

King Charles

Campaigning with Crook, and Stories of Army Life



Charles King
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PREFACE

Ten years ago, at the request of the editor of a paper at my old home, these sketches of the Sioux Campaign of 1876 were written and, finding favor with comrades to whom a few were sent, were published in pamphlet form. Now, reinforced by certain other sketches which have since appeared, they are given a new framework.

They were the first-fruits, so to speak, of a pen that has since been seldom idle. They were rough sketches, to be sure, but no rougher than the campaign; and in the early days of a divorce from associations that were very dear, and of a return to surroundings once familiar, yet, after twenty years of absence, so changed that a cat in a strange garret could hardly have felt less at home, I laid their faint tribute of respect and honor at the feet of the soldier who had been our commander in the wild days in Arizona, our leader from the Platte to the Yellowstone and our comrade in every hardship and privation – Brigadier-General George Crook, United States Army.

Only enough of these pamphlets were printed to reach the few hundred comrades who rode the grim circuit of "The Bad Lands" in that eventful centennial year. The little edition was long ago exhausted. The years that followed only served to strengthen the ties that bound me to the revered commander of old cavalry days. Many a name recorded in these pages no longer graces our muster-rolls. Mason, our soldier major, gallant Emmet Crawford, brave old Munson, daring Philo Clark; Rodgers and Price, Egan and Dewees, Bache and Hunter, have been called from the ranks in which they won such honor, and, only a few short months ago, the leader whom they so faithfully served rejoined them on the farther shore of the dark and silent river. The mountains and prairies over which we marched and fought know no longer the war-cry of painted savage or the din of thrilling combat. Herds of browsing cattle crowd the lovely valleys through which we drove the buffalo. Peaceful homes and smiling villages dot the broad Northwest where hardly a roof-tree was in place when Crook essayed the task of subjugating the foeman to settlement and civilization. Another star had been added to the one awarded him for the campaign which left the fierce Apaches conquered and disarmed. The highest grade in the army had been attained when, all too soon, he was summoned to answer to his name, "beyond the veil."

Better pens than mine shall tell our people of his long years of brave and faithful service in which this campaign of '76 – so pregnant with interest to us who rode the trail, and with result

to a waiting nation – was, after all, only an episode; but, just as in honor and in loyalty, these faint pictures of the stirring scenes through which he led us were inscribed to him at their birth, so now, with added honor and in affectionate remembrance tenfold increased, is that humble tribute renewed.

Charles King,

Captain, U. S. A.

CAMPAIGNING WITH CROOK

CHAPTER I. FORT HAYS AND THE START

The disastrous battle on the Little Horn, which resulted in the annihilation of General Custer and his five favorite companies of the Seventh Cavalry, occurred on the 25th of June, 1876. On the 4th of that month, we of the Fifth Cavalry were far to the south, scattered over the boundless prairies of Kansas. Regimental headquarters and four companies occupied the cosy quarters of Fort Hays, nearly midway between Leavenworth and Denver, Missouri and the mountains, and Company "K," of which I then was first lieutenant, had pitched its tents along the banks of a winding fork of the Smoky Hill River, wondering why we had been "routed out" from our snug barracks and stables at Fort Riley, and ordered to proceed, "equipped for field service," to Hays City, by rail. Ordinarily, Uncle Sam pays the costly railway fare for horsemen and their steeds only when danger is imminent. The two posts were but a week's easy march apart; not a hostile Indian had been seen or heard of in all Kansas since the previous winter; General Pope, who commanded the department, had won the hearts of the ladies and children of the

officers' families by predicting that there would be no separation from husbands and fathers that summer at least; all the ladies had "joined," and, after our long sojourn in the wilds of Arizona, where but few among them had been able to follow us, we were rejoicing in their presence and luxuriating in the pretty homes ornamented and blessed by their dainty handiwork. Some among their number had never before appeared in garrison, and were taking their first lesson in frontier experience. Some, too, had only been with us six short weeks, and did not dream that the daily parades in which they took so much delight, the sweet music of our band, the brilliant uniforms and dancing plumes that lent such color and life to rapid drill or stately guard-mounting, were one and all but part and parcel of the preparation for scenes more stirring, far less welcome to such gentle eyes.

Fort Hays was joyous with mirth and music and merry laughter, for some of the ladies of the regiment had brought with them from the distant East younger sisters or friends, to whom army life on the plains was a revelation, and in whose honor a large barrack-room had been transformed into "the loveliest place in the world for a german," and Strauss's sweetest music rose and fell in witching invitation after the evening tattoo. Riding, driving, and hunting parties were of daily occurrence, and more than one young fellow's heart seemed in desperate jeopardy when the summons came.

The sun was setting in a cloudless sky as I reined in my horse in front of General Carr's quarters and dismounted, to make

my report of a three days' hunt along the valley of the Saline for stampeded horses. The band, in their neat summer dress, were grouped around the flagstaff, while the strains of "Soldaten Lieder" thrilled through the soft evening air, and, fairly carried away by the cadence of the sweet music, a party of young ladies and officers had dropped their croquet mallets and were waltzing upon the green carpet of the parade. Seated upon the verandas, other ladies and older officers were smilingly watching the pretty scene, and on the western side of the quadrangle the men in their white stable frocks were just breaking ranks after marching up from the never-neglected care of their horses. Half a dozen laughing children were chasing one another in noisy glee, their bright sashes and dainty dresses gleaming in the last rays of the golden orb. The general himself was gazing thoughtfully at the distant line of willows that fringed the banks of the stream, and holding an open newspaper in his hand as I entered and made my report.

"Have you heard the news?" he asked me. "Schuyler has gone to join General Crook as aide-de-camp. Got a telegram from him just after you left on this scout, and started last night. It's my belief that Crook will have a big campaign, and that we'll be sent for."

Ten minutes after, as the trumpets rang out the "retreat," and the last echoes of the evening gun died away over the rolling prairie, we noted a horseman coming at rapid gait along the dusty road from Hays City, as the railway station was hopefully named.

He disappeared among the foliage in the creek bottom. The soft hush of twilight fell upon the garrison, the band had gone away to supper, the bevy of sweet-faced girls with their tireless escorts had gathered with a number of officers and ladies in front of the general's quarters, where he and I were still in conversation, when the horseman, a messenger from the telegraph office, reappeared in our midst. "Despatch for you, general; thought you'd better have it at once," was all he said, as he handed it to "the chief," and, remounting, cantered away.

Carr opened the ugly brown envelope and took out, not one, but three sheets of despatch paper, closely written, and began to read. Looking around upon the assembled party, I noticed that conversation had ceased and a dozen pair of eyes were eagerly scrutinizing the face of the commanding officer. Anxious hearts were beating among those young wives and mothers, and the sweet girl-faces had paled a little in sympathy with the dread that shone all too plainly in the eyes of those who but so recently had undergone long and painful separation from soldier husbands. The general is a sphinx; he gives no sign. Slowly and carefully he reads the three pages; then goes back and begins over again. At last, slowly, thoughtfully he folds it, replaces the fateful despatch in its envelope, and looks up expectant of question. His officers, restrained by discipline, endeavor to appear unconcerned, and say nothing. The ladies, either from dread of the tidings or awe of him, *look* volumes, but are silent. Human nature asserts itself, however, and the man and the commander turns to me with,

"Well, what did I tell you?" And so we got our orders for the Sioux campaign of 1876.

To the officers, of course, it was an old story. There was not one of our number who had not seen hard campaigning and sharp Indian fighting before. But could we have had our choice, we would have preferred some less abrupt announcement. Hardly a word was spoken as the group broke up and the ladies sought their respective homes, but the bowed heads and hidden faces of many betrayed the force of the blow.

The officers remained with General Carr to receive his instructions. There was no time to lose, and the note of preparation sounded on the spot. General Sheridan's orders directed four companies from Fort Hays to proceed at once to Cheyenne by rail, and there await the coming of the more distant companies – eight in all, to go on this, the first alarm.

Companies "A," "B," "D," and "K" were designated to go; "E" to stay and "take care of the shop." Those to go were commanded by married officers, each of whom had to leave wife and family in garrison. "E" had a bachelor captain, and a lieutenant whose better half was away in the East, so the ladies of the regiment were ready to mob the general for his selection; but there was wisdom in it. In ten minutes the news was all over the post. A wild Celtic "Hurray, fellows, we're going for to join Crook," was heard in the barracks, answered by shouts of approval and delight from every Paddy in the command. Ours is a mixed array of nationalities – Mulligan and Meiswinkel,

Crapaud and John Bull, stand shoulder to shoulder with Yanks from every portion of the country. In four regiments only is exclusiveness as to race permitted by law. Only darkies can join their ranks. Otherwise, there is a promiscuous arrangement which, oddly enough, has many a recommendation. They balance one another as it were – the phlegmatic Teuton and the fiery Celt, mercurial Gaul and stolid Anglo-Saxon. Dashed and strongly tintured with the clear-headed individuality of the American, they make up a company which for *personnel* is admirably adapted to the wants of our democratic service. The company of the Fifth Cavalry most strongly flavored with Irish element in the ranks was commanded by Captain Emil Adam, an old German soldier, whose broken English on drill was the delight of his men. "The representative Paddy," as he calls himself, Captain Nick Nolan, of the Tenth Cavalry, has an Ethiopian lieutenant (a West-Pointer) and sixty of the very best darkies that ever stole chickens. But wherever you meet them, the first to hurray at the chance of a fight is the Pat, and no matter how gloomy or dismal the campaign, if there be any fun to be extracted from its incidents, he is the man to find it.

And so our Irishmen gave vent to their joy, and with whistling and singing the men stowed away their helmets and full-dress uniforms, their handsome belts and equipments, and lovingly reproduced the old Arizona slouch hats and "thimble belts," and the next evening our Fort Hays command, in two special trains, was speeding westward as fast as the Kansas Pacific could carry

us. The snow-capped peaks of the Rockies hove in sight next day, and Denver turned out in full force to see us go through. At evening on the 7th, we were camping on the broad prairie near Cheyenne. Here Major Upham joined us with Company "I." A week after we were off for Laramie. On the 22d, our companies were ordered straight to the north to find the crossing of the broad Indian trail from the Red Cloud and Spotted Tail reservations, by which hundreds of Indians were known to be going to the support of Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse.

We were to hide in the valley of the South Cheyenne, near the base of the Black Hills, and cut off the Indian supplies. Buffalo Bill had joined us, his old comrades of the Sioux war of 1868-69; and though we feared the Indians would be quick to detect our presence, and select others of a dozen routes to the Powder River country, we hoped to be able to nab a few.

