ever so much more than a year ago, have I let even a sip of wine pass my lips, the first and only teetotaler among the Rays, and perhaps *that* has something to do with my perfect physical trim. I owe you this, and have gladly kept the faith. Now in my new-found happiness I feel as if I could keep that and every other faith to the end. Lovingly, devotedly, your boy,

Sanford Ray.

P. S. – Inez says it should not be announced until you all have approved, whereas I wished and would be for shouting the news from the housetops. There is a chance of getting this to you quicker than I thought. Captain Dwight has never been himself since Bender's trial and conviction. General Young wanted him to take sick leave last month and go to Japan, but he wouldn't. Now he's fairly broken down and has to be left behind, so this will go to Manila with him. I wonder – I can't help wondering – what he'd think if he knew what was in it. The fellows do say she could have had him and his money, yet she chose your boy, Sandy.

For a moment after reading the final page Colonel Ray sat in silence. Aloft could be heard the firm footfalls of Miss Sanford as she bustled about her room unpacking her belated trunks. Within, with merry snap and sparkle, the fresh-heaped wood fire blazed in the broad open fireplace. Without, the orderly trumpeter, away over by the flagstaff, was winding the last note of stable call. The late afternoon sunshine flooded the valley of the Minneconjou. The mountain air, cool, bracing, redolent of pine and cedar, stirred the tracery of the white curtains at the open southward window and fluttered the silken folds of the standard and guidons at the parlor archway. Anxiously the mother heart was throbbing by his side, and the fond eyes sought the soldier's strong, storm-beaten face. Then she noted the look of bewilderment in his gaze, for again he was studying that postscript. Then suddenly

he stretched forth his hand, took from the little pile of newspapers on a chair a copy of a recent army journal, swiftly turned over a page or two, searching the columns with half doubtful eyes; then, finding what he needed, thumbed the paragraph and held it where she could easily see. "Read that," said Ray, and Marion read aloud:

"San Francisco, – 18. – Among the arrivals at the Occidental by the *Sheridan* from Manila and Nagasaki are Major, Mrs. and Miss Farrell and Captain Oswald M. Dwight, the latter of the – th Cavalry. Major Farrell, Quartermaster U. S. Volunteers, is the owner of valuable properties in Texas, whither he is soon to return. Captain Dwight, one of the most distinguished of our squadron leaders, is rapidly recuperating from serious illness contracted in the Philippines. The voyage proved a blessing in more ways than one, for the dinner given by Major and Mrs. Farrell last night, to a select coterie at the Bohemian Club, was to announce the engagement of their lovely daughter, Inez, to this gallant trooper, who won his spurs in the Apache campaign of the '80's, and the sympathy of hosts of friends on the Pacific coast in the death of his devoted wife six years ago. They will now rejoice with him in his joy, and unite with us in wishing him and his young and beautiful bride all possible felicity."

Mrs. Ray turned, all amaze, incredulity and distress; then, with something like a sob, buried her face on the sturdy blue shoulder. There was suspicious moisture about her husband's blinking eyes, and he for a moment could hardly trust himself to speak.

"Is it —*our* boy now, dear?" he gently asked, and her head came up at the instant, her blue eyes welling over with indignant tears:

"Oh, Will," she answered, "you know well what I'm thinking. It is of *her*— of Margaret — it is of *their* boy — poor little motherless Jim!"

CHAPTER II

A FACE FROM THE PHILIPPINES

The man did not live who could say, much less think, that Oswald Dwight did not devotedly love his devoted wife and had not deeply, even desolately, mourned her untimely death. Margaret Welland was not a woman to be soon forgotten. For six years she had been the object almost of reverence among the officers and men of her husband's regiment, almost of worship among the women. Gentle, generous, and charitable, gifted with many a physical charm and almost every spiritual grace, she had lived her brief life in the army an uncrowned queen, and died a martyr – almost a saint. For long weeks afterward the women would weep at mere mention of her name. The casket that bore the fragile, lifeless form and that of her infant daughter to their final rest was literally buried in flowers that were wet with tears. Strong men, too, turned aside or hid their faces in trembling hands when with bowed head Oswald Dwight was led by, clasping to his breast his sobbing little boy. There were some who said that Dwight could never have pulled up again if it hadn't been for Jimmy. It was long months before the stricken soldier was restored to them. It was longer still before little Jim returned, and every day meantime, after Dwight's appearance, regularly as he rose and went silently about his duties, the father wrote his letter to be read aloud to his only living child, and the one thing that spurred the merry-hearted little fellow to his studies was the longing to read and to answer for himself. Jim's first missive to his father, penned by his own infinite labor, was the event of the second winter at Fort Riley, for it was shown in succession to nearly every comrade and to every even remotely sympathetic woman at the post. There were maidens there who would fain have consoled the tall, distinguished, dark-eyed trooper, so interesting in his depth of melancholy, so eligible as a catch, for Dwight, for an army man, was oddly well to do. Obstinate, however, he refused all consolation from even such a sympathetic source, and would for long brook no companion on his solitary walks or rides. All his talk now was of his boy. All his thoughts, plans, projects, seemed centering on little Jim, who, for the time being, had to be housed among his mother's people. He was still too young for the care of a soldier-father who any day might be compelled to take the field. But then came station at Fort Riley, with its big garrison, its school and its society, and then the yearning at his heart could no longer be denied. The Wellands nearly cried their eyes out when Oswald, toward the end of the third "leave" since Margaret's death, told them that the time for which he had scrupulously sought to prepare them had come at last: he must have his boy – he could not live without him.

Then when Jimmy came it seemed as though an entire garrison had started in to spoil him. He was the merriest, sunniest, friendliest little chap, frank, brave and even beautiful, with all his mother's lovely coloring, with her deep, heavily-lashed, soulful, violet eyes, with her soft curling brown hair, with her sweet, sensitive mouth and pretty white teeth. No wonder big Oswald used to set him on his knee and look long into the smiling little face, so fond and trustful, yet filled with vague wonderment why daddy should so wistfully gaze at him; and then with relief, Jim knew not why, when the strong arms would suddenly draw the lithe, slender little body to that broad and heaving chest and hold it there, close strained, while bearded lips sought and kissed again and again the sunny curls. Dwight just lived for that boy, said Fort Riley, small blame to him! Dwight made little Jim his friend, his confidant, his companion. Jim had his own little pony as soon as he could safely bestride one. Jim had his own little camp bed in the room opening off his father's. Jim had his own shower bath rigged up in his own closet. Jim had his regular setting-up drill and calisthenics, with daddy himself for teacher, his rub-down and his soldier toilet, with daddy to teach him breathing exercises that took the oxygen deep down into his lungs and sent the red blood whirling through his sinewy little frame. Jimmy had his own racket for tennis, his own target rifle, his own kites, tops, marbles, soldiers of every conceivable size, costume and corps, his own railway tracks and trains, his own books and bookshelves, his own

desk and study table – pretty much everything a boy could have except his own way, which he was the better without, and his own mother – without whom boy life can never be complete.

Fort Riley could be censorious, Heaven knows, when cause existed, and sometimes when it didn't; but, save the cherished thought of certain sentimental women that little Jim should have a mother's care as well as a father's, Fort Riley had few critics so unwise as to question Dwight's methods with his boy. Jim did not lack for playfellows of his own age – the fort was full of them and they as full of mischief and merriment as even army boys are apt to be; but, though at school and in the "all-round" sports of boyhood Jim mingled with them unreservedly, the father had made it his business to know most of them well before he brought Jim to take his initiation among them. There were some few whose homes Jim was cautioned not to visit. There were some whom, even on rainy days when the railway was in successful operation all over the second story, Jim was not permitted to invite to join his fellow-operatives. A few carping critics there were who thought such indulgence would be sure to spoil any boy, but, under his father's eye and guided by his father's hand, Jim worked and studied quite as steadily as he played. The staff of the little army household was made up mainly of former trooper Hentzler and his buxom wife, Hentzler being butler, steward, and valet, Frau Hentzler cook and housemaid. Mrs. Feeny, of the troop, was their laundress, and Trooper Mehl "boots," striker and groom. But it was Dwight himself who roused his boy for his morning bath and exercise, who sat with him through his study hour, saw him off to school; walked, rode, drove, sometimes shot and fished with him, going for the purpose far up the Smoky Hill. It was Dwight who read with him after their evening tea and who finally knelt with him night after night before he tucked the little fellow into his white bed, imploring God's guidance for himself, God's blessing for his boy.

And so never again had they been separated, Dwight and his boy, until the squadron sailed for Manila and little Jim, refusing to be comforted, had been left with his mother's kindred until matters should shape themselves in the Philippines. But the shaping process that might have been a matter only of months, had the army found no other enemy than the insurgents and their climate, proved long and costly in life, limb, and treasure, thanks to the aid and comfort given that enemy by our fellow-men at home. Dwight had led his squadron through a campaign fierce in its occasional fighting, but well-nigh fatal through hardship and heat prostration to many besides himself. Dwight had had to turn over his command to Captain Gridley, his next in rank, and go to the sea and Corregidor for rest and recuperation. What good effects might have been obtained were offset by the court-martial of an officer whose mind, it was believed, had been affected by sunstroke, yet Captain Dwight was compelled to appear and remain some time in Manila to testify against him. He returned to the field little benefited by the enforced separation from his fellows, and speedily showed symptoms of returning prostration that led the general commanding to order him again to the seashore and recommend his being sent on a sea voyage. It was during this voyage that, after four wonderful days at Nagasaki, he found himself daily, almost hourly, in the presence of Inez Farrell, as beautiful and graceful a girl as ever his eyes had seen. He was strong neither physically nor mentally. He was still an invalid when they met on the veranda of the old hotel overlooking that wonderful land-locked harbor. He had by no means forgotten the impression created by her beauty and her lissome grace when dancing at the club at Manila. He was invited by Major Farrell to be one of their little party on a rickshaw ride over the green hills to Mogi. It was an ideal day. It was an ideal night, with the moon nearing full as they sat later on the upper veranda, gazing out upon the riding lights of the shipping thick-clustered on the placid bosom of the bay. It was followed by other nights as beautiful both ashore and at sea. He was twenty years her senior, yet she seemed to look for him, wait for him, prefer him in every way to younger officers, also homeward bound, and these youngsters left him to his fate.

