

King Charles

A Trooper Galahad



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CHAPTER I

"Life is full of ups and downs," mused the colonel, as he laid on the littered desk before him an official communication just received from Department Head-Quarters, "especially army life, – and more especially army life in Texas."

"Now, what are you philosophizing about?" asked his second in command, a burly major, glancing over the top of the latest home paper, three weeks old that day.

"D'ye remember Pigott, that little cad that was court-martialled at San Antonio in '68 for quintuplicating his pay accounts? He married the widow of old Alamo Hendrix that winter. He's worth half a million to-day, is running for Congress, and will probably be on the military committee next year, while here's Lawrence, who was judge advocate of the court that tried him, gone all to smash." And the veteran officer commanding the – th Infantry and the big post at Fort Worth glanced warily along into the adjoining office, where a clerk was assorting the papers on the adjutant's desk.

"It's the saddest case I ever heard of," said Major Brooks, tossing aside the *Toledo Blade* and tripping up over his own,

which he had thoughtfully propped between his legs as he took his seat and thoughtlessly ignored as he left it. "Damn that sabre, – and the service generally!" he growled, as he recovered his balance and tramped to the window. "I'd almost be willing to quit it as Pigott did if I could see my way to a moderate competence anywhere out of it. Lawrence was as good a soldier as we had in the 12th, and, yet, what can you do or say? The mischief's done." And, beating the devil's tattoo on the window, the major stood gloomily gazing out over the parade.

"It isn't Lawrence himself I'm so – Orderly, shut that door!" cried the chief, whirling around in his chair, "and tell those clerks I want it kept shut until the adjutant comes; and you stay out on the porch. – It isn't Lawrence I'm so sorely troubled about, Brooks. He has ability, and could pick up and do well eventually, but he's utterly discouraged and swamped. What's to become, though, of that poor child Ada and his little boy?"

"God knows," said Brooks, sadly. "I've got five of my own to look after, and you've got four. No use talking of adopting them, even if Lawrence would listen; and he never would listen to anything or anybody – they tell me," he added, after a minute's reflection. "I don't know it myself. It's what Buxton and Canker and some of those fellows told me on the Republican last summer. I hadn't seen him since Gettysburg until we met here."

"Buxton and Canker be – exterminated!" said the colonel, hotly. "I never met Buxton, and never want to. As for Canker, by gad, there's another absurdity. They put him in the cavalry

because consolidation left no room for him with us. What do you suppose they'll do with him in the – th?"

"The Lord knows, as I said before. He never rode anything but a hobby in his life. I don't wonder Lawrence couldn't tolerate preaching from him. But what I don't understand is, who made the allegation. What's his offence? Every one knows that he's in debt and trouble, and that he's had hard lines and nothing else ever since the war, but the court acquitted him of all blame in that money business – "

"And now to make room for fellows with friends at court," burst in the colonel, wrathfully, "he and other poor devils with nothing but a fighting record and a family to provide for are turned loose on a year's pay, which they're to have after things straighten out as to their accounts with the government. Now just look at Lawrence! Ordnance and quartermaster's stores hopelessly boggled – "

"Hush!" interrupted Brooks, starting back from the window. "Here he is now."

Assembly of the guard details had sounded a few moments before, and all over the sunshiny parade on its westward side, in front of the various barracks, little squads of soldiers armed and in full uniform were standing awaiting the next signal, while the porches of the low wooden buildings beyond were dotted with groups of comrades, lazily looking on. Out on the greensward, broad and level, crisscrossed with gravel walks, the band had taken its station, marshalled by the tall drum-major in his huge

bear-skin shako. From the lofty flag-staff in the centre of the parade the national colors were fluttering in the mountain breeze that stole down from the snowy peaks hemming the view to the northwest and stirred the leaves of the cottonwoods and the drooping branches of the willows in the bed of the rushing stream sweeping by the southern limits of the garrison. Within the enclosure, sacred to military use, it was all the same old familiar picture, the stereotyped fashion of the frontier fort of the earliest '70s, – dull-hued barracks on one side or on two, dull-hued, broad-porched cottages – the officers' quarters – on another, dull-hued offices, storehouses, corral walls, scattered about the outskirts, a dull-hued, sombre earth on every side; sombre sweeping prairie beyond, spanned by pallid sky or snow-tipped mountains; a twisting, winding road or two, entering the post on one front, issuing at the other, and tapering off in sinuous curves until lost in the distance; a few scattered ranches in the stream valley; a collection of sheds, shanties, and hovels surrounding a bustling establishment known as the store, down by the ford, – the centre of civilization, apparently, for thither trended every roadway, path, track, or trail visible to the naked eye. Here in front of the office a solitary cavalry horse was tethered. Yonder at the sutler's, early as it was in the day, a dozen quadrupeds, mules, mustangs, or Indian ponies, were blinking in the sunshine. Dogs innumerable sprawled in the sand. Bipedes lolled lazily about or squatted on the steps on the edge of the wooden porch, some in broad sombreros, some in scalp-lock and