On the 24th, we had begun our march at 6 a.m. from the Cardinal's Chair, at the head of the Niobrara, and before noon had descended into the valley of "Old Woman's Fork," of the South Cheyenne. We had with us two half-breed Sioux scouts and an Indian boy, "Little Bat," who had long been employed by the Fort Laramie officers as a reliable guide. Camping at noon along the stream, I was approached by Major Stanton, who had joined our column under instructions from General Sheridan, and informed that he was going to push ahead of the column at once, as the scouts reported recent Indian signs. It was necessary, he said, that he should get to the Cheyenne as

quickly as possible, and he wanted me to go as commander of the escort. In half an hour we were in saddle again, Major Stanton with his blunderbuss of a rifle, "Little Bat" in his semi-civilized garb, Lieutenant Keyes with forty men of Company "C," and myself. The general detained me a moment to convey some earnest instructions, and to post me on certain points in Sioux warfare which experience with Apaches was supposed to have dulled, and, with the promise, "I'll follow on your trail to-morrow," waved his hand, and in two minutes we were out of sight down the winding valley.

Three p.m. is early on a long June day. We rode swiftly, steadily, but cautiously northward; the valley widened out to east and west; we made numerous cut-offs among the bends of the stream, crossing low ridges, at each one of which Bat, well to the front, would creep to the top, keenly scrutinize all the country around, and signal "come on." At 5 o'clock he suddenly halted and threw himself from his horse, and I cantered forward to see what was up. We had struck our first trail of the campaign, and the yielding soil was thick with pony tracks. Coming from the east, the direction of the reservation, they led straight down the valley, and we followed. Every now and then other tracks from the east joined those we were on, and though at least four or five days old, they were of interest. Half an hour before sunset, far off among the hills to the northeast, a thin column of smoke shot up into the clear sky. Ten minutes more another rose in the west. They were Sioux signals, and we were discovered. But the

country was open all around us; not a tree except the cottonwoods along the narrow stream-bed, no fear of ambuscade, and we must not halt until within sight of the Cheyenne valley; so on we go. Just at twilight, Bat, five hundred yards in front, circles his horse rapidly to the left, and again I join him. It is the recent trail of a war-party of Sioux, crossing the valley, and disappearing among the low hills to the northwest. They number fifty warriors, and those whose tracks we have been following took the same direction – the short cut towards the Big Horn mountains. Our march is very cautious now – advance, flankers, and rear guard of old, tried soldiers, well out; but on we jog through the gathering darkness, and at nine p.m., as we ride over a ridge, Bat points out to me a long, low line of deeper shade, winding six or seven miles away in the moonlight. It is the timber along the Cheyenne, and now we may hunt for water and give our tired horses rest and grass. The valley is broad; the water lies only in scanty pools among the rocks in the stream-bed. There has been no rain for a month, and there is not a blade of grass nearer than the bluffs, a mile away. Our horses drink eagerly, and then in silence we fill our canteens and move off towards the hills. Here I find a basin about two hundred yards in diameter, in which we "half lariat" and hobble our horses; dig holes in the ground, wherein, with sage brush for fuel, we build little fires and boil our coffee, while Keyes and I take a dozen of our men and post them around our bivouac at points commanding every approach. No Indian can reach us unseen through that moonlight. No Indian

cares to attack at night, unless he has a "sure thing;" and though from five different points we catch the blaze of signal fires, we defy surprise, and with ready carbine by our side we eat our crisp bacon, sip the welcome tin of steaming coffee, then light our pipes and chat softly in the cool night air. Little we dream that two hundred miles away Custer is making his night ride to death. Our supports are only twenty-five miles away. We dread no attack in such force that we cannot "stand off" until Carr can reach us, and, as I make my rounds among the sentinels to see that all are vigilant, the words of the Light Cavalryman's song are sounding in my ears:

"The ring of a bridle, the stamp of a hoof,
Stars above and the wind in the tree;
A bush for a billet, a rock for a roof,
Outpost duty's the duty for me.
Listen! A stir in the valley below —
The valley below is with riflemen crammed,
Cov'ring the column and watching the foe;
Trumpet-Major! Sound and be d — ."

Bang! There's a shot from below, and the bivouac springs to life.

CHAPTER II

THE TRAIL AND THE CHASE

A shot in the dead of night from an outpost in the heart of the Indian country is something that soon ceases to be either exciting or of great interest, but the first that is heard on the campaign makes the pulses bound. Men sprang to their feet, horses pawed and snorted, and the sergeant of the guard and myself made rapid time to the point from which the alarm had come. There was the sentinel alone, unharmed, but perturbed in spirit. To the question, somewhat sternly put, "Who fired that shot?" he replies, with evident chagrin, "I did, sir; somethin' was crawlin' right up that holler, an' I challenged an' he didn't answer, an' I fired; but danged if I know what it was." Before there is time to say a word of rebuke, plainly enough in the bright moonlight something *does* come crawling up out of a "hollow" two hundred yards away – something of a yellow or reddish brown, on four legs, with a long, smooth, sneaking shamble that carries the quadruped rapidly over the ground, then changes to an ungainly lope, which takes him to a safe distance in six seconds; and there the creature turns, squats on his haunches, and coolly surveys us. Turning away in silent indignation, as I get almost out of earshot it is some comfort to hear the sergeant's pithy commentary, "Ye wall-eyed gutter-snipe, your grandmother would ha' known that was nothin' but a cayote."

Then follows the inevitable volley of chaff with which the Paddy greets every blunder on the part of his fellow-soldiers, and for a few minutes the silent bivouac is rollicking with fun. That some recent attempt has been made to instruct the troopers of Company "C" in the *finesse* of sentry duty is apparent from the shouted query, "Hi, Sullivan, if it was *two* cayotes would you advance the saynior or the junior wid the countersign?" at which there is a roar, and Lieutenant Keyes visibly blushes. In half an hour all is quiet again. Officers and men, we watch turn and turn about during the night, undisturbed, save at 3 o'clock the outlying sentries report that they distinctly heard the rapid beat of many hoofs dying away towards the west.

We are astir at the first gray of dawn, rolling our blankets and promptly saddling, for we must ride well down the Cheyenne and find the Mini Pusa, the dry north fork, before breakfast can be attended to. No stirring trumpet marks our reveille. We mount in silence, and like shadowy spectres ride away northward in the broadening valley. The stars are not yet paling in the west, but Bat's quick eye detects fresh hoof-prints not two hours old in the springy soil of the hillside, half a mile out from camp. Sure enough. They had prowled around us during the night, longing for our scalps, but not daring to attack. Only a few venturesome spies had galloped down to take observations, and had then ridden away to join their brothers in arms, and plot our destruction. We laughed as we shook our bridle-reins and jogged along, thinking how confounded they would be when they caught sight of our

main body, who, with General Carr at their head, would be along by noon. A six-mile ride brought us into the belt of cottonwoods and willows along the bed of the stream, but the South Cheyenne had sunk out of sight. Broad reaches of streaked and rippled sand wound through the timber, clearly showing where, earlier in the season, a rapid, sweeping torrent had borne great logs and heaps of brushwood upon its tawny breast; but it had dwindled away to nothing, and our thirsty horses looked reproachfully at their masters as, dismounting, we ploughed up the yielding sand, in hopes of finding the needed water beneath. This is one of the dismal peculiarities of the streams of the Far West. On the 1st of May we would have found that valley barely fordable; on the 25th of June it was as dry as a bone.

Mounting again, and scattering through the timber "down stream," a shout from Major Stanton had the effect of the trumpet rally on skirmish drill.

Our party came together with eager haste, and found him under a steep bank, shaded by willows, his horse fetlock deep in what remained of a once deep pool; and two or three at a time our chargers slaked their thirst. It was poor water – warm, soapy, alkaline – but better than none at all.

Just before noon we were clambering up the hills on the northeast of the Mini Pusa. Our orders were to proceed with the utmost caution on nearing the trail. General Sheridan had clearly indicated that it must cross the valley of the South Cheyenne some distance west of the Beaver, and very near its confluence

with the Mini Pusa. Stanton and I, with our field-glasses in hand, were toiling up through the yielding, sandy soil with Little Bat; Lieutenant Keyes and the escort, leading their horses, following. Once at the top of the ridge we felt sure of seeing the country to the eastward, and hardly had Bat reached the crest and peered cautiously over than he made a quick gesture which called the major and myself to his side. He pointed to the southeast, and, sweeping our glasses in that direction, we plainly saw the broad, beaten track. It looked like a great highway, deserted and silent, and it led from the thick timber in the Cheyenne valley straight to the southeast up the distant slope, and disappeared over the dim, misty range of hills in the direction of the Red Cloud and Spotted Tail reservations.

General Sheridan was right. Sitting in his distant office in Chicago, he was so thoroughly informed that he could order out his cavalry to search through a region hitherto known only to the Sioux, and tell them just where they would find the highway by which the vast hordes of hostiles under Sitting Bull were receiving daily reinforcements and welcome supplies of ammunition from the agencies three and four hundred miles to the southeast.

This was the traffic which General Carr and the Fifth Cavalry were ordered to break up; and here, just at noon, our little band of three officers and forty men, far in the advance, had struck the trail, as General Sheridan predicted. Keeping horses and men well under cover, we crept to a farther ridge, and from there our

glasses commanded a grand sweep of country: the valley of the South Cheyenne for fifty miles to the southeastward, until the stream itself was lost in the tortuous cañon of the Southern Black Hills; the great, towering range of the Black Hills themselves forty miles to the eastward, and the lone peak far to the northeast that the Sioux called (phonetically spelling) Heengha Kahga. The earliest maps simplified that into "Inyan Kara," and now the school-children of Deadwood talk glibly of the big hill that, higher than Harney's or Custer's Peak, their geography terms the "Indian Carry." Why can't we keep the original names?

Once thoroughly satisfied of our proximity to the trail, Major Stanton directed the escort to retrace its steps to the thick timber along the Mini Pusa, where it would be out of sight, while he and I, with our powerful binoculars, kept watch upon the Indian highway. The afternoon was hot and cloudless; not a breath of air stirred the clumps of sage-bush, the only vegetation along the bluffs and slopes. The atmosphere was dazzlingly clear, and objects were visible to us through our glasses that we knew to be miles away. The signal smokes to the west, and our front of the day before, had disappeared; not a living thing was in sight. Our men and horses were hidden among the dense cottonwoods a mile behind us, but, though invisible to us, we well knew that trusty eyes were keeping watch for the first signal from the hillside.

Three – four o'clock came, and not a soul had appeared upon the Indian trail. Away over the intervening ridge to the rear we

could see the valley of Old Woman's Fork, down which we had come the day previous, and our glasses detected, by an hour after noon, clouds of dust rising high in air, harbingers of the march of General Carr and the main body. At last the major closed his glasses with a disgusted snap and the remark, "I don't believe there's an Indian stirring to-day."