What time he was not walking the deck, with her little hand resting on his arm, or flung in long, low steamer chair close to hers, where he could watch the wondrous beauty of her face and feel the spell of her soft, languorous, lovely eyes, Dwight found himself in converse with her father, a patriotic quartermaster, the owner of valuable properties in the Lone Star State, to which he must speedily

return – his "boys," two nephews, were not trained to business, said he, and they, too, had been seeing service and unsettling their minds and habits with the volunteers that didn't get to Cuba. His daughter was his chief anxiety, he admitted. She had her mother's luxurious Spanish temperament; needed a guiding hand – a husband to whom she could look up with respect and honor, not a callow youngster with no ideas beyond scheming for promotion and better pay. Several of these young chaps had been buzzing about her at Manila, but she had "turned them all down," said Farrell. She had sense and power of observation with all her possibly romantic admiration for soldiers, but what she really admired was the real soldier – a man fit to command and lead, a man with a record behind him, not an uncertainty ahead. Dwight's seat, at the request of the veteran general officer going with them to the States, had been at the captain's table, but Dwight soon effected – at least Farrell effected and Dwight got the *discredit* of it – a transfer with the officer who had been seated at the side of Inez Farrell, and Dwight's mental condition can perhaps be judged of by the fact that he never noticed that General Hume thereafter not once addressed him on the voyage.

Enough said. Oswald Dwight's many friends throughout the service read with much surprise, most of them with vague disquietude and some few with downright dismay, the announcement of the marriage at Los Angeles, by the Right Reverend the Bishop of the Diocese, assisted by the Very Reverend Fathers Moran and Finley, at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, of Inez, only daughter of Major and Quartermaster James O'Donohue Farrell, U. S. V., of Santa Rosita, Texas, and Maria Mercedes de la Cruz y Mendoza y Fronteras, his wife, to Captain Oswald M. Dwight, – th U. S. Cavalry.

When the happy pair set forth upon their wedding journey some comment was created by the fact that, while they went to New Orleans, the parents of the bride did not go to Texas, as had been planned. Moreover, the major, it seems, had not anticipated that orders honorably discharging him from the volunteer service would meet him within the week of his arrival within the Golden Gate. Officers of the Department Staff, interrogated on the subject, said little but looked volumes. Major Blake, of the Cavalry, an old and intimate friend of the Rays, was understood to say that it was a wonder the major had been honorably discharged at all. Farrell, who was to have gone to his Texas property, found that certain mines in Mexico demanded immediate looking after. Indeed, it was this fact that precipitated an earlier marriage than Miss Farrell, whose trousseau was by no means in readiness, had for a moment contemplated. Farrell said he might be as much as six months in the mountains beyond Guadalajara and other places. The señora had, of course, wealthy kindred with whom she could stay at Mexico or Vera Cruz, but the hitch was about Inez, who, said her father, was so Americanized that she couldn't get along with her mother's people – they were forever at swords' points, and what more natural than that the ardent swain should promptly urge immediate union; then the Farrells could go their way in peace and he could bear away his beautiful bride to the Atlantic seaboard, to be made known to his people, and to embrace little Jim. To this Inez responded coyly that she could not think of such a plan. She could not go back to San Francisco, a bride, in the gowns she wore while there as Miss Farrell. Then said Dwight, we'll go straight to New Orleans, where her mother had many friends and kinsfolk, where the best of modistes abound, where everything a bride could possibly wear could surely be found, and Farrell added his dictum to the pleadings of the groom-elect. The plan appealed to him most, as it would cost him least.

When Farrell gave them his tearful benediction and farewell, ten thousand dollars of Dwight's money was stowed away in bills of exchange on the City of Mexico for investment in the fabulous mines of the Sierras, and Dwight's signature was on the back of one or two bills left in the hands of Farrell's friends and correspondents at the Bank of California, purely, of course, for safe-keeping. And so they went on their respective ways, Farrell not soon to be seen in God's country again.

Three months later, with little Jim at his side and the young step-mother dawdling along after them in her easy carriage, Captain Dwight was tramping through Switzerland. The surgeons had said in so many words he must not return to the Philippines for half a year, and neither before nor after his

marriage had a word reached him from the Rays, who were his next-door neighbors and Margaret's most devoted friends until Jimmy was nearly two years old. Even thereafter, though stationed far apart, Marion Ray and Margaret Dwight had kept up their correspondence almost to the end. Dwight, indeed, had seen barely half a dozen of his former comrades, and that only by accident and in haste. There had come since his second marriage the usual number of cards in response to the wedding announcement sent to so many friends both in and out of the army. There had come a curiously unusual dearth of letters of congratulation. But every man was on the move, he persuaded himself. Everybody was either busy in the Philippines or voyaging to or from them. They, too, were moving from pillar to post, and letters must be miscarrying, so few, for instance, had come from Father-in-law Farrell, and those that did come made no mention of matters Farrell could hardly have ignored, and that Dwight had rather counted on.

Still, Dwight's health was mending every week. Inez had seen so much of foreign life in her younger days she could not be expected to care to go poking about, as he did with Jimmy, into all manner of odd nooks and corners. Father and son once more were hand in hand – hand in glove – for hours each day, and but for a shyness Jim would surely soon get over – a queer, silent shrinking from his beautiful young mother – but for this and one or two little worries due to the non-appearance of letters that ought to have come and doubtless would come, Dwight strove to persuade himself that he was again a happy and an enviable man.

Then came a day that left its impress on them all. There had been something very like demur on part of the Welland family when Dwight first announced his intention of taking Jimmy with them to see the Old World. What would Inez – they spoke her name with effort – think of such a plan? Was not a young bride justified in expecting the undivided attention of her husband? Would not any girl, placed as she was, prefer a honeymoon unclouded by the presence of the children of her predecessor? Inez had not warmed to her other kindred by marriage; could she be expected to welcome and, all at once, to warm to little Jim? Conscientiously and consistently they had tried to like Inez, and could not. She was beautiful; she was appealing; she was apparently all desire to please, but she was not convincing. The more they saw of her the less they liked, but Dwight's infatuation was complete. And still he would have his boy, and they spoke at last. He had answered by summoning her to the room – a strange proceeding – and bidding her speak for him, and she did. She said her heart had yearned for little Jim ever since the captain first began to tell of him, and when she realized later how utterly the father's heart was bound up in his boy, she had prayed for guidance that she might prove a second mother to the little fellow, and it was her earnest desire that the lad might come with them. How else was she to hope to win his trust, his affection? There was nothing left for them to say; but the dread and desolation that fell upon the household when, for the second time, they were compelled to part with Margaret's boy, no one but the Wellands was permitted to know.

Inez, who had been a model sailor on the Pacific, kept much to her stateroom on the gray Atlantic, though the voyage was unusually placid. Nor had she later made much effort in her quest for Jimmy's trust and affection. She could not climb mountains, pedal wheels or ride quadrupeds. She cared little for scenery – she had seen so much in her girlhood. She admitted feeling languid and inert. Perhaps mountain air was not congenial. She would be better when they got to sunny Italy. She wished there to see everything and to live in the open air – it was what the doctor said the captain must do – and then she was always exquisitely gowned and ready to meet them when in the late afternoon they came home, all aglow, with just time to get out of their tweeds and into dinner dress. Then Jimmy went early to bed, and she had the long beautiful evenings with her husband. But now they were in sunny Italy and, except to drive in beauteous toilets and dine in evening garb still more resplendent, Inez had no interest in her surroundings and but little in Jim. They were to sail for home, taking the *Hohenzollern* at Naples, after the Easter week in Rome. They had been driving much of the day and dining early on the balcony of their hotel, looking out upon the glorious view toward Sorrento and Capri, with grim Vesuvius, smoke-crowned, in the middle distance. Any moment, said their host,

they should sight the graceful hull of their expected steamer cleaving the blue beyond the rocky scarp of Posilipo, when Jimmy, gazing steadily through the glass at the crowding fleet of shipping off the Dogana, spoke excitedly: "It is our flag, daddy, and the funnel has three stripes!"

"A transport," said his father, who had been bending over Inez. "She must have come in while we were driving." Yet, even as he spoke, anxiously, tenderly, he was studying her face.

"Then – that was one of our officers that spoke to you, mamma?" said Jim, turning quickly, eagerly toward her.

She had been unusually inert and silent since their return, had herself suggested dinner on the balcony. It would save the bother of dressing, and then repacking, since they might have to go on board any hour that evening. She had been gazing listlessly out over the beautiful bay, almost dazzling in the rays of the setting sun. Now she suddenly started, shivered, but almost as suddenly, quickly rallied.

"Spoke to *me*, Jimmy! Why, child, you've been dreaming!"

"Why, no, mamma! Don't you remember – while daddy was in at the bank?" and the boy's big violet eyes turned full upon her. The white hands gripped the arm of her reclining chair, but she laughed lightly, and the words came quick.

"Jimmy boy, you were sound asleep on the front seat. Don't you remember, Oswald, dear?"