blanket, – none in the garb of civil life as seen in the nearest cities, and the nearest was four or five hundred miles away. Out on the parade were bits of lively color, the dresses of frolicsome children to the east, the stripes and facings of the cavalry and artillery at the west; for, by some odd freak of the fortunes of war, here, away out at Fort Worth, had come a crack light battery of the old army, which, with Brooks's battalion of the cavalry, and head-quarters' staff, band, and six companies of the – th Infantry, made up the garrison, – the biggest then maintained in the Department immortalized by Sheridan as only second choice to Sheol. It was the winter of '70 and '71, as black and dreary a time as ever the army knew, for Congress had telescoped forty-five regiments into half the number and blasted all hopes of promotion, – about the only thing the soldier has to live for.

And that wasn't the blackest thing about the business, by any means. The war had developed the fact that we had thousands of battalion commanders for whom the nation had no place in peace times, and scores of them, in the hope and promise of a life employment in an honorable profession, accepted the tender of lieutenancies in the regular army in '66, the war having broken up all their vocations at home, and now, having given four years more to the military service, – taken all those years out of their lives that might have been given to establishing themselves in business, – they were bidden to choose between voluntarily quitting the army with a bonus of a year's pay, and remaining with no hope of advancement. Most of them, despairing of

finding employment in civil life, concluded to stay: so other methods of getting rid of them were devised, and, to the amaze of the army and the dismay of the victims, a big list was published of officers "rendered supernumerary" and summarily discharged. And this was how it happened that a gallant, brilliant, and glad-hearted fellow, the favorite staff officer of a glorious corps commander who fell at the head of his men after three years of equally glorious service, found himself in far-away Texas this blackest of black Fridays, suddenly turned loose on the world and without hope or home.

Cruel was no word for it. Entering the army before the war, one of the few gifted civilians commissioned because they loved the service and then had friends to back them, Edgar Lawrence had joined the cavalry in Texas, where the first thing he did was to fall heels over head in love with his captain's daughter, and a runaway match resulted. Poor Kitty Tyrrell! Poor Ned Lawrence! Two more unpractical people never lived. She was an army girl with aspirations, much sweetness, and little sense. He was a whole-souled, generous, lavish fellow. Both were extravagant, she particularly so. They were sorely in debt when the war broke out, and he, instead of going in for the volunteers, was induced to become aide-de-camp to his old colonel, who passed him on to another when he retired; and when the war was half over Lawrence was only a captain of staff, and captain he came out at the close. Brevets of course he had, but what are brevets but empty title? What profiteth it a man to be called colonel if he

have only the pay of a sub? Hundreds of men who eagerly sought his aid or influence during the war "held over him" at the end of it. Another general took him on his staff as aide-de-camp, where Lawrence was invaluable. Kitty dearly loved city life, parties, balls, operas, and theatres; but Lawrence grew lined and gray with care and worry. The general went the way of all flesh, and Lawrence to Texas, unable to get another staff billet. They set him at court-martial duty at San Antonio for several months, for Texas furnished culprits by the score in the days that followed the war, and many an unpromising army career was cut short by the tribunal of which Captain and Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel Lawrence was judge advocate; but all the time he had a skeleton in his own closet that by and by rattled its way out. Time was in the war days when many of the men of the head-quarters escort banked their money with the beloved and popular aide. He had nearly twelve hundred dollars when the long columns probed the Wilderness in '64. It was still with him when he was suddenly sent back to Washington with the body of his beloved chief, but every cent was gone before he got there, stolen from him on the steamer from Acquia Creek, and never a trace was found of it thereafter. For years he was paying that off, making it good in dribblets, but while he was serving faithfully in Texas, commanding a scout that took him miles and miles away over the Llano Estacado, there were inimical souls who worked the story of his indebtedness to enlisted men for all it was worth, and, aided by the complaints of some of their number, to his grievous disadvantage. He came

home from a brilliant dash after the Kiowas to find himself complimented in orders and confronted by charges in one and the same breath. The court acquitted him of the charges and "cut" his accusers, but the shame and humiliation of it all seemed to prey upon his spirits; and then Kitty Tyrrell died.