Not in our sight – not within our hearing, perhaps. The blessed Sabbath stillness falls on all within our ken; our steeds are blinking, our men are drowsing in the leafy shades below. Only the rising dust, miles to the southward, reveals the coming of comrade soldiery. Far to the northwest, a single dark speck, floating against the blue of heaven, attracts the lingering inspection of my field-glass. Eagle or buzzard, I do not know. The slow, circling, stately flight in ascending spiral carries him beyond our vision, but from his altitude the snow-capped peaks of the Big Horn range are clearly visible, and on this still Sabbath afternoon those mighty peaks are looking down upon a scene of carnage, strife, and slaughter that, a week hence, told only by curt official despatches, will thrill a continent with horror. Even as we watch there on the slopes by the Mini Pusa, Stanton and I, grumbling at our want of luck in not sighting an Indian, many a true and trusted comrade, many an old cadet friend of boyish days, many a stalwart soldier is biting the dust along the Little Horn, and the names of Custer and his men are dropping from the muster-rolls. The heroes of a still mightier struggle, the victors of an immortal defence of national honor, are falling fast till all

are gone, victims of a thankless warfare.

No wonder the Indians have no time to bother with us. We bivouac in undisturbed serenity that night, and join our regiment in the Cheyenne valley at noon next day without so much as an adventure. That night Company "I" is thrown forward to scout the trail, while the regiment camps out of sight among the cottonwoods, and for the next week we keenly watch the neighborhood, all the companies making thorough scouts in each direction, but finding nothing of consequence. Small parties of Indians are chased, but easily escape, and there isn't a doubt that the reservation Indians know of our whereabouts, and so avoid us.

Late in the afternoon of July 1st, our new colonel, Wesley Merritt, famous as a cavalry commander during the War of the Rebellion, arrives and assumes the reins of government, relieving General Carr, who falls back to second in command. We are all agog to see what will be our new chief's first move. He is fresh from Sheridan's staff in Chicago, and is doubtless primed with latest instructions and wishes of the lieutenant-general. He is no stranger to us, nor we to him, and his first move is characteristic. At dawn of day of the 2d, he marches us four miles down stream to better grass and a point nearer the big trail; sends Montgomery with his grays to scout over towards the Black Hills, and Hayes and Bishop with Company "G" to lie along the trail itself – but no Indian is sighted.

The sun is just rising on the morning of the 3d of July when

my captain, Mason, and I roll out of our blankets and set about the very simple operations of a soldier's campaign toilet. The men are grooming their horses; the tap of the curry-comb and the impatient pawing of hoofs is music in the clear, crisp, bracing air. Our cook is just announcing breakfast, and I am eagerly sniffing the aroma of coffee, when General Merritt's orderly comes running through the trees. "Colonel Mason, the general directs Company 'K' to get out as quickly as possible – Indians coming up the valley!" "Saddle up, men! lively now!" is the order. We jump into boots and spurs, whip the saddles from saplings and stumps, rattle the bits between the teeth of our excited horses, sling carbines over shoulder, poke fresh cartridges into revolver chambers, look well to the broad horsehair "cinches," or girths. The men lead into line, count fours, mount, and then, without a moment's pause, "Fours right, trot," is the order, and Mason and I lead off at a spanking gait, winding through the timber and suddenly shooting out upon the broad, sandy surface of the dry stream-bed. There the first man we see is Buffalo Bill, who swings his hat. "This way, colonel, this way," and away we go on his tracks. "K" is a veteran company. Its soldiers are, with few exceptions, on their second and third enlistments. Its captain ranks all the line officers of the regiment, and admirably commanded it during the war while the field officers were doing duty as generals of volunteers. There is hardly a trace of nervousness even among the newest comers, but this is the first chase of the campaign for us, and all are

eager and excited. Horses in rear struggle to rush to the front, and as we sputter out of the sand and strike the grassy slopes beyond the timber belt all break into a lope. Two or three scouts on a ridge five hundred yards ahead are frantically signalling to us, and, bending to the left again, we sweep around towards them, now at a gallop. Mason sternly cautions some of the eager men who are pressing close behind us, and, looking back, I see Sergeant Stauffer's bronzed face lighting up with a grin I used to mark in the old Apache campaigns in Arizona, and the veteran "Kelly" riding, as usual, all over his horse, but desperately bent on being ahead when we reach the scene. Left hands firmly grasp the already foaming reins, while throughout the column carbines are "advanced" in the other.

"Here comes Company 'I,' fellers," is the muttered announcement from the left and rear, and, glancing over my left shoulder, I see Kellogg with his bays and Lieutenant Reilly swinging out along the slope to our left. As we near the ridge and prepare to deploy, excitement is subdued but intense – Buffalo Bill plunging along beside us on a strawberry roan, sixteen hands high, gets a trifle of a lead, but we go tearing up the crest in a compact body, reach it, rein up, amazed and disgusted – not an Indian to be seen for two miles across the intervening "swale." Away to the left, towards the Cheyenne, scouts are again excitedly beckoning, and we move rapidly towards them, but slower now, for Mason will not abuse his horses for a wild-goose chase. Ten minutes bring us thither. Kellogg has joined forces

with us, and the two companies are trotting in parallel columns. Still no Indian; but the scouts are ahead down the valley, and we follow for a brisk half-hour, and find ourselves plunging through the timber ten miles east of camp. Another hour and we are dashing along a high ridge parallel with the Black Hills, and there, sure enough, are Indians, miles ahead, and streaking it for the Powder River country as fast as their ponies can carry them. We have galloped thirty miles in a big circle before catching sight of our chase, and our horses are panting and wearied. Every now and then we pass pack-saddles with fresh agency provisions, which they had dropped in their haste. Once our scouts get near enough to exchange a shot or two, but at last they fairly beat us out of sight, and we head for home, reach camp, disgusted and empty-handed, about four p.m. Two "heavy weights" (Colonel Leib's and Lieutenant Reilly's) horses drop dead under them, and the first pursuit of the Fifth is over.

CHAPTER III

THE FIGHT ON THE WAR BONNET

The chase of July 3d, besides killing two and using up a dozen horses, rendered our further presence in the valley of the Cheyenne clearly useless. No more Indians would be apt to come that way when they had the undisturbed choice of several others. General Merritt was prompt to accept the situation, and as prompt to act. Early the next morning, "K" and "I," the two companies engaged in the dash of the day before, took the direct back track up the valley of Old Woman's Fork, guarding the chief and the wagons. General Carr, with companies "B," "G," and "M," marched eastward towards the Black Hills, while Major Upham, with "A," "C," and "D," struck out northwestward up the valley of the Mini Pusa. Both commands were ordered to make a wide *détour*, scout the country for forty-eight hours, and rejoin headquarters at the head of what was then called Sage Creek. We of the centre column spent the glorious Fourth in a dusty march, and followed it up on the 5th with another.

On the 6th, a courier was sent in to Fort Laramie, seventy miles away, while the regiment camped along the stream to wait for orders. Towards ten o'clock on the following morning, while the camp was principally occupied in fighting flies, a party of the junior officers were returning from a refreshing bath in a deep pool of the stream, when Buffalo Bill came hurriedly towards

them from the general's tent. His handsome face wore a look of deep trouble, and he brought us to a halt in stunned, awe-stricken silence with the announcement, "Custer and five companies of the Seventh wiped out of existence. It's no rumor – General Merritt's got the official despatch."

Now we knew that before another fortnight the Fifth would be sent to reinforce General Crook on the Big Horn. Any doubts as to whether a big campaign was imminent were dispelled. Few words were spoken – the camp was stilled in soldierly mourning. That night Lieutenant Hall rode in with later news and letters. He had made the perilous trip from Laramie alone, but confirmed the general impression that we would be speedily ordered in to the line of the North Platte, to march by way of Fetterman to Crook's support. On Wednesday, the 12th, our move began, no orders having been received until the night before. Just what we were to do, probably no one knew but Merritt; he didn't tell, and I never asked questions. Evening found us camping near the Cardinal's Chair at the head of the Niobrara, in a furious storm of thunder, lightning, and rain, which lasted all night, and, wet to the skin, we were glad enough to march off at daybreak on the 13th, and still more glad to camp again that evening under the lee of friendly old Rawhide Peak.

We were now just one long day's march from Fort Laramie, and confidently expected to make it on the following day. At reveille on the 14th, however, a rumor ran through the camp that Merritt had received despatches during the night indicating

that there was a grand outbreak among the Indians at the reservation. Of course we knew that they would be vastly excited and encouraged by the intelligence of the Custer massacre. Furthermore, it was well known that there were nearly a thousand of the Cheyennes, the finest warriors and horsemen of the plains, who as yet remained peaceably at the Red Cloud or Spotted Tail Reservations along the White River, but they were eager for a pretext on which to "jump," and now they might be expected to leave in a body at any moment and take to the war-path. Our withdrawal from the Cheyenne River left the favorite route again open, and the road to the Black Hills was again traversed by trains of wagons and large parties of whites on their way to the mines, a sight too tempting for their covetous eyes. Major Jordan, commanding the post of Camp Robinson, had hurriedly described the situation in a despatch to Merritt, and when "Boots and saddles" sounded, and we rode into line, we saw the quartermaster guiding his wagons back over the ridge we had crossed the day before, and in a few minutes were following in their tracks. Away to the east we marched that morning, and at noon were halted where the road connecting Fort Laramie with the reservation crossed the Rawhide Creek. Here Captain Adam with Company "C" left us and pushed forward to the Niobrara Crossing, twenty-five miles nearer the Indian villages, while the indefatigable Major Stanton, "our polemical paymaster," was hurried off to Red Cloud, to look into the situation. The rest of us waited further developments.

On Saturday, the 15th of July, just at noon, General Merritt received the despatch from the Red Cloud Agency which decided the subsequent movement of his command. It led to his first "lightning march" with his new regiment; it impelled him to a move at once bold and brilliant. It brought about an utter rout and discomfiture among the would-be allies of Sitting Bull, and, while it won him the commendation of the lieutenant-general, it delayed us a week in finally reaching Crook, and there was some implied criticism in remarks afterwards made.