Dwight, too, laughed merrily. "Surely! Why, little man, your peepers were shut and you were curled up like a pussy cat – "

"But I'd waked up, daddy. Mamma gave a little scream and I thought somebody'd hurt her, and there was this gentleman with his hat raised, just standing and staring at her till she bent over and said something quick – "

"Well, of all the *traeumbilder* I ever heard!" and Mrs. Dwight's pearly teeth gleamed through rosy lips as she laughed delightedly, merrily. "Why, Jimmy boy, I had to shake you awake when I saw papa coming. That's what I bent forward for. You called him for something, dear, or I shouldn't have disturbed him."

"Certainly, I wanted him to see those Italian cavalry officers coming by, and his eyes could hardly open in time. Just look at 'em now."

They were, indeed, worth looking at – big and violet, blue and round and full of wonderment, of incredulity – almost of shock and distress – gazing fixedly upon the lovely, laughing face of the girl in the deep reclining chair.

And then, soft stepping, apologetic, salver in hand, a waiter appeared at the long Venetian window. Dwight took the card, read, and fairly cried aloud:

"By all that's jolly, Inez, it's Sandy Ray!"

CHAPTER III

A NIGHT AT NAPLES

There was a joyous time at the Salone Margherita that evening. Homeward bound, the *Burnside*, from Manila to New York *via* Suez, had anchored that morning off the Dogana quay, and twoscore officers and ladies and a numerous contingent of discharged soldiers had come swarming ashore to see what they could of Naples before again proceeding on the morrow. The fact that most of the officers were invalided home, convalescing from wounds or severe illness, seemed but moderately to cloud their enjoyment. By six o'clock most of their number had heard that Dwight of the cavalry, with his bride, was at the Grand, whither several went at once before ordering dinner. First to arrive, alone, and looking pallid and ill, was a young soldier in civilian dress, who seemed nervously impatient at the delay that followed the sending up of his card, and by no means delighted when three or four of his fellows came in and followed suit before his own was acknowledged. So uncompanionable, indeed, was he that he stepped outside to the southward terrace as though to avoid these others, and, but for the cards, the observant *portier* might have thought them strangers to each other. The late arrivals, as a rule, were garbed in khaki, just as they had come away from Manila, and were objects of polite curiosity to the elegantly capped, cloaked and uniformed Italian officers sauntering in from the Piazza Umberto, many of whom saluted courteously, though few could tell from the dress worn by the Americans which was officer and which was private soldier.

It was full fifteen minutes before Captain Dwight appeared, though little Jim had come bounding down the carpeted stairway all joy at seeing a face or two he well remembered, and in meeting new friends, who were unspeakably welcome because they were soldiers, American soldiers, *our* soldiers. Father, he said, would be down in a moment. Mamma was not quite well, over-tired, perhaps, from the long drive and day at sight-seeing and shopping. Even when Dwight appeared, shaking hands most cordially, rejoicefully, with all, and, indeed, nearly embracing Sandy Ray, whom he had known since that young gentleman's babyhood, it was a disappointment to all his visitors that he seemed worried and harassed. Mrs. Dwight, he explained, had not benefited as they had hoped by the journeyings abroad, and she had just had something like a sinking spell. They would have to excuse her a while. She'd be down later. "But you, too, Sandy boy! What a tough time you must have been having! I hadn't heard of your being ill. I haven't heard anything, in fact. Your father hasn't written to me at all. What has been the matter?"

And then it appeared that Sandy had been ailing for weeks on top of a not very serious wound, "wasn't at all fit," yet didn't wish to come home – had been ordered out of the Islands, in fact. And then, as it further appeared, when Dwight turned, looking for little Jim, all eagerness that Sandy should see how splendidly the lad was grown and developed since their parting in Arizona years ago, when Jimmy was just beginning to toddle about and talk, there stood the boy, his big blue eyes fixed on the pallid, solemn face of Lieutenant Ray with a look of bewilderment and trouble. Fowne of the Engineers spoke of it later to Foster, who just at that moment had seized Jimmy and swung him to his shoulder, where, instead of gleefully pounding his captor's head and laughing merrily, as of old he would have done, Jimmy was straining his violet blue eyes again, staring after Ray, whom a waiter, bearing his card, had summoned to follow him. Three or four of the laughing party at the moment had surrounded Dwight, compelling him with their chatter, so that he stood with a hand still extended toward the spot where Jimmy had been standing, and did not even see that Ray had been summoned and was gone. Question and answer were flying thick and fast, for full five minutes before, looking about him, Dwight missed his boy. Foster, finding the little fellow unresponsive, at least, had presently set him down, and then, plunging eagerly into the talk over the latest newspaper tidings of the doings of the Islands – of Otis's probable home-coming and MacArthur's succeeding to the command, of

what could be looked for at Samar and Mindanao – he, too, had lost sight of the lad. "Hullo!" said Dwight, "Jimmy has taken possession of Ray. Well, that's as it should be. How was Gridley when you last saw him, Foster? And tell me about the Gillettes. They were mighty kind to me when I was so knocked out after Bender's trial. Fit now? I should say so! Never felt finer in my life. I'm going back to Manila just as soon as I can place my wife and Jimmy, no matter what the doctors say."

And so it happened that, for ten minutes or more, neither Lieutenant Ray nor little Jim was greatly missed. But then Dwight began bethinking him it was high time for Inez to appear. She had promised to come down and meet his old comrades. Only a few minutes would be needed, she declared, in which "to prink a bit." She had been looking so white, or yellow, rather – so wan and weak, yet, after a bumper of champagne, had rallied gallantly, had bidden him run down to meet them and keep them entertained. She'd soon be there. That was now full twenty minutes back, and these fellows were getting impatient for dinner. The head waiter was even now announcing that their table was in readiness. Excusing himself a moment, Dwight hastened from the salon and ran swiftly up to their apartments. She was not there. He went out upon the gallery – the last look by day over that incomparable panorama of earth and sea and sky, for the sun was just kissing the far westward wave and throwing a glow of ruddy gold all over the Vesuvian shore. The waiter was clearing the table. Would the signor finish his wine? The signor needed none. Since that heat prostration in Luzon, Dwight found that a single glass would sometimes go to his head, and so when Inez was fatigued on land or ill at sea, and on her account he had ordered champagne, he merely sipped it, as it were, for her sake. There stood the generous flask still beaded with its icy dew, but most of its contents were gone. So was Inez. That waiter had then the proverbial "cheek" of his class – to drink half their wine and offer the signor the dregs. No, he wished no wine. Where was the signora? The signora, with the signorino, said the waiter, had been there but the moment before. The signora had reentered her apartment as the signor ascended. Dwight tapped at her window, and presently her voice answered him, in apparent exasperation. She had been having "no end of bother" changing her gown. She couldn't come down to meet his friends in the dusty traveling suit she had worn all day. She had hunted through two trunks before she found what she needed, and was so sorry for the delay, but she heard the party was to dine there. She had a maid to help her now, so she was trying to look her best and be worthy of him. Could he help in some way? Oh, dear no. Run back to them, there's a good boy, and in a few minutes she would be there.

So Dwight returned to the laughing party and went with them to their table and sat with them – an odd group in their service-worn suits of khaki amid the sumptuously attired guests in the brilliant room. Yet even among the wearers of the handsome Italian uniform the incessant glances toward the American party were far from critical. These men had but recently seen sharp service, and soldiers respect and envy soldier achievement. It was Dwight who first missed and asked for Ray. Ray? Why, Ray wasn't of our party. Ray wasn't of any party, in fact. Ray was "off his feed, if not off his base." The fellow was utterly hipped, said Foster. "No more like his father than I to Hercules, and nobody knows why." Ray came ashore with the rest of the crowd, had business at Cook's Bank, wandered off by himself and had been mooning by himself most of the voyage. Foster buried his muzzle deep in his brimming glass of Chianti and didn't care a billy what had become of young Ray. Gone back to the ship, probably, to sit and sulk the rest of the voyage. Obviously the quartette was out for pleasure, and Ray would have been a spoil-sport. None the less, Dwight felt that he should find him, if possible, and so went to the office. But assuredly, said the smiling, gold-banded official, the tenente departed as they were all in conversation. The tenente wished not to disturb them. The signorino went with him to his carriage and, behold! the signorino himself! Jimmy, indeed, came through the portal at the moment from the Piazza Umberto side, but not the blithe, bounding, joyous Jimmy of the morning. The young face was clouded with a look the father never before had seen, and when he called and Jimmy suddenly turned and saw him, though the bright eyes lighted instantly with all the old love – perhaps, too, with some relief – the cloud did not entirely vanish, nor did the boy come bounding.

He ran; he took his father's hand and looked up in his face, and when he was asked what he had done with Mr. Ray, said slowly: "Why, daddy, he isn't a bit like what I 'sposed he'd be. He only spoke to mamma a minute or two, and – I guess he isn't well. He didn't have time to speak to me – he hardly said good-by, or – anything."

"Oh, then mamma saw Mr. Ray! I'm glad of that," said Dwight, though remembering she had not mentioned it.