"If that had only happened years before," said the colonel, "it would have been far better for Lawrence, for she conscientiously believed herself the best wife in the world, and spent every cent of his income in dressing up to her conception of the character." Once the most dashing and debonair of captains, poor Ned ran down at the heel and seemed unable to rally. New commanders came to the department, to his regiment, and new officials to the War Office, – men "who knew not Joseph;" and when the drag-net was cast into the whirlpool of army names and army reputations, it was set for scandal, not for services, and the old story of those unpaid hundreds was enmeshed and served up seasoned with the latest spice obtainable from the dealers rebuked of that original court. And, lo! when the list of victims reached Fort Worth in the reorganization days, old Frazier, the colonel, burst into a string of anathemas, and more than one good woman into a passion of tears, for poor Ned Lawrence, at that moment long days' marches away towards the Rio Bravo, was declared supernumerary and mustered out of the service of the United States with one year's pay, – pay which he could not hope to get until every government account was satisfactorily straightened, and this, too, at a time when the desertion of

one sergeant and the death of another revealed the fact that his storehouses had been systematically robbed and that he was hopelessly short in many a costly item charged against him. That heartless order was a month old when the stricken soldier reached his post, and then and there for the first time learned his fate.

Yes, they had tried to break it to him. Letters full of sympathy were written and sent by couriers far to the north; others took them on the Concho trail. Brooks and Frazier both wrote to San Antonio messages thence to be wired to Washington imploring reconsideration; but the deed was done. Astute advisers of the War Secretary clinched the matter by the prompt renomination of others to fill the vacancies just created, and once these were confirmed by the Senate there could be no appeal. The detachment led by Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel Lawrence, so later said the Texas papers, had covered itself with glory, but in its pursuit of the fleeing Indians it had gone far to the northeast and so came home by a route no man had dreamed of, and Lawrence, spurring eagerly ahead, rode in at night to fold his motherless little ones to his heart, and found loving army women aiding their faithful old nurse in ministering to them, but read disaster in the tearful eyes and faltering words that welcomed him.

Then he was ill a fortnight, and then he had to go. He could not, would not believe the order final. He clung to the hope that he would find at Washington a dozen men who knew his war record, who could remember his gallant services in a dozen battles, his popularity and prominence in the Army of

the Potomac. Everybody knows the favorite aide-de-camp of a corps commander when colonels go begging for recognition, and everybody has a cheery, cordial word for him so long as he and his general live and serve together. But that proves nothing when the general is gone. Colonels who eagerly welcomed and shook hands with the aide-de-camp and talked confidentially with him about other colonels in days when he rode long hours by his general's side, later passed him by with scant notice, and "always thought him a much overrated man." Right here at Fort Worth were fellows who, six or seven years before, would have given a month's pay to win Ned Lawrence's influence in their behalf, – for, like "Perfect" Bliss of the Mexican war days, Lawrence was believed to write his general's despatches and reports, – but who now shrank uneasily out of his way for fear that he should ask a favor.

Even Brooks, who liked and had spoken for him, drew back from the window when with slow, heavy steps the sad-faced, haggard man came slowly along the porch. The orderly sprang up and stood at salute just as adjutant's call sounded, and the band pealed forth its merry, spirited music. For a moment the new-comer turned and glanced back over the parade, now dotted with little details all marching out to the line where stood the sergeant-major; then he turned, entered the building, and paused with hopeless eyes and pallid, careworn features at the office doorway. His old single-breasted captain's frock-coat, with its tarnished silver leaves at the shoulders, hung loosely about his

shrunken form. The trousers, with their narrow welt of yellow at the seam, looked far too big for him. His forage-cap, still natty in shape, was old and worn. His chin and cheeks bristled with a stubbly grayish beard. All the old alert manner was gone. The once bright eyes were bleary and dull. Neighbors said that poor Ned had been drinking deep of the contents of a demijohn a sympathetic soul had sent him, and half an eye could tell that his lip was tremulous. The colonel arose and held out his hand.