In a mere narrative article there is little scope for argument. Merritt's information was from Major Stanton, substantially to the effect that eight hundred Cheyenne warriors would leave the reservation on Sunday morning, fully equipped for the war-path, and with the avowed intention of joining the hostiles in the Big Horn country. To continue on his march to Laramie, and let them go, would have been gross, if not criminal, neglect. To follow by the direct road to the reservation, sixty-five miles away, would have been simply to drive them out and hasten their move. Manifestly there was but one thing to be done: to throw himself across their path and capture or drive them back, and to do this he must, relatively speaking, march over three sides of a square while they were traversing the fourth, *and must do it undiscovered.*

If Merritt hesitated ten minutes, his most intimate associates, his staff, did not know it. Leaving a small guard with the wagon train, and ordering Lieutenant Hall to catch up with us at night,

the general and seven companies swing into saddle, and at one o'clock are marching up the Rawhide, *away* from the reservation, and with no apparent purpose of interfering in any project, howsoever diabolical, that aboriginal fancy can suggest. We halt a brief half-hour under the Peak, fourteen miles away, water our thirsty horses in the clear, running stream, then remount, and, following our chief, lead away northwestward. By five p.m. we are heading square to the north; at sunset we are descending into the wide valley of the Niobrara, and just at ten p.m. we halt and unsaddle under the tall buttes of the Running Water, close by our old camp at Cardinal's Chair. Only thirty-five miles by the way we came, but horses must eat to live, and we have nothing but the buffalo grass to offer them. We post strong guards and pickets to prevent surprise, and scatter our horses well out over the hillsides to pick up all they can. Captain Hayes and I are detailed as officers of the guard and pickets for the night, and take ourselves off accordingly. At midnight, Lieutenant Hall arrives with his long wagon train. At three a.m., in the starlight, Merritt arouses his men; coffee and bacon are hurriedly served; the horses get a good breakfast of oats from the wagons, and at five a.m. we are climbing out of the valley to the north. And now, *Messieurs les Cheyennes*, we'll see who first will bivouac to-night upon the War Bonnet. You are but twenty-eight miles from it; we are fifty to the point where your great trail crosses the little stream. The Sioux, in their picturesque nomenclature, called it after the gorgeous head-piece of bead-work, plume and

eagles' feathers, they wear in battle, the prized War Bonnet. The frontiersman, scorning the poetic, considers that he has fittingly, practically, anyway, translated it into Hat Creek, and even for such a name as this, three insignificant creeks within a few miles of one another claim precedence – and Indian and Horsehead creeks are placidly willing to share it with them.

The sun rises over the broad lands of the Sioux to the eastward as we leave the shadowy Niobrara behind. Merritt's swift-stepping gray at the head of the column keeps us on our mettle to save our distance, and the horses answer gamely to the pressing knees of their riders. At 10.15 we sight the palisade fortifications of the infantry company which guards the spring at the head of old Sage Creek, and Lieutenant Taylor eagerly welcomes us. Here, officers, men, and horses take a hurried but substantial lunch. We open fresh boxes of ammunition, and cram belts and pockets until every man is loaded like a deep-sea diver, and fairly bristles with deadly missiles. Then on we go. East-northeast over the rolling, treeless prairie, and far to our right and rear runs the high, rock-faced ridge that shuts out the cold north winds from the reservation. The day is hot; we are following the Black Hills road, and the dust rises in heavy clouds above us. But 'tis a long, long way to the Indian crossing, and we *must* be the first to reach it. At sunset a winding belt of green in a distant depression marks the presence of a stream. At eight p.m., silently under the stars, we glide in among the timbers. At nine the seven companies are unsaddled and in bivouac close under

the bluffs, where a little plateau, around which the creek sweeps in almost complete circle, forms excellent defensive lair, secure against surprise. We have marched eighty-five miles in thirty-one hours, and here we are, square in their front, ready and eager to dispute with the Cheyennes their crossing on the morrow.

No fires are lighted, except a few tiny blazes in deep-dug holes, whence no betraying flame may escape. Horses and men, we bivouac in a great circle along the steep banks of a sluggish stream. The stars shine brightly overhead, but in the timber the darkness is intense. Mason, my captain, and I are just unstrapping our blankets and preparing for a nap, when Lieutenant Forbush, then adjutant of the regiment, stumbles over a fallen tree, and announces that Company "K" is detailed for guard and picket. I had "been on" all the night before with Captain Hayes, and would gladly have had a sound sleep before the morrow's work; but when Mason, after reporting for orders to General Merritt, comes back and tells me that I am to have command of the outposts to the southeast, the direction from which the foe must come, there is compensation in the supposed mistake in the roster.

We grope out in the darkness, and post our pickets in hollows and depressions, where, should the bivouac be approached over the distant ridges, they can best observe objects against the sky. The men are tired; and, as they cannot walk post and keep awake, the utmost vigilance is enjoined on non-commissioned officers. Hour after hour I prowl around among the sentries,

giving prompt answer to the muffled challenge that greets me with unvarying watchfulness. At one o'clock Colonel Mason and I, making the rounds together, come suddenly upon a post down among the willows next the stream, and are not halted; but we find the sentinel squatting under the bank, only visible in the starlight, apparently dozing. Stealing upon him from behind, I seize his carbine, and the man springs to his feet. Mason sternly rebukes him for his negligence, and is disposed to order him under guard; but old Sergeant Schreiber, who was never known to neglect a duty in his life, declares that he and the sentry were in conversation, and watching together some object across the stream not half a minute before we came upon them. Everywhere else along our front we find the men alert and watchful. At three o'clock the morning grows chilly, and the yelping of the coyotes out over the prairie is incessant. My orders are to call the General at half-past three; and, making my way through the slumbering groups, I find him rolled in his blanket at the foot of a big cottonwood, sleeping "with one eye open," for he is wide awake in an instant, and I return to my outpost towards the southeast.

Outlined against the southern sky is a high ridge, some two miles away. It sweeps around from our left front, where it is lost among the undulations of the prairie. Square to the northeast, some twenty miles distant, the southernmost masses of the Black Hills are tumbled up in sharp relief against the dawn. A faint blush is stealing along the Orient; the ridge line grows darker against the brightening sky; stars overhead are paling, and the

boughs of the cottonwoods murmur soft response to the stir of the morning breeze. Objects near at hand no longer baffle our tired eyes, and the faces of my comrades of the guard look drawn and wan in the cold light. We are huddled along a slope which did well enough for night watching; but, as the lay of the land becomes more distinct, we discern, four hundred yards farther out to the southeast, a little conical mound rising from a wave of prairie parallel to our front but shutting off all sight of objects between it and the distant range of heights, so I move my outpost quickly to the new position, and there we find unobstructed view.

To our rear is the line of bluffs that marks the tortuous course of the stream, and the timber itself is now becoming mistily visible in the morning light. A faint wreath of fog creeps up from the stagnant water where busy beavers have checked its flow, and from the southward not even an Indian eye could tell that close under those bluffs seven companies of veteran cavalry are crouching, ready for a spring.

Turning to the front again, I bring my glasses to bear on the distant ridge, and sweep its face in search of moving objects. Off to the right I can mark the trail down which we came the night before, but not a soul is stirring. At half-past four our horses, saddled and bridled, are cropping the bunches of buffalo grass in the "swale" behind us; the four men of the picket are lying among them, lariat in hand. Corporal Wilkinson and I, prone upon the hill-top, are eagerly scanning the front, when he points quickly to the now plainly lighted ridge, exclaiming:

"Look, lieutenant – there are Indians!"

Another minute, and two miles away we sight another group of five or six mounted warriors. In ten minutes we have seen half a dozen different parties popping up into plain sight, then rapidly scurrying back out of view. At five o'clock they have appeared all along our front for a distance of three miles, but they do not approach nearer. Their movements puzzle me. We do not believe they have seen us. They make no attempt at concealment from our side, but they keep peering over ridges towards the west, and dodging behind slopes that hide them from that direction.

General Merritt has been promptly notified of their appearance, and at 5.15 he and General Carr and two or three of the staff ride out under cover of our position, and, dismounting, crawl up beside us and level their glasses.

"What can they be after? What are they watching?" is the question. The Black Hills road is off there somewhere, but no travel is possible just now, and all trains are warned back at Taylor's camp. At half-past five the mystery is solved. Four miles away to the southwest, to our right front, the white covers of army wagons break upon our astonished view. It must be our indefatigable Quartermaster Hall with our train, and he has been marching all night to reach us. He is guarded by two companies of stalwart infantry, but they are invisible. He has stowed them away in wagons, and is probably only afraid that the Indians won't attack him. Wagon after wagon, the white covers come gleaming into sight far over the rolling prairie, and by this time

the ridge is swarming with war-parties of Cheyennes. Here you are, beggarly, treacherous rascals; for years you have eaten of our bread, lived on our bounty. You are well fed, well cared for; you, your papposes and ponies are fat and independent; but you have heard of the grand revel in blood, scalps, and trophies of your brethren, the Sioux. It is no fight of yours. You have no grievance, but the love of rapine and warfare is the ruling passion, and you must take a hand against the Great Father, whom your treaty binds you to obey and honor. And now you have stuffed your wallets with his rations, your pouches with heavy loads of his best metallic cartridges, all too confidingly supplied you by peace-loving agents, who (for a consideration) wouldn't suspect you of warlike designs for any consideration. You are only a day's march from the reservation; and here, you think, are your first rich victims – a big train going to the Black Hills unguarded. No wonder you circle your swift ponies to the left in eager signals to your belated brethren to come on, come on. In half an hour you'll have five hundred here, and the fate of those teamsters and that train is sealed.

"Have the men had coffee?" asks General Merritt, after a leisurely survey. "Yes, sir," is the adjutant's report. "Then let them saddle up and close in mass under the bluffs," is the order, and General Carr goes off to execute it.

The little hill on which we are lying is steep, almost precipitous on its southern slope, washed away apparently by the torrent that in the rainy season must come tearing down the long ravine

directly ahead of us; it leads down from the distant ridge and sweeps past us to our right, where it is crossed by the very trail on which we marched in, and along which, three miles away, the wagon train is now approaching. The two come together like a V, and we are at its point, while between them juts out a long spur of hills. The trail cannot be seen from the ravine, and *vice versa*, while we on our point see both. At the head of the ravine, a mile and a half away, a party of thirty or forty Indians are scurrying about in eager and excited motion. "What in thunder are those vagabonds fooling about?" says Buffalo Bill, who has joined us with Tait and Chips, two of his pet assistants. Even while we speculate the answer is plain. Riding towards us, away ahead of the wagon train, two soldiers come loping along the trail. They bring despatches to the command, no doubt, and, knowing us to be down here in the bottom somewhere, have started ahead to reach us. They see no Indians; for it is only from them and the train the wily foe is concealed, and all unsuspecting of their danger they come jauntily ahead. Now is the valiant red man's opportunity. Come on, Brothers Swift Bear, Two Bulls, Bloody Hand; come on, ten or a dozen of you, my braves – there are only two of the pale-faced dogs, and they shall feel the red man's vengeance forthwith. Come on, come on! We'll dash down this ravine, a dozen of us, and six to one we'll slay and scalp them without danger to ourselves; and a hundred to one we will brag about it the rest of our natural lives. Only a mile away come our couriers; only a mile and a half up the ravine a murderous

party of Cheyennes lash their excited ponies into eager gallop, and down they come towards us.

"By Jove! general," says Buffalo Bill, sliding backwards down the hill, "now's our chance. Let our party mount here out of sight, and we'll cut those fellows off."

"Up with you, then!" is the answer. "Stay where you are, King. Watch them till they are close under you; then give the word. Come down, every other man of you!"