"Yes, on the gallery," said Jimmy. "At least, I suppose so. He came out through the corridor, and then mamma sent me after him with the gloves he had left. I wanted to ask him – " hesitated Jimmy. He did not know whether to go on or not, but he need not have worried. Papa had suddenly turned from him, turned to meet his new mamma – his beautiful young mamma, who, with bared neck and arms, in dinner toilet, was coming slowly and with trailing skirts down the broad and carpeted stairway and looking more radiant and beautiful than Jimmy ever before had seen her; she whom, a few minutes earlier, he had found on the gallery pallid and excited, trembling from weakness, perhaps. Now she had diamonds in her ears and at her creamy throat, diamonds flashing in her corsage. There were shimmer and spangle and firefly sparklings in the lustrous folds of her gown. There were starlight twinklings from the bands of those wondrous, dainty, high-heeled little "slipper shoes," as Jimmy called them. There were glowworm gems in the dark masses of her luxuriant hair. There were rich and precious stones upon her slender, clasping fingers, for Dwight had been lavish to an extent he only now began to realize, for, though his heart leaped in unison with the instant admiration and worship in his eyes, it ached in strange, dull foreboding and reproach for the thought that instantly seized him: How utterly unlike Margaret!

A moment later and the men in khaki were being presented. They had sprung to their feet at sight of the radiant vision in the doorway, where for a moment Inez seemed to hesitate. Beautiful she was beyond question, with the rich, dusky beauty of the passionate South, and they who gazed upon her marveled not at the lover worship in Dwight's deep-set eyes – at the pride with which he watched her gracious, graceful, yet half-appealing and timid acknowledgment of their soldier homage. They made way for her, and would have it that she should sit with them as they lingered a few moments over their wine. And then Farnham, their senior present, raised his glass to her with a word of soldier compliment and greeting, after the manner of the days of his forefathers, and they joined in the toast, one and all, and Inez blushed and beamed upon them, and looked up into her husband's eyes as though begging that he should speak for her, and sipped just the tiniest ripple from the brimming glass of champagne. They had not too much time, for boxes had been reserved for all their party at the Salone Margherita, and could not – would not Mrs. Dwight and the captain join them? Several of the ladies from the transport were to be with them, and now it would be incomplete without Mrs. Dwight. Again the deep, dark, lustrous eyes sought the husband's face, as though she would say in this, as in everything, he must decide. The transport was to proceed at dawn. The *Hohenzollern* could not be going earlier. How she *would* shine, this bird of paradise, among those simply-garbed army women who perforce were limited to such toilets as could be evolved from the little steamer trunks. It was Dwight who negated the project. She would be utterly overdressed for the place and the occasion, but he based his regrets upon the long and fatiguing day, the packing that had to be done, the coming at any moment of their ship. Even now she was announced, said Jimmy, hastening in. And so the others went their way without the Dwights and joined their fellow-voyagers in their revel, the merriest group in all that laughing company, and only once or twice did someone, some gentle-hearted woman, speak the thought that more than once or twice occurred to many present: Why should Sandy Ray have withdrawn from all companionship? Someone said he had returned to the steamer – alone.

It was long after midnight when they came rippling back to the huge bulk of the troopship, with silver raining from the blades of their oars into the sparkling bosom of that wondrous bay. A joyous little flotilla of Neapolitan water craft was theirs, for they had chartered several of the clumsy, unwieldy looking, yet most serviceable barklings, each with its dusky, brown-throated oarsman. They

had spent some merry hours after the long, hot voyage through Indian seas and under torrid skies. They had heard much catchy music that all could appreciate and few words, fortunately, that any could understand. They were chatting and singing and recalling the brilliant scene, the dazzling lights, the lustrous corridor and stairway of pure white marble, the coaxing, wheedling swarm of beggar children, the sharp and ever-recurrent contrast between splendid opulence and squalid misery, and as they circled under the massive overhang of their stanch and trusty ship, and one after another each merry boatload came again in full view of the frowning cone of old Vesuvius, belching lurid flame and billowing ruddy streams of molten lava from its crest, some sweet-voiced woman in the foremost boat uplifted her heart in the barcarole from "Masaniello": "Behold how brightly breaks the morning," and, though morning was yet some hours away, here but a league or two across the star-reflecting deep and under the shoulder of the mountain furnace lay the vine-covered walls of Portici, where first was trilled that exquisite welcome to Aurora. And so with music and merriment and laughter, homeward bound from distant service in defense of a beloved flag, they came trooping up the side, the opulence of their gladness all the sharper contrast to the dull apathy of one lone watcher who shrank from their approach and sought seclusion across the deck and in the shadow of the long boat.

Ray was not in his stateroom when Foster bustled thither to inquire. Ray had returned some hours before, said the ship's official on duty. Ray was not found, however, until nearly four bells, when Foster, who had smoked too much to feel sleepy and wished to "stay up and see Vesuvius, anyhow," made an extended inspection of the silent deck. Foster had taken it amiss that Ray should seem so downhearted and be so uncompanionable. Foster felt that the time had come when, in the absence of Sandy's own, he (Foster) should assume paternal rights, or at least those of elder brother, and take the youngster to task. Here and there about the big ship he found, in knots of two or three, silent or conversing in low tone, comrades of the commissioned list or of the ranks, unwilling to seek their berths so long as so gorgeous a panorama lasted. These were ranged along the starboard side, where best they could study that superb sweep of shore line, of light and shadow, of slope and mountain, of curving strand – white, flashing in the moonbeams, of twinkling villages low-lying, of distant, rock-ribbed isles, but among these worshipers there was no Ray.

It was over on the other – the dark, the port – side, and all alone, sprawled in a steamer chair he had lugged to the upper deck and the shadow of the big boat, that Foster came upon the lad. His field glasses were in his hand; his eyes fixed dreamily upon the dwindling, diminishing night lights of the westward suburbs, and Foster hailed brusquely. It was time to jar the boy out of his mooning:

"Hello, Sandy! Where on earth have you been all night?"

"Nowhere," was the short reply.

"Where on sea then, if you will be captious?"

"Oh, admiring scenery," and Sandy yawned suggestively.

"Scenery is all on t'other side, man! Nothing here but ships and shore lights."

"Well – that's what I'm – looking at."

Foster turned sulkily. He disliked being "stood off" by anybody, especially a youngster. Dimly in the soft moonlight the sleeping city lay outspread before him. Standing on the rail, grasping a stanchion, he could see, save where the charthouse and huge funnel interposed, the entire sweep from Posilipo at the west around almost to Sorrento. Ray, seated under the shadow of the long boat, could see only from Posilipo to a low-lying cluster of lights almost at the water's edge. That then was the Piazza Umberto, and those few twinkling, starlike sparkles to the left, dancing so merrily on the intervening wave – those were from some still open casements at the Grand. Then Foster saw what Sandy Ray was looking for, and turned and left him.

At dawn they were weighing anchor, but the big ship had not yet swung her nose to the west when Foster again appeared on the dripping deck and again found Ray almost at the same spot. Some of the same lights, a very few, were still faintly to be seen to the west of the Piazza, and Ray's signal glasses were lifted to his eyes. Aloft the sentinel stars were paling, their night watch ended. Ashore,

along the quays and basin and about the Dogana, the lantern lights told of the stir of coming day and departing shipping. Beyond the heavy smoke all about the lone and threatening mountain, the skies were taking on a rose hue of their own that dulled the glow of the sluggish streams rolling ever down those scarred and desolate slopes. Near by in silvery chime ship after ship announced the passing of the night hours, the birth of the infant day, and a long, light-girdled shape, floating easily close at hand on the swelling tide, slowly changed from shadowy black to gray, from gray to violet, and finally – as the still invisible sun peered long leagues away beyond the Italian mountains, beyond the Adriatic wave, above the dim Ægean shore, and sent his flashing signals through the upper ether – from cream to snowy white, there lay the *Hohenzollern*, "all a taunto and impatient" for her westward voyage for "Gib," for the Azores, for home, and they of the bulkier, heavier transport envied possibly the lithe and lissome build of the famous pleasure craft, once the pride of the old German Lloyds. She might follow in the run past Ischia and Sicily. She would lead far in the chase for Sandy Hook.

"Been up all night, Sandy?" hailed Foster sharply, believing it high time to break in upon these romantic moonings.

"No," said the young soldier slowly. "I've been – down."

"Poor boy," thought Foster, as he turned away. "He looks it! Poor, nonsensical, damn little fool!"

Yet Foster was not so very big, so very wise, so very safe and sure. He had yet to know for himself much that Ray knew now.

CHAPTER IV

"SHE IS COMING HERE!"

The valley of the Minneconjou was looking its loveliest in the joyous sunshine of mid-May. The post had been enlarged to meet the needs of the increasing garrison. A colonel of infantry had been sent to assume command, there being now two of his battalions at the station and only one squadron, of four troops, of Ray's old regiment, the – th Cavalry. At any moment our friend of that name and many years, now become lieutenant-colonel in his own right, could expect orders for the Philippines, and he was ready as ever, though there were just a few reasons why he hated to go. It had been decided that Marion, his wife, hitherto his almost inseparable companion, should not venture to Manila. The detail at most would not exceed two years. It might cover only one, for it was certain that, with the coming enlargement of the army, Ray would soon be promoted to the full rank of colonel, and that would probably bring him home again, for, as things had been going in Samar and Mindanao, colonels were in that sort of campaigning about as useful as most of them in church. Keen young captains and lieutenants were in demand. Field officers, so-called, were of less account in the field than in fortified places. Occasionally a sizable column – a major's command perhaps – would push forth into the jungle, where it speedily had to split up into small detachments, probing in single file, and in pursuit of scattering bands of ladrones or banditti, the bamboo or the mountain trail. Moreover, much of the vim and spirit had been taken out of the soldiery, officers and men, old and young, by the fate of the more daring and energetic of their number, who had fallen victims, not to lance or bullet of lurking foe at the front, but rather "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" at the rear. A powerful party at home had shown far more concern over the alleged ill-treatment of the few insurgent bands than their actual treachery to our men-at-arms. Officers and men listened in silence to the public rebukes and sentences administered to the leaders who had shed their gloves and fought the insurrecto with weapons far more effective, yet infinitely less deadly, than fire and steel. Officers and men in silence set forth upon their next ordered expedition, and in silence returned and announced the result – practically nothing. Elusive and flitting little bands of native warriors, vanishing like shadows among the thickets, were not to be trapped by the methods prescribed for dealing with an army arrayed in front of Washington. "Don't come unless you have to," wrote Major Blake from the hospital at Manila to Billy Ray at Minneconjou. "The courts-martial of Hill and Dale and Langham have taken the heart out of our fellows. The young officers say they dare not go out for fear they might do some damage somewhere."