"Come in, Lawrence, old fellow, and tell me what I can do for you." He spoke kindly, and Brooks, too, turned towards the desolate man.

"You've done – all you could – both of you. God bless you!" was the faltering answer. "I've come to say I start at once. I'm going right to Washington to have this straightened out. I want to thank you, colonel, and you too, Brooks, for all your willing help. I'll try to show my appreciation of it when I get back."

"But Ada and little Jim, Lawrence; surely they're not ready for that long journey yet," said Frazier, thinking sorrowfully of what his wife had told him only the day before, – that they had no decent winter clothing to their names.

"It's all right. Old Mammy stays right here with them. She has taken care of them, you know, ever since my poor wife died. I can keep my old quarters a month, can't I?" he queried, with a quivering smile. "Even if the order isn't revoked, it would be a month or more before any one could come to take my place. Mrs. Blythe will look after the children day and night."

Frazier turned appealingly to Brooks, who shook his head and refused to speak, and so the colonel had to.

"Lawrence, God knows I hate to say one word of discouragement, but I fear – I fear you'd better wait till next week's stage and take those poor little folks with you. I've watched this thing. I know how a dozen good fellows, confident as yourself, have gone on to Washington and found it all useless."

"It can't be useless, sir," burst in the captain, impetuously. "Truth is truth and must prevail. If after all my years of service I can find no friends in the War Office, then life is a lie and a sham. Senator Hall writes me that he will leave no stone unturned. No, colonel, I take the stage at noon to-day. Will you let Winn ride with me as far as Castle Peak? I've got to run down and see Fuller now."

"Winn can go with you, certainly; but indeed, Lawrence, I shall have to see you again about this."

"I'll stop on the way back," said Lawrence, nervously. "Fuller promised to see me before he went out to his ranch." And hastily the captain turned away.

For a moment the two seniors stood there silently gazing into each other's eyes. "What can one do or say?" asked the colonel, at last. "I suppose Fuller is going to let him have money for the trip. He can afford to, God knows, after all he's made out of this garrison. But the question is, ought I not to make poor Lawrence understand that it's a gone case? He is legally out already. His successor is on his way here. I got the letter this morning."

"On his way here? Who is he?" queried the major, in sudden interest. "They didn't know when Stone came through San Antonio ten days ago."

"Man named Barclay; just got his captaincy in the 30th, – but was consolidated out of that, of course."

"Barclay – Barclay, you say?" ejaculated the major, in excitement. "Well, of all the –"

"Of all the what?" demanded the colonel, impatiently. "Nothing wrong with him, I hope."

"Wrong? No, or they wouldn't have dubbed him Galahad. But, talk about ups and downs in Texas, this beats all. Does Winn know?"

"I don't know that any one knows but you and me," answered the veteran, half testily. "What's amiss? What has Winn to do with it?"

"Blood and blue blazes! Why, of course you couldn't know. Three years ago Barclay believed himself engaged to a girl, and she threw him over for Winn, and now we'll have all three of them right here at Worth."

CHAPTER II

In spite of what Colonel Frazier could say, Captain Lawrence had gone the long and devious journey to Washington. Those were the days when the lumbering stage-coach once a week, or a rattling ambulance, bore our army travellers from the far frontier to San Antonio. Another trundled and bumped them away to the Gulf. A Morgan Line steamer picked them up and tossed and rolled with them to the mouth of the Mississippi and unloaded them at New Orleans, whence by dusty railway journey of forty-eight hours or more they could hope to reach the North. The parting between Lawrence and his tall slip of a daughter and boisterous little Jimmy was something women wept over in telling or hearing, for only two looked on, well-nigh blinded, — Mrs. Blythe, who had been devoted to their mother, and old "Mammy," who was devoted to them all. A month had rolled by, and the letters that came from Lawrence from San Antonio and Indianola and New Orleans had been read by sympathizing friends to the children. Then all awaited the news from Washington. Every one knew he would wire to Department Head-Quarters the moment the case was settled in his favor; but the days went by without other tidings, and the croakers who had predicted ill success were mournfully happy. February passed, March was ushered in; orders came transferring certain portions of Frazier's big command, and certain new