I am alone on the little mound. Glancing behind me, I see Cody, Tait, and Chips, with five cavalrymen, eagerly bending forward in their saddles, grasping carbine and rifle, every eye bent upon me in breathless silence, watching for the signal. General Merritt and Lieutenants Forbush and Pardee are crouching below me. Sergeant Schreiber and Corporal Wilkinson, on all-fours, are half-way down the northern slope. Not a horse or man of us visible to the Indians. Only my hatless head and the double field-glass peer over the grassy mound. Half a mile away are our couriers, now rapidly approaching. Now, my Indian friends, what of you? Oh, what a stirring picture you make as once more I fix my glasses on you! Here, nearly four years after, my pulses bound as I recall the sight. Savage warfare was never more beautiful than in you. On you come, your swift, agile ponies springing down the winding ravine, the rising sun gleaming on your trailing war bonnets, on silver armlets, necklace, gorget; on brilliant painted shield and beaded legging; on naked body and beardless face, stained most vivid vermilion.

On you come, lance and rifle, pennon and feather glistening in the rare morning light, swaying in the wild grace of your peerless horsemanship; nearer, till I mark the very ornament on your leader's shield. And on, too, all unsuspecting, come your helpless prey. I hold vengeance in my hand, but not yet to let it go. Five seconds too soon, and you can wheel about and escape us; one second too late, and my blue-coated couriers are dead men. On you come, savage, hungry-eyed, merciless. Two miles behind you are your scores of friends, eagerly, applaudingly watching your exploit. But five hundred yards ahead of you, coolly, vengefully awaiting you are your unseen foes, beating you at your own game, and you are running slap into them. Nearer and nearer – your leader, a gorgeous-looking fellow, on a bounding gray, signals "Close and follow." Three hundred yards more, my buck, and (you fancy) your gleaming knives will tear the scalps of our couriers. Twenty seconds, and you will dash round that point with your war-whoop ringing in their ears. Ha! Lances, is it? You don't want your shots heard back at the train. What will you think of ours? "All ready, general?"

"All ready, King. Give the word when you like."

Not a man but myself knows how near they are. Two hundred yards now, and I can hear the panting of their wiry steeds. A hundred and fifty! That's right – close in, you beggars! Ten seconds more and you are on them! A hundred and twenty-five yards – a hundred – ninety —

"Now, lads, in with you!"

Crash go the hoofs! There's a rush, a wild, ringing cheer; then bang, bang, bang! and in a cloud of dust Cody and his men tumble in among them. General Merritt springs up to my side, Corporal Wilkinson to his. Cool as a cucumber, the Indian leader reins in his pony in sweeping circle to the left, ducks on his neck as Wilkinson's bullet whistles by his head; then *under* his pony, and his return shot "zips" close by the general's cheek. Then comes the cry, "Look to the front; look, look!" and, swarming down the ridge as far as we can see, come dozens of Indian warriors at top speed to the rescue. "Send up the first company!" is Merritt's order as he springs into saddle, and, followed by his adjutant, rides off to the left and front. I jump for my horse, and the vagabond, excited by the shots and rush around us, plunges at his lariat and breaks to the left. As I catch him, I see Buffalo Bill closing on a superbly accoutred warrior. It is the work of a minute; the Indian has fired and missed. Cody's bullet tears through the rider's leg, into his pony's heart, and they tumble in confused heap on the prairie. The Cheyenne struggles to his feet for another shot, but Cody's second bullet crashes through his brain, and the young chief, Yellow Hand, drops lifeless in his tracks.

Here comes my company, "K," trotting up from the bluffs, Colonel Mason at their head, and I take my place in front of my platoon, as, sweeping over the ridge, the field lies before us. Directly in front, a mile away, the redskins are rushing down to join their comrades; and their triumphant yells change to cries of

warning as Company "K's" blue line shoots up over the divide.

"Drive them, Mason, but look out for the main ridge," is the only order we hear; and, without a word, shout, or shot, "K" goes squarely at the foe. They fire wildly, wheeling about and backing off towards the hills; but our men waste no shot, and we speed up the slope, spreading out unconsciously in open order to right and left. Their bullets whistle harmlessly over our heads, and some of our young men are eagerly looking for permission to begin. Now the pursued have opened fire from both our flanks, for we have spread them open in our rush; and, glancing over my shoulder, it is glorious to see Montgomery's beautiful grays sweeping to our right and rear, while Kellogg's men are coming "front into line" at the gallop on our left. We gain the crest only to find the Indians scattering like chaff before us, utterly confounded at their unexpected encounter. Then comes the pursuit – a lively gallop over rolling prairie, the Indians dropping blankets, rations, everything weighty they could spare except their guns and ammunition. Right and left, far and near, they scatter into small bands, and go tearing homeward. Once within the limits of the reservation they are safe, and we strain every nerve to catch them; but when the sun is high in the heavens and noon has come, the Cheyennes are back under the sheltering wing of the Indian Bureau, and not one of them can we lay hands on.

Baffled and astounded, for once in a lifetime beaten at their own game, their project of joining Sitting Bull nipped in the bud,

they mourn the loss of three of their best braves slain in sudden attack, and of all their provender and supplies lost in hurried flight. Weary enough we reach the agency building at seven that evening, disappointed at having bagged no greater game; but our chief is satisfied. Buffalo Bill is radiant; his are the honors of the day; and the Fifth generally goes to sleep on the ground, well content with the affair on the War Bonnet.

CHAPTER IV

THE MARCH TO THE BIG HORN

Chasing the Cheyennes from the War Bonnet and Indian Creek to the reservation, our seven companies had struck cross country, and until we neared the high bluffs and ridges to the north of the agency, it was not difficult for the wagons to follow us; but it was generally predicted that Lieutenant Hall would never be able to get his train over the ravines and "breaks" which he would encounter on the 18th, and the command was congratulating itself on the prospect of a day's rest at Red Cloud, when at noon, to our utter astonishment, the wagons hove in sight. We had fasted since our four-o'clock breakfast on the previous morning – were hungrily eying the Indian supplies in their plethoric storehouses, and were just about negotiating with the infantry men of Camp Robinson for the loan of rations and the wherewithal to cook the same, when Hall rode in, *nonchalant* as usual, and parked his train of supplies amid shouts of welcome. General Merritt was unfeignedly glad to see his quartermaster; he had received his orders to hasten in to Fort Laramie and proceed to the reinforcement of General Crook, and every moment was precious. We were allowed just two hours to prepare and partake of an ample dinner, pack our traps and store them in the wagons again, when "Boots and saddles" was echoed back from the white crags of Dancer's Hill and Crow Butte, and at 2.30 we were

winding up the beautiful valley of the White River. Lieutenant Hall was left with his train to give his teams and teamsters a needed rest, and ordered to follow us at early evening.

All the morning the reservation Indians had come in flocks to have a look at the soldiers who had outwitted them on the previous day. Arrapahoe and Ogalalla, Minneconjou and Uncapapa, represented by dozens of old chiefs and groups of curious and laughing squaws, hung about us for hours – occasionally asking questions and invariably professing a readiness to accept any trifle we might feel disposed to part with. To beg is the one thing of which an Indian is never ashamed. In Arizona I have known a lot of Apaches to hang around camp for an entire day, and when they had coaxed us out of our last plug of tobacco, our only remaining match, and our old clothes, instead of going home satisfied they would turn to with reviving energy and beg for the things of all others for which they had not the faintest use – soap and writing-paper.

In addition to all the "squaw men" and "blanket Indians" at the reservation, there came to see us that day quite a number of Cheyennes, our antagonists of the day before. Shrouded in their dark-blue blankets and washed clean of their lurid war-paint, they were by no means imposing. One and all they wanted to see Buffalo Bill, and wherever he moved they followed him with awe-filled eyes. He wore the same dress in which he had burst upon them in yesterday's fight, a Mexican costume of black velvet, slashed with scarlet and trimmed with silver buttons

and lace – one of his theatrical garbs, in which he had done much execution before the footlights in the States, and which now became of intensified value. Bill had carefully preserved the beautiful war bonnet, shield and decorations, as well as the arms of the young chieftain Yellow Hand, whom he had slain in single combat, and that winter ('76 and '77) was probably the most profitable of his theatrical career. The incidents of the fight of the 17th and the death of Yellow Hand were dramatized for him, and presented one of the most telling of the plays in which he starred all over the East that season. He realized above all expenses some \$13,000 on that one alone, and I fancy that some of your readers may have seen it. For a time it was his custom to display the trophies of that fight in some prominent show-window during the day, and take them away only in time for the performance at night. As an advertisement it drew largely in the West, but when Bill reached the refinements of the Middle States and the culture of New England he encountered a storm of abuse from the press and the clergy which, while it induced him to withdraw "the blood-stained trophies of his murderous and cowardly deeds" from the show-windows, so stimulated public curiosity as to materially augment his receipts.

It is in New England, the land of the Pequots and the Iroquois, that the most violent partisans of the peace policy are to be found to-day. There is method in their cultured mania, for the farther removed the citizen finds himself from the Indian the better he likes him. Year after year, with the westward march

of civilization, the Indian has found himself, in the poetic and allegorical language ascribed to him by Cooper and others who never heard him use it, "thrust farther towards the fiery bosom of the setting sun." Each state in turn has elbowed him on towards the Mississippi, and by the time the struggling aborigine was at the safe distance of two or three states away, was virtuously ready to preach fierce denunciation of the people who simply did as it had done. It is comical to-day to hear Mr. Conger, of Michigan, assailing Mr. Belford, of Colorado, because the latter considers it time for the Utes to move or become amenable to the laws of the land; and when we look back and remember how the whole movement was inaugurated by the Pilgrim Fathers, is it not edifying to read the Bostonian tirades against the settlers – the pilgrims and pioneers of the Far West?

Our march to Laramie was without noteworthy incident. We reached the North Platte on Friday afternoon, July 21, spent Saturday in busy preparation, and early Sunday morning, six o'clock, the trumpets were sounding "the General," the universal army signal to strike your tent and march away. The white canvas was folded into the wagons, and in a few moments more the column of horse was moving off on the long-anticipated march to join General Crook. Captain Egan and Lieutenant Allison of the Second Cavalry rode out from Laramie to wish us godspeed. By eight the sun was scorching our backs and great clouds of dust were rising under our horses' feet, and Laramie was left behind. Many and many a weary march, many a week of privation and

suffering, many a stirring scene were we to encounter before once again the hospitable old frontier fort would open its gates to receive us. At half-past two we camped along the Platte at Bull Bend, and had a refreshing bath in its rapid waters; at four a violent storm of wind and rain bore down upon us, and beat upon our canvas during the night, but morning broke all the better for marching. A cold drizzle is far preferable to thick dust. We sped along briskly to the "La Bonté," and from there hastened on to Fetterman, where the main command arrived at noon on the 25th, the wagons and rear guard, of which I was in charge, coming in two hours later, fording the Platte at once, and moving into camp some distance up stream.