So Ray, who had fought Indians all over the West for many a year – sometimes, it is true, coming in for a Puritanical scorching from press and pulpit in far New England, where, two hundred years ago, with prayerful zest our forefathers burned witches at the stake and put Pequots to the sword – now found himself shrinking from the task of tackling savages with gloves who treated men without mercy. Marion, as has been said, was not to accompany him to the Islands and be near to counsel and to comfort. She was not too well now, and had had many an anxiety. Billy, Junior, when he should have been studying for West Point, had been spooning over a pretty girl not yet in long dresses, and Sandy, their firstborn, the soldier boy, had come home from the Islands wounded in body and soul. The scar of the bullet would not be long healing, but the sting of that other shock and sorrow, who could say what that might yet import? for Sandy would not speak of it. Sandy would not so much as refer to his brief dream of bliss and the girl that inspired it. Sandy had come to them at Minneconjou to recuperate, detached from his own regiment "for such light duty as he might be able to perform" with his father's squadron of the old – th. Sandy was a sad and silent man. "Let him alone to beat it out in time," said the soldier-father. "It is the only way." But Marion's mother heart yearned over

her boy and his wordless sorrowing. He must have loved that beautiful but unprincipled creature with all his fervent young heart.

Colonel Stone, who was now in command at Minneconjou, had known the Rays for years and was firmly their friend. Without so much as a hint from any source, he had divined that Sandy's low spirits were not the result of that bullet wound. He could not but note the solicitude with which his cavalry friend and oft-time fellow-campaigner regarded the silent young soldier, his eldest son. Colonel Stone had suggested at first that Sandy be put at surveying the reservation – something to keep him long hours each day in the open air. But barely six months had elapsed since the Engineers, under orders from department headquarters, had completed with chain, rod and transit thorough plotting of the six mile square, to the end that a very finely finished map was received almost at the time the colonel first broached the subject. Sandy could not yet take part in the sharp mounted drills that were his father's delight. Something had to be done to give him measurably congenial occupation. He could not play tennis, croquet or billiards. He would not play poker or find solace in Scotch highballs. He might have derived some comfort from reading and study, but Priscilla was beset with desire to prescribe his reading and guide his studies, for Priscilla, being several years his senior in age and many volumes his superior in reading, was ever mindful of the mission which no conscientious woman should be without. Priscilla had thought to start a school for the children of the garrison, but found that many of the elders were driven every day to town and its high school, while most of the mites were corraled each morning in the basement of the post chapel, pupils of a sergeant schoolmaster whose success had been quite remarkable, so much so that parents were reluctant – and their progeny rebellious – when other and more modern methods, Priscilla's, were suggested. It must be owned that the little ones from the start found Miss Sanford unsympathetic, if not impossible. Children love being catechized as little as do their elders, and they resented it that this somewhat prim, yet by no means unprepossessing, spinster should consider it her duty and her privilege to cross-question them as to their infantile responsibilities and, all uninvited, to undertake supervision of their noisy sports. Finding no opening for a day school, Miss Sanford had sought to interest the weans in an afternoon reading class. The first day or two the major's spacious quarters were well filled, so were the children with alluring goodies they could thoroughly appreciate. But when sermons began to take the place of sandwiches, and moral admonitions and questionings were administered in lieu of lemonade and lady-fingers, Miss Sanford's kindergarten dissolved in air and the would-be gentle monitress in disappointed tears. Uncle Will had whimsically striven to console her with the promise of better luck when school stopped in June, but Aunt Marion had smilingly though silently shaken her head. She knew Priscilla's propensities of old. She had convictions, said Aunt Marion, and theories as to how children should be taught to see the serious side of life. Priscilla was suffering from an accumulation of pent-up zeal and enthusiasm that was yet to find an outlet.

Then one day the outlet came.

Lieutenant Parker, "Exchange officer," so-called, was suddenly ordered to duty at West Point, and Colonel Stone asked Sandy Ray if he would take his place. "Strictly speaking," said he, "I should name one of my own officers, but I have other work for all of them, and lots of it. You have really very little else just now that you can do, except, perhaps, go to stables."

Now, if there was one institution more than another at Minneconjou against which Priscilla Sanford had set her seal, it was the post Exchange. In all her months of residence under Uncle Will's, the major's, roof, never once had the others there sheltered forgotten the day of her first acquaintance with the subject. Sandy was still beyond seas, but Billy, Junior, was of the household when, just as they took their place at table for luncheon, the husband and father spoke:

"Maidie wife, they have some capital cider at the Canteen and I ordered some sent over."

Miss Sanford looked up inquiringly over her poised spoonful of soup.

"The – Canteen?" she asked.

"Yes. The Post Exchange, it is called officially. It's the post shop, restaurant, club, amusement hall, etc.," answered the head of the house, while Marion, his wife, glanced just a trifle nervously at her niece.

"But why – Canteen? It isn't, is it, a – bar?" And Miss Sanford's tone betrayed the depth of her disapprobation of the name.

"Yes, and no," said Uncle Will pleasantly, his dark eyes twinkling under their heavy brows and lashes. He rather liked to have 'Cilla mount her successive hobbies, and thought it better, as a rule, to let her air her theories first in the sanctity of the family circle. "After experimenting a hundred years or so we found it wiser to prescribe the drinks as well as the meats of our men, and to provide a place for them at home where they can have rational amusement and refreshment, rather than send them out into the world where they get the worst of everything."

"But, uncle, do you mean you let – you encourage – these young soldiers to – drink?" And the slender gold chain of Miss Sanford's intellectual *pince nez* began to quiver, as did the lady's sensitive nostrils.

"Encourage? No! Let? Yes, so long as it is nothing but sound beer or light wine – things we buy for them from the most reliable dealers and provide them practically at cost. You see they have their own clubroom, and billiards, checkers, chess, dominoes, coffee, cake and sandwiches. It keeps them here. It helps and contents them. They can't drink more than is good for them."

"Is it good for them that they should drink – at all?" demanded Priscilla.

"Possibly not. The ascetic in everything would be, physically perhaps, the ideal soldier. But precious few soldiers are ascetics, though many are total abstainers."

"Then why not all, since it is best for so many?"

"Because, 'Cilla, a large number refuse to be abstainers, and we can't make them. They won't enlist or serve if such conditions are imposed. If forbidden to use mild and carefully selected stimulant here they will go elsewhere and get the vilest the frontier can furnish, to the ruin of their stomachs, reputation and moral nature. We teach temperance – not intolerance."

But Priscilla had been reared in the shadow of the stanch old Calvinistic church and the strictest of schools.

"I – cannot see how you dare place such temptation in their way," said she. "You thereby take their souls in the hollow of your hand and become responsible – Oh!" – with a shudder of genuine distress and repugnance – "I knew – I had heard – there was drinking; but I never supposed it was countenanced, *encouraged* by – by those who ought to be their shield against such temptation and trouble." And here Priscilla's words were oddly reminiscent of the editorial columns of the *Banner of Light* and certain other most excellent organs of the Prohibition element.

"We do it to keep them from vastly worse temptation and trouble, Priscilla," said the veteran soldier kindly, and signaling Marion not to interpose. "You are right, dear, in the abstract, but we have to deal with men as we find them. We would be glad indeed of ideals, but the ideal doesn't, as a rule, enlist."

"The Bible teaches us it stingeth like an adder," said Priscilla solemnly, with suggestive glance at Billy, Junior, whom she but yesterday had rebuked for sipping claret at the colonel's dinner.

"The Bible also tells us Who turned water into wine at a certain marriage feast," said Uncle Will, his mustache twitching.

Whereat Priscilla flushed; the tears started to her eyes; she arose and left the table, her soup unfinished. It was one thing to quote the Scriptures in support of her views; it was quite another to array them on the other side. When Aunt Marion went to Priscilla's room a little later, with a tray of tea and comfits and a word of gentle expostulation, she found her niece in anything but melting mood. To Priscilla's mind such argument as Uncle Will's was impious. To Aunt Marion's suggestion that at least it was from like authority with her own, Priscilla could find no better reply than "That's different."

Down in her heart of hearts Priscilla thought it a grave mistake on part of somebody that the episode of the marriage of Cana of Galilee had any place in Holy Writ. Indeed it may be hazarded that, long schooled by the *Banner* and the eloquent lessons of her favorite preachers, Priscilla could have listened with becoming modesty, but no surprise, had it been suggested that she undertake the preparation of an expurgated edition of the Word.

At the date of this initial clash Uncle Will was still commanding the post. Stone, with the Sixty-first, came later. Priscilla, finding her uncle ever smilingly tolerant of her views, but never shaken in his own, had first essayed an inspection of the Canteen – she would not call it the Exchange – and then had descended upon the chaplain – a gentle divine, gifted with much faith but little force, a kindly, sweet-tempered cleric ever ready to follow if never to lead in good work that demanded personal push and energy. Priscilla had spent sleepless hours in thought over the situation. She could not abolish the Canteen since the law ("The law *and* the prophets," said Uncle Will, though Priscilla would not hear) sustained it. She could, she reasoned, conduct a rival establishment that should wean the soldier from the false faith to the true, and to this end she sought the aid of the cassock.