officers began to arrive to fill the three or four vacancies existing, but the new captain of Troop "D" of the cavalry had not yet appeared. His fame, however, had preceded him, and all Fort Worth was agog to meet him. Brooks knew but a modest bit of his story, and what he knew he kept from every man but Frazier, yet had had to tell his wife. The Winns were silent on the subject. Winn himself was a man of few intimates, – a young first lieutenant of cavalry, – and the tie that bound him to Lawrence was the fact that he and Kitty Tyrrell were first-cousins, their mothers sisters, and Winn, a tall, athletic, slender fellow, frank, buoyant, handsome, and connected with some of the best names in the old army, was one of the swells of his class at the Point and the beau among all the young officers the summer of his graduation, – the summer that Laura Waite, engaged to Brevet Captain Galbraith Barclay of the Infantry, came from the West to visit relatives at that enchanting spot, spent just six weeks there, and, after writing letters all one month to close her absent lover's eyes, wound up by writing one that opened them. She was a beautiful girl then; she was a lovely-looking woman now, but the bloom was gone. The brilliant eyes were often clouded, for Harry Winn was "his aunt Kitty all over," said many a man who knew them both. Their name was impecuniosity. That Mrs. Winn could tell much about the coming captain letters from other regiments informed more than one bright woman at Worth; but that the young matron would tell next to nothing, more than one woman, bright or blundering, discovered on inquiry.

Only one officer now at the post had ever served with Barclay, and that was Brooks, who became tongue-tied so soon as it was settled beyond peradventure that Captain Galbraith Barclay from the unassigned list had been gazetted to the 12th Cavalry, Troop "D," *vice* Lawrence, honorably discharged. But Brooks had letters, so had Frazier, from old officers who had served with the transferred man. Some of these letters referred to him in terms of admiration, while another spoke of him unhesitatingly as "more kinds of a damned fool" than the writer had ever met. Verily, various men have various minds.

Presently, however, there came a man who could tell lots about Barclay, whether he knew anything or not, and that was one of the new transfers, Lieutenant Hodge by title and name. Hodge said he had served with the 30th along the Union Pacific, and had met Barclay often. In his original regiment Mr. Hodge had been regarded as a very monotonous sort of man, a fellow who bored his hearers to death, and the contrast between his reception in social circles in the regiment he had left, and that accorded him here at Worth so soon as it was learned that he knew Barclay, inspired Mr. Hodge to say that *these* people were worth knowing; they had some life and intelligence about them. The gang he had left in Wyoming were a stupid lot of owls by comparison. For a week Hodge was invited to dinner by family after family, and people dropped in to spend the evening where he happened to be, for Hodge held the floor and talked for hours about Barclay, and what he had to tell was interesting indeed; so much so,

said Brooks, that some of it was probably a preposterous lie. To begin with, said Hodge, Captain Barclay was rich, very rich, fabulously rich, perhaps; nobody knew how rich, and nobody would have known he was rich at all, judging from the simplicity and strict economy of his life. In fact, it was this simplicity and strict economy that had given rise to the belief that existed for a year or two after he joined the 30th that he was hampered either with debts or with dependent relatives. Relatives they knew he had, because sisters sent their boys to visit him at Sanders, and he took them hunting, fishing, etc.; from these ingenuous nephews the ladies learned of others, nephews, nieces, sisters, cousins, aunts, who wrote long letters to Uncle Gal, and the mail orderly said he left more letters at Captain Barclay's quarters than at anybody's else. So Fort Sanders dropped the theory of debts and adopted that of dependants, and that held good for the first year of his service with them. He had joined from the volunteers, where he had risen to the grade of major. He was "pious," said Hodge, – wouldn't drink, smoke, chew, play cards, or swear, – thought they ought to have services on Sunday. He left the roistering bachelors' mess soon after his reaching the post, and had ever since kept house, his cook and housemaid being one old darky whom he had "accumulated" in the South during the war, – a darky who had been well-taught in the household of his old master, and who became extravagantly attached to the new. Hannibal could cook, wait at table, and tend door to perfection, but he had to learn the duties of second girl when his master

joined the 30th in far Wyoming, and that was the only time a breach was threatened. Hannibal's dignity was hurt. He had been body-servant in the antebellum days, butler, cook, coachman, and hostler, but had never done such chores as Marse Barclay told him would fall to his lot when that reticent officer set up his modest establishment. Hannibal sulked three days, and even talked of leaving. The lieutenant counted out a goodly sum, all Hannibal's own, and told him that he would find the balance banked in his name in the distant East whenever he chose to quit; then Hannibal broke down, and was speedily broken in. All this had Hodge heard when the dames of Sanders and those of Steele or Russell were comparing notes and picnicking together along that then new wonder of the world, the Union Pacific. But all this was only preliminary to what came later.