Fetterman was crowded with wagon trains, new horses, recruits, and officers, all waiting to go forward to General Crook, north of the Big Horn, and with the eight companies of the Fifth Cavalry as a nucleus, General Merritt organized the array of "unattached" into a disciplined force, brought chaos into prompt subjection, and at eight a.m. on the 26th started the whole mass on its northward march. Among those to meet us here were our old Arizona comrades, Lieutenants Rodgers and Eaton, who had hurried from detached service to catch us, and there were some comical features in the reunion. They had escaped from Eastern cities but the week previous, had made the journey by rail to Cheyenne and Medicine Bow, and by stage or ambulance to Fetterman, were fresh and trim and neat as though stepping out for parade. We had been marching and scouting for six weeks

through scorching dust and alkali, and with untrimmed beards and begrimed attire were unrecognizable. Rodgers positively refused to believe in the identity of a comrade whom he had met at a german at Fort Hays, but forgot his scruples when he received through that same officer the notification that he was promoted to the command of Company "A," its captain having suddenly concluded to resign a short time before.

Here, too, the future medical director of the expedition, Dr. Clements, made his appearance, and joined for the campaign, and two officers of the Fourth Infantry, whose companies were not included in General Crook's field force, obtained authority to serve with the Fifth Cavalry. And among those who cast their lot with us as volunteers, there came a gallant sailor, a lieutenant of our navy, who, having leave of absence from his department after long sea service, came out to spend a portion thereof in hunting on the Plains, just as his cousin, Lieutenant Rodgers, was hastening to join his regiment; and Jack Tar became a cavalry man, to serve for three months or the war, and it wasn't a week before Mr. Hunter had won the regard of every officer and man in the Fifth, and the brevet of "Commodore," by which title he was universally hailed throughout the long and dreary campaign that followed.

Two more companies of ours, "E" and "F," had been ordered to join us also, but we were in a hurry, and they followed by forced marches. On the night of the 28th we were encamped in pitchy darkness in a narrow valley at the head-waters of the

North Fork of the Mina Pusa. I was aroused from sleep by the voice of Lieutenant Pardee, who was serving as an aide-de-camp to General Merritt, and, rolling out of my blankets, found the general and himself at our tent. They asked if we had heard the distant sound of cavalry trumpets. The general thought he had, and we all went out beyond the post of the sentinels upon the open prairie to listen. It was time for Captains Price and Payne to reach us with their companies, and the general thought that in the thick darkness they had lost the trail and were signalling in hopes of a reply, and so we pricked up our ears. The silence was as dense as the darkness; no sound came from the slumbering camp; no light from the smouldering fire; suddenly there floated through the night air, soft and clear, the faint notes of the cavalry trumpet sounding "Officer's Call;" another minute and it was answered by our chief trumpeter, and, guided by the calls, in half an hour our comrades had joined us, and ten companies of the Fifth Cavalry were camped together for the first time in years.

From that night "Officer's Call" grew to be the conventional signal by which we of the Fifth were wont to herald our coming through the darkness or distance to comrades who might be awaiting us. Last September, when the Utes made their attack on Major Thornburgh's command, your readers will doubtless remember that after that gallant soldier's death the command of the besieged battalion devolved upon Captain Payne, of the Fifth Cavalry. He and his company, who were the first to employ the signal, have best reason to remember its subsequent value, and I

cannot do better than to repeat in his own words, my classmate's description of the arrival of General Merritt and the regiment after their famous dash of two hundred miles to the rescue. Of his little battalion of three companies, fifty were lying wounded in the hurriedly constructed rifle-pits, he and his surgeon were of the number, and for six days the Indians had poured in a pitiless fire whenever hand or head became visible. Hoping for the speedy coming of his colonel, Payne tells us: "While lying in the trenches on the night of the 4th of October, this incident came to mind. Believing it *just* possible for General Merritt to reach us next morning, and knowing that, if possible, come he would, I directed one of my trumpeters to be on the alert for the expected signal. And so it was; just as the first gray of the dawn appeared, our listening ears caught the sound of "Officer's Call" breaking the silence of the morning, and filling the valley with the sweetest music we had ever heard. Joyously the reply rang out from our corral, and the men rushing from the rifle-pits made the welkin ring with their glad cheers."

First at the head-waters of the Mina Pusa, in July, '76; last in the valley of the Milk River. Next? Far out in the cañons of Colorado, utterly isolated from the world, snowed in, living we don't know how, four companies of the Fifth Cavalry are waiting at the ruins of the White River Agency the result of all this negotiation in Washington. Merritt with the other companies, six in number, is wintering at Fort Russell, on the line of the Union Pacific. More than probable is it that the earliest spring will find

him a second time making that two-hundred-mile march to the Milk River, and once again the Rockies will echo the stirring strains of "Officer's Call."

Saturday, the 29th of July, '76, broke like a morning in mid-Sahara. We marched in glaring sun, through miles of dust, sage-brush, and alkali, and followed it up on Sunday, the 30th, with just such another; no shade, no grass, no water fit to swallow. We bivouacked along the Powder River, a curdling stream the color of dirty chalk, and we gazed with wistful, burning eyes at the grand peaks of the Big Horn, mantled with glistening snow, only fifty miles away. Monday was another day of heat, glare, and dust, with that tantalizing glory of ice and snow twenty miles nearer. That night the wind started in from the west, and blew down from those very peaks, fanning our fevered cheeks like blessed wavelets from heaven, as indeed they were. We were gasping for air on the banks of Crazy Woman's Fork, and would have suffocated but for that glad relief.

Early next morning Merritt led us on again, marching through a rolling country that became more and more varied and interesting with every mile; we were edging in closer to the foot-hills of the mountains. Several small herds of buffalo were sighted, and some few officers and men were allowed to go with Cody in chase. At one p.m. we halted on Clear Fork, a beautiful running stream deserving of its name, fresh from the snow peaks on our left; had lunch and rested until five, when once more we saddled up and pushed ahead; came suddenly upon Lake De

Smet, wild and picturesque, lying like a mirror in a deep basin of treeless banks, and in a beautiful open glade, rich with abundant green grass and watered by a clear, cold rivulet, we camped in the glorious starlight, thanking Heaven we were out of the desert, and at last along the storied range of the Big Horn.

Wednesday, August 2d, dawned bracing, clear, and beautiful. The glorious sunshine beamed on lofty crags and pine-covered heights close at our left hand, peered into dark ravine and rocky gorge, sparkled on the swift-flowing stream, and on innumerable dew-drops over the glade. Men and horses awoke to new life. A few miles ahead lay a lofty ridge, and from that, said our guides, the valleys of the Tongue and its branches, and the grand sweep of country towards the Rosebud on the north, and the Big Horn River to the northwest, would be spread before us like a map. Over that ridge, somewhere, lies Crook with his force, expectant of our coming; over that ridge, beyond him, are or were ten thousand renegades and hostile Indians, Sioux, and San Arcs, Cheyennes of the North (it was the Southern Cheyennes we whipped back on the War Bonnet), Minneconjous, Uncapapas (Sitting Bull's Own), Yanktonnais, and Brulés, all banded together in one grand attempt to exterminate the white intruders.

How I envied the advance that day the first glimpse over that divide! But each company took its turn at head of column; and now that we were fairly in among the fastnesses, where attack might be expected at any moment, two companies were daily detailed to escort and guard the wagon train, and Companies "A"

and "K" were the unfortunates to-day. It was mean duty. The road was not bad, but it wound up and down, over crests and through deep ravines. We had to dismount and lend a helping hand half the time. At seven we passed the palisaded ruins of old Fort Phil Kearney, abandoned by "Peace Commission" order in '68; and just beyond we halted and silently surveyed the ridge on which Captains Fetterman and Brown, Lieutenant Grummond, and three companies of soldiers were slowly slaughtered by Red Cloud and his surrounding thousands in December, '66. We fancied the poor women and children in the fort, listening and looking on in dumb, helpless horror; and then we thought of Custer and his comrades lying yet unburied only a few miles farther across that uplifted barrier in our front, and then we hurried on, eagerly praying that it might be our fortune to avenge some of those sacrificed lives; toiled up the long, long ascent, reached the lofty crest, and halted again in sheer amaze. The whole landscape to the north was black with smoke. East, as far as the Cheetish (Wolf) Mountains; west, as far as the Little Horn, from every valley great masses of surging, billowy clouds rolled up to swell the pall that overspread the northern sky and hung low upon the dividing ridges towards the Yellowstone. Here and there forked flames shot up through the heated veil, and even at our distance we could almost hear their roar and crackle. "Lo" had set the country afire to baffle his pursuers, and, knowing of the coming of Crook's reinforcements, was now, in all probability, scattering over the continent.

At eleven we passed an abandoned outpost of earthworks – thrown up, probably, by a detached company guarding the road. At two we overtook Merritt and the eight companies resting along a cool, limpid stream that gave promise of trout; and here we camped for the night, and listened eagerly to the news brought us by courier from General Crook. Scouts were out hunting for the Indians, who had withdrawn their masses from his immediate front, and he was only waiting our coming to launch out in pursuit. We sleep that night restless and impatient of the delay – morning comes all too slowly – but at four o'clock we are astir and on the move to meet our brigadier, but couriers report him coming down towards us along the main valley of the Tongue. We unsaddle and wait till three in the afternoon, when again "the General" sounds, and we march northwardly over the ridges towards the thick smoke. "Crook is camping on Goose Creek," is the explanation, and we are to join him there. At half-past five we catch glimpses of distant patrols and herds of cavalry horses and quartermasters' mules on the sloping side-hills. Presently horsemen come cantering out to meet us. Gray-haired, handsome, soldierly as ever, the first to hail us is our old Arizona major, now Lieutenant-Colonel Royall, of the Third Cavalry – with him a group of his own and the Second Cavalry officers. But we are still moved onward. We descend a long spur of foot-hill; plunge through a rapid mountain torrent into dense timber on the other side, still guided by our welcoming comrades; ride with dripping flanks through willow and cottonwood into

brilliant light beyond. There white tent and wagon-covers gleam in every direction; rough, bearded men are shouting greeting; and just ahead, on the trail, in worn shooting-jacket, slouch felt hat, and soldier's boots, with ragged beard braided and tied with tape, with twinkling eyes and half-shy, embarrassed manner, stands our old Arizona friend and chieftain, the hardworking soldier we have come all these many miles to join, looking as natural as when we last saw him in the spurs of the Sierras. There is no mistaking the gladness of his welcome. His face lights up with new light. He has a cordial word with General Carr, who commands the leading battalion; then turns to me, and with a grasp of the hand that fairly makes me wince, gives greeting for which I'd make that march twice over.

CHAPTER V.