Uncle Will had taken her, at her request, to see the objectionable institution, and she had peered curiously about the cozy interior. At sight of their much honored squadron leader, the few troopers at the tables, busy with checkers, dominoes or billiards, had sprung to attention, facing him and the grave-eyed lady by his side, and there stood in soldierly respect. Ray smilingly acknowledged their homage, bade them go on with their games; he merely wished his niece from the East "to see how we manage to live in the West." Then he showed her the bookshelves and the reading room with its illustrated weeklies and magazines, the well-furnished writing tables whereat certain young soldiers were working at their letters home; the refreshment counter, with its appetizing little stack of sandwiches and polished urn of steaming coffee, and all this Priscilla saw without sign of surrender. What she looked for she did not find – symptoms of the inevitable intoxication and debauchery to be expected wherever liquor was sold or used. Some of the men had half-emptied beer glasses at their elbow. Two German non-commissioned officers were sipping appreciatively the wine of their native Rhineland as they chatted in quiet comfort over their little table at the window. A veteran sergeant stepped forward and begged the honor of tendering the colonel and the lady a glass of their wine, and again every man was on his feet as Ray drank to their health, and Priscilla thanked their entertainers and said she would be glad of a little coffee – she never used wine. She was silent as she came away – all was so orderly, so cheery; the men seemed so content with their surroundings, so pleased that "the colonel" (never did they forget his volunteer title) should come to see them. She owned that – yes – they looked very – decent *now*, but – but, it was only the first step; it was what it all *led* to, said she, that made it so dangerous, so dreadful! Indeed, the mere fact that all was so well ordered made it, presumably, to Priscilla's mind, all the more alluring and terrible. It was the devil's way always, she had been taught – imperceptible, inviting, insidious. Priscilla prayed long that night and pondered. She had almost decided on a campaign of conquest and overthrow, when the new commander came, and in Colonel Stone she found an obstacle quite as firm as Uncle Will – and far less tolerant.

Meantime, however, Priscilla had organized her "Soldiers' Advancement Association"; had started in a vacant set of quarters a rival to the Canteen, where even better coffee and sandwiches could be had and much more improving conversation, but no beer, and Priscilla was presently in the seventh heaven; so many soldiers came she had to send for more seats and more supplies. Every evening after dinner, putting behind her the unworthy, if worldly, impulse to go and join in the music or the dance, Priscilla met her martial friends and pupils, learned their soldier names, something of their history and much of their needs. The chaplain at first was quite assiduous in his attendance, but the chaplain, she speedily decided, was slow, prosy, unconvincing. He did not seem to *stir* them as they should be stirred, and when one night the kindly old gentleman failed to come, and his goodwife sent word she feared her husband had caught a heavy cold, Priscilla took the Word, as the French would say; read the chapter of her choice; expounded vehemently after the manner of her favorite exhorters, and came

home radiant. No less than six of the men had come to her to thank her for her soul-stirring words, and to say that if they had had such teaching as that in their past they would never have brought sorrow to a mother's heart, as some of them feared they had. Uncle Will's eyebrows went up significantly when Priscilla named her converts, and once or twice, as he sat writing to Blake that night in his little den, sounds as of irrepressible chuckling came from that sanctum, and Marion slipped in to say a word of caution. Priscilla, however, at last had found her opportunity and could not be laughed out of it. The chaplain was warned, he said, that exposure to the wintry night air was hazardous, and he was reluctantly compelled to withdraw, and Priscilla, by no means reluctantly, to part with him. She was in desperate earnest and in the full tide of apparent success, with all Minneconjou watching with absorbed if mischievous interest. Priscilla's mourners' bench, it must be owned, was graced by the presence of one or two veteran troopers, the mention of whose names was enough to start the risibilities of that godless array, "the Mess." There was Shaughnessy, who had served six enlistments and never kept the chevrons six months at a time. There was Kelly, the "champeen thrumpether," who could blow "Taps" that would bring tears to your eyes one day and maledictions on his head the next. There was Costigan, who had been "bobtailed" out of two of the best regiments of infantry of the service, and only "taken on" in Ray's old troop by special permission, because of his undeniable valor in Indian campaign and the fact that when he let whisky alone there was not a neater, nattier soldier, Horse, Foot or Dragoon, to be found in the field. Priscilla had indeed gathered in some of the reprobates, and sought to reach more. She begged that, in accordance with their plaintive request, the inmates of the guard-house, immortal "Company Q," might be allowed the benefit and privileges of the Association. Had not He said He came not to call the just but the sinners to repentance? and, as Uncle Will whimsically remarked, "If what Priscilla wants are sinners – she's got 'em."

And this was the state of things when Stone arrived; took command, reinforced the garrison with eight stout companies and band of the Sixty-first, and the guard-house with a score of military malefactors who, hearing of Miss Sanford's Soldiers' Advancement Association, begged leave to partake of its blessings, including the coffee and sandwiches. Then Stone suddenly "tumbled to the scheme," as Billy, Junior, a fierce skeptic from the start, described it. Then Stone himself attended a meeting, to the obvious embarrassment of the congregation, though Priscilla beamed upon him in the sudden belief that here indeed was a heart worth the moving. What Stone saw was quite enough to convince him of the utter absurdity of permitting the further attendance of, at least, the guard-house contingent, but he would not wound Priscilla or, without abundant reason, disturb the edifice builded under Ray's administration. The Association might even have lived and thrived another week on Priscilla's ministrations – and at Ray's expense – for daily coffee and sandwiches for all comers, forty odd, at least, was proving costly. It was "Company Q" itself that broke it up. The privilege and the darkness combined enabled certain of its unhallowed spirits to smuggle whisky into the prison room, and, thus stimulated, a gifted ex-professional of the "dramatic line" set up a wonderfully if wickedly witty burlesque of the evening's lecture, to the irrepressible, and presently uproarious, mirth of his fellow-jailbirds. It was just what Stone was expecting, and so far from ordering it stopped, he sent for Ray and bade him listen. Then the post and the squadron commander shook hands in silence. "You see for yourself," said Stone. "I, too, have been expecting it," said Ray. Then the guard was sent in. The impious revel was suddenly and summarily squelched. Then Ray gently told Priscilla the sinners could come no more, but mercifully would not tell her much, at least, that he had heard. So the Soldiers' Advancement Association retrograded in numbers to less than half, and then, as others not at the moment under guard took alarm, to less than a dozen. But Priscilla wrapped herself up in the nine that were left, and, as all barrack room was now needed, for these they fitted up a little apartment in the basement of the major's quarters, and then came Sandy Ray, as has been said, and spring was turning to summer, and Priscilla's band of stalwarts had been reduced to six, and of these six the apple of her spiritual eye was Blenke.

One of the recruits, regimental and bibli-classical, was Blenke, but already a marked man. Small of stature, lithe, slender and sinewy, with dainty little hands and feet, with pallid face and regular features and great big, mournful brown eyes that looked pleadingly into those of his superiors, Blenke wore the uniform of a private with the ease and grace and care of a dandy subaltern. Blenke's gloves and shoes could not be furnished by the quartermaster's department; they did not deal in such small sizes; but Blenke brought with him all he could need of such items for months to come. Blenke was a silent fellow in barracks. Blenke never whistled or sang. Blenke rarely spoke and never smiled. It was not that Blenke's face was set in gloom, but an air of gentle melancholy hung ever about him. He made no intimates, sought no confidences and gave none among the men. Whatever he was put to do he did surprisingly well. Corporal Donovan, detailed to drill him when he, with the rest of the little party, arrived, informed the first sergeant that "that young feller knew more settin'-up drill than any non-com at the post." So it proved also with the manual of arms. Blenke was an expert. When put into a squad for aiming and position drill, Blenke had nothing to learn, and his shooting and gallery practice was on a par with the best. They sent him out to the rifle range west of the post and there he "qualified" at known distance and excelled at the silhouettes, and still he declared he had never before "taken a blanket." He learned his drill and shooting with the militia, he said; gave "clerk" as his occupation and wrote a beautiful hand, though his spelling at times might be criticised. Blenke had a watch, card-case, shirts, shoes and underwear that told of better days. Blenke, apparently, had no vices. He neither drank, smoked, chewed, gambled nor, unless closely pressed as to his past, was he believed to lie. Blenke looked about him a bit before going either to church or town. Then Blenke began appearing regularly at chapel service, and then, modestly, sought permission to enter Miss Sanford's Soldiers' Advancement Association, where speedily he attracted the especial notice of that devoted and devotional young woman. Then Blenke offered his services as writer, copyist, etc., and Priscilla, being much occupied, gladly installed him at a desk whereat he spent much time when not elsewhere on duty, and all the while, neat, handy, silent, unobtrusive, yet seeing everything with those deep, mournful, watchful eyes, Blenke found means to make himself more and more useful, and presently to communicate the fact that though his present lot was humble there had been "advantages" in the past, there were ambitions for the future. To begin with, he wished to transfer into the cavalry. He knew little, he said, of the relative merits of those arms before enlisting. He had seen much since, he said, to convince him that for a young man of spirit the cavalry offered opportunities not to be looked for in the infantry. This, he judged, would not displease the squadron commander, whose influence through Miss Sanford he earnestly sought, and so it resulted that Blenke, little by little, was far more frequently to be found about the major's quarters than his own.