Little detachments, horse and foot, were scattered all over the line of the brand-new railway while it was being built; every now and then the Indians jumped their camps and working-parties, and in the late fall of '67 Barclay had a stiff and plucky fight with a band of Sioux; he was severely wounded, but beat them off, and was sent East to recuperate. Now came particulars Hodge could not give, but that letters could and did. It was while Barclay was convalescing at Omaha Barracks that he met Miss Laura Waite, – a beautiful girl and a garrison belle. She was ten years his junior. This was her first winter in army society. She had spent her girl years at school, and now was having "simply a heavenly time," if her letters could be believed. Her father was

a field officer of cavalry with rather a solemn way of looking at life, and her mother was said to be the explanation of much of his solemnity, — she being as volatile as he was staid. She too had been a beauty, and believed that beauty a permanent fixture. But Laura was fresh and fair, sweet and winsome, light-hearted and joyous, and the father for a time took more pride in her than he did in his sons. Major Waite was in command of the cantonment from which the relief party was sent when the news came that Barclay and his little detachment were "corralled." Major Waite became enthusiastic over the details of the cool, courageous, brainy defence made by the young officer against tremendous odds, covered him with all manner of thoughtful care and attention when he was brought into the cantonment, then, when the winter soon set in and the camp broke up, and Waite went back to Omaha Barracks, he took Barclay with him to his house instead of the hospital, and the rest followed as the night the day.

Barclay spent a month under the major's roof, won his esteem and friendship, but left his heart in the daughter's hands. If ever a man devotedly loved a beautiful, winsome young girl, that man was Galbraith Barclay; if ever a girl's father approved of a man, that man was Barclay; and if ever a man had reason to hope that his suit would win favor in a father's eyes, that man was Barclay; yet it did not. Major Waite's reply to the modest yet most manful plea of Lieutenant Barclay to be permitted to pay his addresses to the major's daughter surprised every one to whom Mrs. Waite

confided it, and they were not few. The old soldier begged of the younger not to think of it, at least just yet. But when it transpired that the younger had been most seriously thinking of it and could think of nothing else, then the major changed his tune and told him what he did not tell his wife; and that only became known through the father's own intemperate language long months after. He told Barclay he knew no man to whom he would rather intrust his daughter's happiness, but he feared, he believed, she was still too young to know her own mind, too young to see in Barclay what he saw, and he urged that the young officer should wait. But Barclay knew his own mind. He was able, he said, to provide for her in comfort either in or out of the army, which few possible aspirants could say. He would listen to no demur, and then at last the father said, "Try your fate if you will, but let there be no thought of marriage before she is twenty, – before she can have had opportunity of seeing something of the world and of other men, – not these young whippersnappers just joining us here."

It was a surprise to him that Laura should accept Mr. Barclay. She came to him, her father, all happy smiles and tears and blushes, and told him how proud and glad a girl she was, because she thought her lover the best and noblest man she ever dreamed of except her own dear old dad. For a time Waite took heart and hoped for the best, and believed her and her mother, as indeed they believed themselves; and when Barclay went back to Sanders at the end of January he was a very happy man, and Laura for a week a very lonely girl. Then youth, health, elasticity,

vivacity, opportunity, all prevailed, and she began to take notice in very joyous fashion. She did not at all recognize the doctrine preached by certain mammas and certain other damsels, that she as an engaged girl should hold aloof now and give the other girls, not so pretty, a chance. The barracks were gay that winter: Laura danced with the gayest, and when Barclay got leave in April and came down for a fortnight he found himself much in the way of two young gentlemen who danced delightfully, a thing he could not do at all. Yet he had sweet hours with his sweetheart, and grew even more deeply in love, so beautiful was she growing, and went back to Sanders a second time thinking himself happiest of the happy, or bound to be when, in the coming autumn, he could claim her as his own. But Waite was troubled. He was to take the field the 1st of May; his troops would be in saddle and on scout away to the west all summer long; his wife and daughter were to spend those months at the sea-shore and in shopping for the great event to come in November. He had a long, earnest talk with Barclay when once more the devoted fellow came to see the lady of his love on the eve of her departure for the East, but Barclay looked into her radiant, uplifted eyes, and could not read the shadow of coming events, of which she was as ignorant as he. In May he led his men on the march to the Big Horn, and in June she led with Cadet Lieutenant Winn the german at the graduation hop at West Point. Then Winn was assigned to duty, as was the custom of the day, one of two or three young graduates chosen as assistant instructors during the summer camp. He had