THE ASSEMBLY OF THE B. H. AND Y

Friday, the 4th of August, 1876, was a busy day in the camp of General Crook. He had been waiting impatiently for the coming of the Fifth Cavalry, in order that he might resume the offensive, and, to use his own words, "finish the campaign in one crushing blow." The tragic success of the Indians on the Little Big Horn, of June 25th, resulting in the annihilation of Custer and five companies of the Seventh Cavalry, compelled General Terry to fall back to the Yellowstone, where he set about the reorganization of his command; and, safely intrenched in his supply camp at the mouth of the Tongue River, he too had been awaiting the arrival of reinforcements. General Miles, with his fine regiment, the Fifth Infantry, was hurried up the Missouri from Fort Leavenworth, and companies of the Twenty-second Infantry, from the Lakes, also hastened to join him. They were stemming the muddy current of the great river as fast as the light-draft steamers could carry them, while we were marching up from Fetterman to join General Crook.

On the 4th of August, Terry's command, consisting of the remnant of the Seventh Cavalry, one battalion of the Second Cavalry, the Fifth Infantry (Miles), Seventh Infantry (Gibbon), a battalion of the Twenty-second, and the Sixth Infantry garrison at Fort Buford, threatened the hostiles on the side of

the Yellowstone; while General Crook, with the entire Third Cavalry, ten companies of the Fifth, and four of the Second Cavalry, and an admirable infantry command, consisting of detachments from the Fourth, Ninth, and Fourteenth regiments, was preparing to advance upon them from the south. The two armies were not more than one hundred and twenty-five miles apart, yet communication between them was impossible. The intervening country swarmed with warriors, six to eight thousand in number, completely armed, equipped, supplied, and perfectly mounted. Crook had sallied forth and fought them on the 17th of June, and found them altogether too strong and dexterous, so he retired to Goose Creek once more; and here he lay on the 25th of June, when Custer was making his attack and meeting his fate – only fifty miles away, and not a soul of our command had the faintest idea of what was going on.

Warily watching the two commands, the Indians lay uneasily between Crook and Terry. Noting the approach of strong reinforcements to both, they proceeded to get their women and children out of the way, sending them eastward across Terry's front, and preparing to do likewise themselves when the time came for them to start. On the 5th of August the two armies moved towards each other. On the 10th they met; and one of the most comical sights I ever witnessed was this meeting, and one of the most unanswerable questions ever asked was, "Why, where on earth are the Indians?"

However, August the 4th was a day of busy preparation. At

ten a.m. the regimental and battalion commanders met in council at General Crook's headquarters, and by noon the result of their deliberations was promulgated. From the reports of his scouts and allies, General Crook had every reason to believe that he would find the mass of Indians posted in strong force somewhere among the bluffs and uplands of the Rosebud, two days' march away to the north. He had been unable to hear from General Terry or to communicate with him. Lieutenant Sibley, of the Second Cavalry, a young officer of great ability, and universally conceded to be as full of cool courage as any man could well be, had made a daring attempt to slip through with thirty picked men; but the Indians detected him quick as a flash, and after a desperate fight he managed to get back to the command with most of his men, but with the loss of all his horses.

The organization of the command was announced at one p.m.: General Crook to command in person, his faithful aide-de-camp, Bourke, to act as adjutant-general, while his staff consisted of Lieutenant Schuyler, Fifth Cavalry, junior aide-de-camp; Dr. B. A. Clements, medical director, assisted by Drs. Hartsuff and Patzki; Major J. V. Furey, chief quartermaster; Captain J. W. Bubb, chief commissary; Major George M. Randall, chief of scouts and Indian allies; and the bloodthirsty paymaster, our old friend Major Stanton, was the general utility man.

The cavalry was organized as a brigade, with General Merritt in command – Lieutenants Forbush and Hall, Fifth Cavalry, Pardee and Young, of the infantry, serving as staff. General Carr

took command of the Fifth Cavalry, with myself as adjutant; and for the first time the promotions which had occurred in the regiment consequent upon the death of General Custer were recognized in the assignments to command. The commissions had not yet been received from Washington, but all knew the advancement had been made. So my old captain, now become Major Mason, turned over Company "K" to its new captain, Woodson, and was detailed to command the Second Battalion of the Fifth Cavalry, consisting of Companies "B," "D," "E," "F," and "K," while the First Battalion – Companies "A," "C," "G," "I," and "M" – remained, as heretofore, under the leadership of our fellow-citizen Major Upham.

The Third Cavalry was commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Royall, under whom also was the battalion of the Second Cavalry. Consequently, it was his distinguished privilege to issue orders to four battalions, while his senior officer and quondam commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Carr (brevet major-general) had only two. This was a source of much good-natured raillery and mutual chaffing on the part of these two veteran campaigners, and it was Royall's ceaseless delight to come over and talk to Carr about "my brigade," and to patronizingly question him about "your a – detachment." In fact, I believe that Colonel Royall so far considered his command a brigade organization that his senior major, Colonel Evans, assumed command of the Third Cavalry as well as his own battalion; but, as this was a matter outside of my own sphere of duties, I cannot

make an assertion.

The infantry was a command to be proud of, and Lieutenant-Colonel Alexander Chambers was the man to appreciate it. Detachments from three fine regiments gave him a full battalion of tough, wiry fellows, who had footed it a thousand miles that summer, and we were all the better prepared to march two thousand more.

With every expectation of finding our foes close at hand, General Crook's orders were concise enough. As given to me by General Carr, and recorded in my note-book, I transcribe them here: "All tents, camp equipage, bedding, and baggage, except articles hereinafter specified, to be stored in the wagons, and wagons turned over to care of chief quartermaster by sunrise to-morrow. Each company to have their coffee roasted and ground and turned over to the chief commissary at sunset to-night. Wagons will be left here at camp. A pack-train of mules will accompany each battalion on the march, for the protection of which the battalion will be held responsible. The regiment will march at seven a.m. to-morrow, 'prepared for action,' and company commanders will see to it that each man carries with him on his person one hundred rounds carbine ammunition and four days' rations, overcoat and one blanket on the saddle. Fifty rounds additional per man will be packed on mules. Four extra horses, not to be packed, will be led with each company. Curry-combs and brushes will be left in wagons. *Special instructions for action:* All officers and non-commissioned officers to take

constant pains to prevent wastage of ammunition."

That was all. From the general down to subalterns the officers started with no more clothing than they had on and the overcoat and blanket indicated in that order. Many, indeed, officers and men, thinking to be back in a week, left overcoats behind, as superfluous in that bright August weather. When I tell you it was ten weeks before we saw those wagons again, meantime the weather having changed from summer sun to mountain storm and sleet, and we having tramped some eight hundred miles, you can fancy what a stylish appearance the Fifth Cavalry – indeed, the whole expedition – presented as it marched into the Black Hills the following September.

Saturday morning, the 5th of August, broke clear and cloudless, and at the very peep of day the hillsides re-echoed to the stirring music of our reveille. Cavalry trumpet, soft and mellow, replied to the deeper tone of the infantry bugle. We of the Fifth tumbled up in prompt and cheery response to the summons. Roll-call was quickly over. The horses took their final grooming with coltish impatience, and devoured their grain in blissful ignorance of the sufferings in store for them. The officers gathered for the last time in two months around their mess-chests and thankfully partook of a bountiful breakfast. Then "the General" rang out from cavalry headquarters; down fell the snowy canvas in every direction; wagon after wagon loaded up in the rapid style acquired only in long campaigning, and trundled off to join the quartermaster's corral. The long column

of infantry crawled away northward over the divide; half a dozen mounted scouts and rangers cantered away upon their flanks; the busy packers drove up their herds of braying mules, lashed boxes of hard-tack and sacks of bacon upon the snugly-fitting "apparejo" – the only pack-saddle that ever proved a complete success – and finally everything was ready for the start. The bustling town of yesterday had disappeared, and only long rows of saddles and bridles disposed upon the turf in front of each company indicated the regimental position.

At General Carr's headquarters, among the willows close to the stream, a white flag, with a centre square of red, is fluttering in the breeze. It is one of the signal flags, but as the regimental standard had been left with the band at Fort Hays, the general adopted this for the double purpose of indicating his own position and of conveying messages to the distant outposts. Yesterday afternoon a group of our Indian allies, Crows and Shoshones, surrounded that flag with wondering interest from the moment of its first appearance. Accustomed to the use of signals themselves, they eagerly watch any improvement upon their system, and, learning from Sergeant Center, our standard-bearer and signal sergeant, that this was a "speaking flag," they hung around for hours to observe its operation. The herds of the different companies were browsing on the hillsides half a mile away, strong pickets being thrown out in their front, and each herd guarded by a sergeant and party from its own company. So General Carr, to give the Indians an idea of its use and at

the same time secure more room, directed the sergeant to "Flag those Second Battalion herds to the other side of that ravine." So Center signalled "Attention" to the outposts, to which they waved "22, 22, 22, 3," the signal for "All right, go ahead, we're ready," and then, with the staring eyes of a score of swarthy warriors following his every move, Center rapidly swung his flag to form the message: "General Carr directs herds Second Battalion cross ravine." Speedily the grays of Company "B" and the four bay herds of the other companies began the movement, were slowly guided through the sorrels, blacks, and bays of the First Battalion, and commenced the descent into the ravine. One herd lagged a little behind, and the general, gazing at them through his binocular, quickly divined the cause. "Confound that herd guard; tell 'em to take off those side-lines when they're moving, if it's only a hundred yards." The message is sent as given, the side-lines whipped off, the horses step freely to their new grazing-ground, Crow and Shoshonee mutter guttural approbation and say that flag is "heap good medicine."

Hours afterwards they are hunting about camp for old flour-sacks and the like, and several towels, spread on the bushes at the bathing-place below camp to dry in the sun, are missing.

Now, on this brilliant Saturday morning, as we wait expectant of the signal "Boots and saddles," the cavalcade of our fierce allies comes spattering and plunging through the stream. Grim old chieftains, with knees hunched up on their ponies' withers, strapping young bucks bedaubed in yellow paint and red,

blanketted and busy squaws scurrying around herding the spare ponies, driving the pack animals, "toting" the young, doing all the work in fact. We have hired these hereditary enemies of the Sioux as our savage auxiliaries, "regardless of expense," and now, as they ride along the line, and our irrepressible Mulligans and Flahertys swarm to the fore intent on losing no opportunity for fun and chaff, and the "big Indians" in the lead come grinning and nodding salutations towards the group of officers at headquarters, a general laugh breaks out, for nearly every warrior has decorated himself with a miniature signal flag. Fluttering at the end of his "coup" stick or stuck in his headgear, a small square of white towelling or flour-sack, with a centre daub of red paint, is displayed to the breeze, and, under his new ensign, Mr. Lo rides complacently along, convinced that he has entered upon his campaign with "good medicine."