Ray did not like it. Neither did Blenke's captain, yet neither wished to throw cold water on Priscilla's efforts, and really nothing could be less obtrusive or more precise and soldierly than Blenke. He never presumed to speak except in answer to questions. He was scrupulous in dress, bearing, conduct and military courtesy. His salute was precision itself. His captain really wished to make him a corporal, but a veteran first sergeant respectfully protested. "The men wouldn't stand for it, sir, and him not two months in the company." Sandy Ray, who came home in mood to carp at anything, liked it least of all that he should be forever encountering Blenke about the lower floor or around the walks and quarters. But Priscilla was forever talking of Blenke's helpfulness, his piety, high character, and his modest hopes. Blenke was beginning to talk with her about studying for a commission. Blenke was beginning to be disliked among the men because he ignored them so.

Then one day came the expected. Lieutenant-Colonel Ray, – th Cavalry, was ordered to proceed at once to San Francisco, and thence by transport to Manila. Then came tidings of deaths in the Islands, and retirements at home, and, six months sooner than he had hoped for such a thing, Oswald Dwight saw the gold leaves of a major dangling before his mental vision, and the night before Colonel Ray was to bid his loved ones good-by and take train for the coast, and he and Marion, arm in arm, were coming home from some parting calls, they saw Blenke standing at their gate, a telegraphic

message in his hand; Priscilla and Billy, Junior, following, closed upon the elders as Ray tore open the envelope. Blenke, having delivered it, stood scrupulously at attention just beyond the gate, gazing with his mournful eyes straight out at the flagstaff in the middle of the parade. Ray read, turned a bit pale, and glanced hurriedly about him as though in search of someone. Sandy was not in sight. He was busy with the affairs of the Canteen.

"What is it, Will?" asked Marion anxiously, her gloved hand trembling a bit upon his arm.

"Of all things – queer," said Ray. "Dwight gets my squadron, and —*she's* coming with him."

Then unaccountably Private Blenke's forage-cap, always worn well forward, tilted off and fell at his feet.

CHAPTER V

PREMONITORY SYMPTOMS

Colonel Ray was no coward, but it must be owned that he was glad to be well away from Minneconjou before the coming of the Dwights. What troubled him most was, not how Sandy, his eldest boy, but how Marion, his beloved wife, might suffer. Never to either father or mother had the young officer spoken the name of the second Mrs. Dwight. Never since his coming to Minneconjou had he referred to his infatuation of the previous year, nor had he even remotely mentioned the meeting at Naples. They knew of it, of course. There were so many aboard the transport who had heard all there was to hear about it, and some of these many could not be expected to keep it to themselves. Sandy, indeed, reached the post only a day or two in advance of this interesting piece of news. Marion heard it before her husband and refrained from telling him, in hopes that Sandy himself would open his heart and tell her all there was to be told; but presently it dawned upon her that the boy shrank from the very mention of "that woman's" name – then that Will, too, had heard the story, and not from Sandy, and then that each feared to tell the other. Then as of old, she nestled into her husband's arms, and there, in her refuge, said:

"After all, Will, isn't it better he should have seen her and – had done with it?"

"If only he has done with it," thought the colonel, as he watched the young soldier going doggedly about his duties. "If only he *has* done with it!" he thought again, when he saw the red burning on the young fellow's cheek that told he knew at last of the impending arrival. But the boy had shown splendid nerve and grit in that vital matter of the gradual repayment of the moneys lost through his neglect at the Presidio in '98. He had shown such manliness in abjuring wine after that one almost excusable lapse so long ago. A boy who could keep himself so thoroughly in hand, said the colonel, in two cardinal points, can be counted on to keep his head even when he may have lost his heart. No. Ray had trusted Sandy thoroughly in the past, and Sandy had thoroughly justified it. Ray meant as thoroughly to trust now to the manfulness and honor of his son. Pride, too, would help the lad even were "that woman" to seek to lure him again.

But it was hard to leave Marion to meet the Dwights. In all her army life, with the possible exception of Grace Truscott, never had Marion met a woman for whom she felt such depth of affection and regard as for Margaret Dwight. The two, as has been said, were devoted friends, and when Margaret died, leaving her husband, crushed and heartbroken, and that idol of her heart, little Jim, it is doubtful if among her own people she was mourned as utterly as she was by Mrs. Ray. In the years that followed Marion was forever planning for the little fellow's future, and pouring forth a perfect flood of sympathy for that bereaved soldier, his father. It came as a shock inexpressible that Oswald Dwight, after six years' brooding, had married again, and had given Margaret's place to – what? – a girl, young, beautiful, obscure, unprincipled – the girl whom her own Sandy had rapturously, loved and implicitly believed in. And now Marion was called upon to meet this woman in "the fierce white light that beats upon" garrison life – see her daily, hourly, possibly as a next-door neighbor, and no husband's arm or counsel to lean upon.

Nor was this all. It had been arranged that the families of officers ordered on foreign service should retain quarters at the station from which said officers took their departure, provided the quarters were not actually needed by the garrison. Three out of five the big army posts had been left with but a detachment to guard them. Minneconjou was an exception. Hither had come Stone, with two battalions of Foot. Headquarters, staff, band and one squadron of the cavalry had been there, but band and headquarters were now shifted to Niobrara. How Marion wished the squadron could have gone, too! But that was not to be. There were still the four troops at the station, and the Rays were still quartered in the big, roomy house to the right of the post commander's – Marion, her sons, her niece

and their two servants. There was even abundant space for her niece's diminishing Advancement Association – the secretary's desk and the mournful-eyed young secretary being much in evidence at the basement window on the north side. Three sets, the colonel's and the flanking field officers', had been built with high piazzas and well-lighted basements beneath; all the others were squat on the hard prairie ground. Stone had two majors with him, both junior to Ray and the post surgeon, so they had taken root in the lines and, for army men, were quite content. All on a sudden one day the new major, Dwight, drove out from the railway station in town, reported with soldierly precision to Colonel Stone, and accepted the promptly tendered invitation to be the colonel's guest until ready to occupy his own quarters. Dwight came earlier than had been expected; explained that he "came ahead to select quarters," would send Mrs. Dwight the measurements of the rooms, then ask for a week's leave to return and fetch her with their goods, carpets and variegated chattels from Chicago. Had any letters or dispatches been received for him? None? Dwight looked queer and grave. Indeed, Stone, who had heard much of him and had met him once or twice in by-gone days, confessed to his wife that Dwight must have "gone off" not a little in more ways than one. Was it the old sorrow or – the new wife – or, mayhap, the sunstroke in the Pampangas?

That afternoon Marion Ray, seated on the vine-shaded piazza, writing to her husband, looked up suddenly at sound of a footstep and, startled and for a moment speechless, gazed into the once familiar features of Margaret Dwight's once devoted husband. She was slow to rise and hold forth her hand, so strange was the expression in his tired eyes. When she could speak it was to say, though her heart fluttered, "Welcome again, Major Dwight, but I'm so sorry Will is not here, too! It is barely a week since he started."

"I have hurried," was the answer, as he took her hand. "I am so tired of leave, of dawdling, of – almost everything. I'm wild to get to work – to *work* again, Mrs. Ray! That's what a man must have."

All the old strength and repose of manner had gone. She was shocked and troubled at the change, and hurried on in her words lest he should see it.

"And how is my boy – our little Jim? And – I hope Mrs. Dwight is well, and – we're to see her soon," she ventured.

"Mrs. Dwight is looking remarkably well, though she and I are anxious about her mother. Indeed, I had hoped to find dispatches – or something – here from Major Farrell," and surely Dwight's face betrayed rather more than his words. "Jimmy's in fine trim," he hurried on. "They got to be fast friends voyaging. They were up on deck all the homeward way, whereas I'm a very poor sailor. I could hardly, hold up my head from the time we left Gibraltar."

"I'm glad of that – friendship," said Marion gravely, guardedly, for already, in the friendship Minneconjou had been hearing of, little Jim was not included. The *Hohenzollern*, after a stop-over at Algiers, had been boarded at Gibraltar by two crestfallen gentlemen in khaki and a quandary. The transport had preceded the liner into the shadow of the sleeping lion just thirty hours, and, steaming on to sea before the latter was signaled, found some hours out that Foster and Gibson had been unaccountably left behind. At their own expense, their soldier wardrobe and toilet replenished by a score of jovial Britons who had also contributed to their detention, these two warriors completed their voyage, and Gibson said he was practically alone, for, from morn till nearly midnight, from off Cadiz until held up at quarantine, Foster had been dancing attendance on the lovely Mrs. Dwight, the captain being much of the time down with *mal de mer*.

Now, Sandy had merely referred to "two fellows left at 'Gib,'" without going into particulars. Sandy, of course, could not be expected to know what might have transpired on the *Hohenzollern*. Sandy had said nothing about the Dwights at Naples. Sandy had not mentioned even Jimmy, and so long as he shrank from the subject the mother wisely would not question. She was glad now that Sandy was not at home, that he was busy with his accounts over at the Exchange. She was glad that Priscilla was not within earshot, that she was busy with her Bible class on the floor below. Priscilla, Aunt Marion owned, was inquisitive at times, and her theory of a mission among men was not limited to the

rank and file. Priscilla had ambitions embracing the moral improvement of every officer from "C.O. to sub.," and Priscilla had heard things somewhere about the post that set her to asking all manner of questions of her aunt, questions that set the mother heart to fluttering lest Priscilla next might direct her batteries on Sandy. No good could come from that, she knew, for one of Sandy's earliest antipathies had been Cousin 'Cil, whom he called a preacher in petticoats. Sandy was civil to her now, but by no means inviting, and Priscilla took it much amiss that her cousin rather held aloof, refused to argue the canteen question with her, and could not be drawn into doctrinal discussion of any kind.

Below stairs could be heard the low hum of voices through the open casement. Priscilla had been reading aloud to her soldier wards, but police and stable call would presently be sounding – the signal that, save the secretary, would take away her pupils, and Aunt Marion hoped Priscilla might not appear upon the scene before Dwight departed, yet longed to hear him tell of little Jim, and Dwight seemed intent only on telling her of Inez – Inez and her perfections. Dwight seemed to feel that he must make this devoted friend of his first wife fully aware of the manifold perfections of the second. To all she listened with such attention as she could command, but when again she asked for Jim and whether he was greatly grown and whether he was studious, – or what, – for well she remembered all Margaret's cherished plans for her boy, again Dwight responded with what Inez said and Inez thought. Inez so loved him. Inez so delighted in having him with her in her walks and rides. Inez thought him so keen, so quick, so intelligent. Inez admired his eyes, his face, his slender boyish beauty. Inez could not say enough in praise of him. It was Inez this and Inez that. There would only be three of them, said he, when they came to Minneconjou, – Inez, Jim and himself. They would have no use, said he, for the big house occupied by the Rays. He really preferred one of the sets of captain's quarters. Marion had been wondering whether Inez would not prefer to occupy these – whether, in fine, they would not have to move out and give the Dwights possession, but Dwight said no. In fact, he would not decide what set to take, now that he had seen them, until Inez herself arrived; whereat Mrs. Ray breathed freer.

And then the bugles blared across the broad parade and the white stable frocks began to dot the distant and severe façade of the frontier barracks, and 'Cilla's pupils came forth and hastened to their duties, and, catching sight of Colonel Stone and certain of his officers wending their way to the club, Dwight took his leave and started for the steps. He would see Mrs. Ray again within a day, he said. He was eager to see Sandy, who, somehow, had not seemed himself when they met at Naples. And then Priscilla's even tones were heard below, and the low-pitched, murmurous voice of the deferential secretary, and Marion would have detained the major, she hardly knew why, but he was nervously saying adieu and hurriedly descending the steps just as Miss Sanford and her assistant issued from beneath. At sight of the strange officer Priscilla's glasses went up for deliberate survey, the secretary's hand in quick salute. At sound of his name, as Mrs. Ray spoke a word in parting, Miss Sanford's face beamed with instant interest, the secretary's paled with as instant emotion. Standing in the slant of the afternoon sunshine, where Mrs. Ray could not but distinctly see him, Private Blenke had turned yellow-white as unbleached cotton and was biting his lips to control their twitching. Then, without a word, the moment Dwight went his way, Blenke faced about and bolted another.

Miss Sanford followed the major with curious eyes, then turned to resume certain instructions to her satellite, and behold, he was scurrying away across the parade in pursuit of the earlier departures. "Why, I – hadn't half finished," said she, as she turned to her aunt. "What took him off in such a hurry?"

There was none to answer, however, for Mrs. Ray had turned back to her letters; and on the following day Dwight hastened to Chicago. Within the week came Colonel Stone, with a face eloquent of perplexity.

"Mrs. Ray," said he, "this is simply unaccountable, but Major Dwight writes me that, after all, he shall have to claim the privilege of his rank and – this set of quarters. It seems that Mrs. Dwight

is now expecting her mother and others to pay her an extended visit as soon as she is settled, and captain's quarters would not be large enough."

Which was how it happened that, two days later, the goods and chattels of the Rays were being stowed in another and much smaller tenement some distance down the line. There was a very good set – a really roomier set – that Priscilla much preferred only two doors away from that which they were vacating, but Aunt Marion would have none of it. She had made neither comment nor remonstrance when Stone came in with his unwelcome news. She would say nothing about it now. That she should retain the quarters of a field officer was something to be accorded as a courtesy; it could not be demanded as a right, save at certain large posts with small garrisons. But men and women who knew Marion Ray, and they who knew her honored her, felt confident of one thing, that she was intent on getting as far away from the coming household as lay in her power to do. Sandy was but a second lieutenant still and entitled by law to only one room and a kitchen. They were in luck, perhaps, in finding so good and new and commodious a set of quarters as these to which they were assigned.

Sandy had not opened his head on the subject of Major and Mrs. Dwight, even when, at their instance, he, his mother and their household had been dispossessed. Sandy had found an easy horse and, with the consent of the surgeon, had begun to spend some hours in saddle again when not at the "shop." Then Priscilla, believing lonely brooding to be a bad thing for any man, found means to a mount and surprised him one day by appearing in habit and saddle ready to ride. For the life of him Sandy could not look pleased at the prospect. Five years earlier, when Priscilla was well-to-do, he might have found excuse to avoid or to leave her. Now, in the days of her dependence, he could and would not; but he proved a silent companion.

Across the fords and just at the eastern edge of the reservation they passed on their return some ramshackle buildings, only two of which showed signs of recent human occupation, and Priscilla spoke of their abandoned look and then – wished she had refrained.

"Time was," said Sandy, "when they were bustling and lively enough. We had no Exchange then, and the men wandered out here for their beer, and here parted with their money and their hopes. Here they were drugged till their last cent was wheedled or bullied out of them. Then they were kicked out in the cold to take their punishment at the fort. Then it was our *men* that went to ruin. Now, as you see, it is only the ranch."

It was useless arguing with people so narrow-minded as her cousins, thought poor 'Cilla, as she sharply touched her broncho with the lash and drove him hock deep through the foaming waters. What all men should see was that alcohol in any form was an enemy to be shunned and set aside, a thing never to be tampered with or tolerated, and here were sane and, in many ways, excellent people – people who had been to her most loving and kind and charitable – who were willing to concede that what she said might all be true, but were equally convinced that what she would do was utterly impracticable – people who themselves eschewed the use of wine, yet blindly persisted in providing it for these children of the nation, the soldiers, because, as they said, most of the soldiers could not be made to see the harm in malt or mild wine and would drink vilest whisky if deprived of them. She considered Sandy a scoffer, whereas Sandy did not scoff at all. He simply cited facts. She longed for opportunity to convert him to her views and believed implicitly that if he could but be made to listen he would surely see the light, but whenever Cilla brought her batteries to bear he confounded her with some such incontrovertible truth as this or – changed the subject. This day she had planned a coup, and he had met her, unexpectedly, more than halfway. By the time she had regained her self-control they were past the sentry line and well within the post.

"I want to have a *real* talk with you, Sandy," she said, as he swung her to the ground in front of their old quarters, where still they lived while fitting up the new.

"You'll have to do it all, 'Cil, if it's Canteen you're hitting at," was the answer, as he led the way up the broad steps; then stopped suddenly, his young face darkening.

A slender, soldierly form had suddenly issued from the hallway at the sound of voices, and there stood Blenke, hand at cap visor, the mournful eyes in mingled depth of respect and appeal, fixed upon his young superior. It was plain to see that Lieutenant Ray little relished the sight. Blenke's desk and duties had been confined to the floor below. Blenke had no occupation or right on the upper deck. Mechanically the subaltern returned the salute, but there were both suspicion and displeasure in his voice as, almost sharply, he inquired:

"What is it, Blenke? Why are you here?"

"By accident, sir," was the prompt reply, subordination and sorrow mingling in tone, as mournful as the mournful eyes. "I was leaving when I thought my name was called – that Mrs. Ray had called me, and I turned back. There seems to be no one here – yet the door was wide open."

"I cannot imagine who could have called you – or why," answered Ray coldly, never relaxing his odd scrutiny of those dark, reproachful eyes. "But, first call has sounded. I won't keep you."

Blenke saluted. One quick glance he shot at the flushing face of his friend and teacher, as though to say, "Plead for me"; then lithe and quick he went bounding down the steps, Priscilla looking after him. Ray pushed on into the dismantled hallway – into the parlor where rugs and carpets were rolled and heaped and curtains stripped from the rods. He passed through into the little room where stood his father's desk and bookcase, "the den" now doubly lonely and forlorn. He passed swiftly through the dining-room and into the rear hallway, where wide open stood the door to the basement stairway. It proved nothing, however, that that door was unbolted and ajar. In the work of packing and moving the men had been going and coming all the afternoon. Sandy came again to the front and followed Priscilla to the second story. Mother was not in her room, the room that soon in all probability would be hers – the girl-wife of his father's old friend – the girl-wife whose name Sandy Ray had ceased to whisper even to himself. He turned back and Priscilla stood confronting him at the doorway.

"What is it, Sandy? Why should you be so – annoyed at Blenke's believing he was called back?"

"Because I don't believe *him*" said Sandy bluntly, "and – I don't like prowling."

"Oh, how can you be so unfair? Blenke is no prowler, Sandy!" said Priscilla, in fervent reproach. "Blenke is a born gentleman, and I know it, and so will you when you hear his story."

"Oh, fudge!" said Sandy, as he turned impatiently away, entered his own room and slammed the door.

CHAPTER VI

A BRIDE – AND A BEAU

Colonel and Mrs. Stone in the course of the following fortnight had occasion twice, as the society columns expressed it, to "entertain at dinner for" Major and Mrs. Oswald Dwight, and Mrs. Dwight was the topic of all tongues at Minneconjou before she had been two days at the post. They arrived on a Saturday evening; were met at the station by the hospitable Stones; driven at once to the quarters of that efficient and valuable commanding officer; were the recipients on Sunday of many calls, the guests of honor at dinner Monday evening, at which function they met three of the senior officers and the adjutant of the Sixty-first, each accompanied by his better half; were again on dinner duty Tuesday evening to meet eight others prominent in the military social swim, and at nine o'clock were escorted to the hop room, where the regimental band and practically all the officers and ladies of the garrison were arrayed to welcome them and where until midnight the dance moved merrily on.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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