Half-past six. Still no signal to bring in the herds. But Merritt, Carr, and Royall are born and bred cavalrymen, and well know the value of every mouthful of the rich dew-laden grass before the march begins. We are exchanging good-byes with the quartermasters and the unhappy creatures who are to remain behind, adding our closing messages to the letters we leave for dear ones in distant homes, when the cheery notes ring out from brigade headquarters and are taken up, repeated along the line by the regimental trumpeters. Far out on the slopes our horses answer with eager hoof and neigh; with springy steps the men hasten out to bridle their steeds, and, vaulting on their backs,

ride in by companies to the line. The bustle of saddling, the snap of buckle and whip of cinch, succeeds, then "Lead into line" is heard from the sergeant's lips. Officers ride slowly along their commands, carefully scrutinizing each horse and man. Blanket, poncho, overcoat, side-line, lariat, and picket-pin, canteen and haversack, each has its appropriate place and must be in no other. Each trooper in turn displays his "thimble belt" and extra pocket package, to show that he has the prescribed one hundred rounds. The adjutant, riding along the line, receives the report of each captain and transfers it to his note-book. Away down the valley we see the Second and Third already in motion, filing off around the bluffs. Then General Carr's chief trumpeter raises his clarion to his lips. "Mount," rings out upon the air, and with the sound twenty officers and five hundred and fifteen men swing into saddle. Ten minutes more and we are winding across the divide towards Prairie Dog Creek on the east. The Third and Second, a mile to our left, are marching northeastward on the trail of the infantry. We fill our lungs with deep draughts of the rare, bracing mountain breeze, take a last glance at the grand crags and buttresses of rock to the southward, then with faces eagerly set towards the rolling smoke-wreaths that mark the track of the savage foe in the valley of the "Deje Agie," we close our columns, shake free our bridle reins, and press steadily forward. "Our wild campaign has begun."

CHAPTER VI.

THE MEET ON THE ROSEBUD

That General Crook's command, now designated as the "Big Horn and Yellowstone Expedition," started upon its campaign in the best possible spirits and under favoring skies, no one who saw us that bright August morning could have doubted. Unhappily, there was no one to see, no one to cheer or applaud, and, once having cut loose from our wagons and their guards, there was not a soul to mark our progress, unless it were some lurking scout in distant lair, who trusted to his intimate knowledge of the country and to his pony's fleetness to keep himself out of our clutches. Once fairly in the valley of the Prairie Dog, we had a good look at our array. The Fifth Cavalry in long column were bringing up the rear on this our first day's march from Goose Creek; our packers and their lively little mules jogging briskly along upon our right flank, while the space between us and the rolling foothills on the left was thickly covered with our Crow allies. The Shoshones were ahead somewhere, and we proceeded to scrape acquaintance with these wild warriors of the far northwest, whom we were now meeting for the first time. Organized in 1855, our regiment had seen its first Indian service on the broad plains of Texas, and was thoroughly well known among the Comanches, Kiowas, and Lipans when the great war of the rebellion broke out. In those days, with Sidney Johnston, Robert E. Lee, Earl

Van Dorn, Kirby Smith, Fitz Hugh Lee, and a dozen others who became notorious in the rebel army as its representative officers, our regiment had been not inaptly styled "Jeff. Davis's Own." But it outgrew the baleful title during the war, and has lost almost every trace of its ante-bellum *personnel*. Two of its most distinguished captains of to-day – Montgomery and "Jack" Hayes – it is true acquired their earliest military experience in its ranks under those very officers. But, while they are all the better as cavalymen for that fact, they are none the less determined in their loyalty, and both fought in many a wild charge during the rebellion, defending their flag against the very men who had taught them the use of their sabres. In that stern baptism of blood the Fifth became regenerate, and after stirring service in the Army of the Potomac during the war, and throughout the South during reconstruction days, the regiment once more drifted out on the plains, was introduced to the Cheyennes and Sioux in the winter of 1868-9, became very much at home among the Apaches of Arizona from 1871 to 1875, and now we found ourselves, after a long march across country from the Pacific slope, scraping acquaintance with the redoubtable "Crows" of the Yellowstone valley, the life-long enemies of the Sioux.

Riding "at ease," the men talk, laugh, and sing if they want to. All that is required is that they shall not lounge in the saddle, and that they keep accurately their distance, and ride at a steady walk. The Crows are scattered along the entire length of our left flank, but a band of some fifteen or twenty chiefs and headmen

keep alongside the headquarters party at the front of column. There rides General Carr with his adjutant, the surgeon, the non-commissioned staff, and orderlies, and, of course, the standard-bearer, who, as previously explained, has a signal flag for this campaign, and it is this which attracts the aborigine.

These Crows are fine-looking warriors, and fine horsemen too; but to see them riding along at ease, their ponies apparently gliding over the ground in their quick, cat-like walk, their position in the saddle seems neither graceful nor secure. This knot on our left is full of the most favorable specimens, and they all ride alike. Every man's blanket is so disposed that it covers him from the back of his head, folds across his breast, leaving the arms free play in a manner only an Indian can accomplish, and then is tucked in about his thighs and knees so as to give him complete protection. One or two younger bucks have discarded their blankets for the day, and ride about in dingy calico shirts or old cavalry jackets. One or two also appear in cavalry trousers instead of the native breech-clout and legging. But the moment that Indian dismounts you notice two points in which he is diametrically opposed to the customs of his white brother: first, that he mounts and dismounts on the right (off) side of his horse; second, that he carefully cuts out and throws away that portion of a pair of trousers which with us is regarded as indispensable. He rides hunched up in his saddle, with a stirrup so short that his knees are way out to the front and bent in an acute angle. The stirrup itself is something like the shoe of a lady's side-saddle,

and he thrusts his moccasined foot in full length. He carries in his right hand a wooden handle a foot long, to which three or four thongs of deerskin are attached, and with this scourge-like implement he keeps up an incessant shower of light flaps upon his pony's flank, rarely striking him heavily, and nothing will convince him that under that system the pony will not cover more miles in a day at a walk or lope than any horse in America. His horse equipments are of the most primitive description – a light wooden frame-work or tree, with high, narrow pommel and cantle, much shorter in the seat than ours, the whole covered with hide, stitched with thongs and fastened on with a horsehair girth, constitute his saddle. Any old piece of blanket or coffee-sack answers for saddle cloth, and his bridle is the simplest thing in the world, a single head-piece, a light snaffle bit, and a rein, sometimes gayly ornamented, completes the arrangement. But at full speed the worst horseman among them will dash up hill or down, through tortuous and rocky stream-beds, everywhere that a goat would go, and he looks upon our boldest rider as a poor specimen.

The Crows are affably disposed to-day, and we have no especial difficulty in fraternizing. Plug tobacco will go a long way as a medium of introduction anywhere west of the Missouri, and if you give one Indian a piece as big as a postage-stamp, the whole tribe will come in to claim acquaintance. A very pretty tobacco-pouch of Sioux manufacture which hung always at the pommel of my saddle, and the heavily beaded buckskin riding-

breeches which I wore, seemed to attract their notice, and one of them finally managed to communicate through a half-breed interpreter a query as to whether I had killed the Sioux chief who had owned them. Finding that I had never killed a Sioux in my life, the disdainful warrior dropped me as no longer a desirable acquaintance; and even the fact that the breeches were a valuable present from no less a hero than Buffalo Bill failed to make a favorable impression. Following him were a pair of bright-looking young squaws whose sole occupation in life seemed to consist in ministering to the various wants of his sulky chiefship. Riding astride, just as the men do, these ladies were equally at home on pony-back, and they "herded" his spare "mounts" and drove his pack animals with consummate skill. A tiny pappoose hung on the back of one of them, and gazed over her shoulder with solemn, speculative eyes at the long files of soldiers on their tall horses. At that tender age it was in no way compromising his dignity to display an interest in what was going on around him. Later in life he would lose caste as a warrior if he ventured to display wonderment at sight of a flying-machine. For several hours we rode side by side with our strange companions. We had no hesitancy in watching them with eager curiosity, and they were as intent on "picking up points" about us, only they did it furtively.

Gradually we were drawing nearer the swift "Deje Agie," as the Crows call the Tongue River. The valley down which we were moving sank deeper among the bold bluffs on either

side. Something impeded the march of the column ahead; the pack trains on our right were "doubling up," and every mule, with that strict attention to business characteristic of the species, had buried its nose in the rich buffalo grass, making up for lost time. "Halt!" and "Dismount!" rang out from the trumpets. Every trooper slips the heavy curb bit from his horse's mouth and leads him right or left off the trail that he may profit by even a moment's rest to crop the fresh bunches in which that herbage grows.

The morning has passed without notable incident. No alarm has come from the scouts in front or flank. We are so far in rear to-day that we miss our friends Cody and Chips, who hitherto were *our* scouts and no one else's. Now they are part and parcel of the squad attached to General Crook's headquarters, of which Major Stanton is the putative chief. We miss our fire-eater of a paymaster – the only one of his corps, I fancy, who would rather undergo the privations of such a campaign and take actual part in its engagements, than sit at a comfortable desk at home and criticise its movements. At noon we come suddenly upon the rushing Tongue, and fording, breast deep, cross to the northern shore. We emerge at the very base of steep rocky heights, push round a ledge that shuts out the northward prospect from our sight, find the river recoiling from a palisade of rock on the east, and tearing back across our path, ford it again and struggle along under the cliffs on its right bank a few minutes, balancing ourselves, it almost seems, upon a trail barely wide enough for

one horseman. What a place for ambushade or surprise!

We can see no flankers or scouts, but feel confident that our general has not shoved the nose of his column into such a trap without rigid reconnoissance. So we push unconcernedly along. Once more the green, foam-crested torrent sweeps across our line of march from the left, and we ride in, our horses snorting and plunging over the slippery boulders on the bottom, the eager waves dashing up about our knees. Once more we wind around a projecting elbow of bluff, and as the head of our column, which has halted to permit the companies to close up, straightens out in motion again, we enter a beautiful glade. The river, beating in foam against the high, precipitous rocks on the eastern bank, broke in tiny, peaceful wavelets upon the grassy shores and slopes of the western side; the great hills rolled away to the left; groves of timber sprang up in our front, and through their leafy tops the white smoke of many a camp-fire was curling; the horses of the Second and Third, strongly guarded, were already moving out to graze on the foot-hills. An aide-de-camp rides to General Carr with orders to "bivouac right here; we march no further to-day." We ride left into line, unsaddle, and detail our guards. Captain Payne, with Company "F," is assigned the duty of protecting camp from surprise, and he and his men hasten off to surrounding hill-tops and crests from which they can view the approaches, and at two p.m. we proceed to make ourselves comfortable. We have no huts and only one blanket apiece, but who cares? The August sun is bright and cheery; the air is fresh

and clear; the smoke rises, mast-like, high in the skies until it meets the upland breeze that, sweeping down from the Big Horn range behind us, has cleared away the pall of smoke our Indian foes had but yesterday hung before our eyes, and left the valley of the Tongue thus far green and undefiled. We have come but twenty miles, are fresh and vigorous; but the advance reports no signs yet, and Crook halts us so that we may have an early start to-morrow.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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