an hour to devote to drill each morning and a dozen to devote to the girls, and Laura Waite, with her lovely face and form, was the talk of the brilliant throng of visitors that summer. She and her mother returned to the Point as guests of some old friends there stationed, a visit which was not on the original programme at all. Winn took the girl riding day after day, and to hops week after week. The shopping for the wedding went on betweentimes, and Winn even escorted them to the city and took part in the shopping. In fine, when November came, in spite of the furious opposition of her father, in spite of his refusal to attend the ceremony or to countenance it in any way, Winn, *vice* Barclay, honorably discharged, appeared as groom, and bore his bride away to a round of joyous festivities among army friends in New Orleans and San Antonio before their final exile to the far frontier. From that day to this no line had ever come from the angered and aging man, even when Laura's baby girl was born. Funds he sent from time to time, – he knew he'd have to do that, as he told her mother and she told her friends, – and then, just as more funds were much needed because of pressing claims of creditors whose bills had not been paid from previous remittances, Winn being much in the field and Laura becoming disbursing general in his absence, the major suddenly died, leaving a small life insurance for his disconsolate widow and nothing to speak of for his children. They had sucked him dry during his busy life.

The Winns did not invite Mr. Hodge to dinner, and were

not bidden to meet him. Laura was still in light mourning for her father, and for days she really heard very little of Hodge's revelations regarding her discarded Wyoming lover. It was through the nurse-girl, an old soldier's daughter, that she first began to glean the chaff of the stories flitting from house to house, and to hear the exaggeration of Hodge's romancings about Captain Barclay's wealth, for that, after all, proved the most vividly interesting of the travellers' tales he told. Barclay proved to be, said Hodge, an expert mineralogist and geologist, and this was of value when a craze for dabbling in mining stocks swept over Sanders. Barclay, who lived so simply in garrison, was discovered (through a breach of confidence on the part of the officiating clergyman, that well-nigh led to another breach) to be the principal subscriber to the mission church being built in Laramie City. It suddenly became known that Barclay had a balance in the local bank and reserve funds at the East, whereupon promoters and prospectors by the dozen called upon him at the fort and strove to induce him to take stock in their mines. Nine out of ten were sent to the right-about, even those who called his attention to the fact that Colonel This and Major That were large shareholders. One or two he gave ear to, and later got leave of absence and visited their distant claims. He was out prospecting, said Hodge, half the time in the fall of '68. The ventures of the other officers seemed to prove prolific sources of assessments. The Lord only knows how much fun and money the mine-owners of those days got out of the army.

But they failed to impress the puritanical captain, and by the summer of '69 they ceased to do business in his neighborhood, for before sending good money after bad, officers had taken to consulting Barclay, and many an honest fellow's hoarded savings were spared to his wife and children, all through Barclay's calm and patient exposition of the fallacy of the "Company's" claims.

Then, said Hodge, when Channing, of the 27th, was killed by Red Cloud's band back of Laramie Peak, and his heart-broken widow and children were left penniless, somebody found the money to send them all to their friends in New England and to see them safely established there. And when Porter's wife was taken so ill while he was away up north of the Big Horn, and the doctor said that a trained nurse must be had in the first place, there came one from far Chicago; and later, after Porter reached the post, overjoyed to find his beloved one slowly mending and so skilfully guarded, the doctors told him she must be taken to the sea-shore or the South, and, though every one at Sanders knew poor Porter had not a penny, it was all arranged somehow, and Emily Porter came back the next winter a rosy, blooming, happy wife. No one knew for certain that all the needed money came from Barclay, but as the Porters seemed to adore him from that time on, and their baby boy was baptized Galbraith Barclay, everybody had reason to believe it. If Mrs. Winn ever wanted to experience the exhilaration of hearing what other people thought of her, she had only, said Mr. Hodge in confidence, to turn Mrs. Porter loose on that subject.

Then, too, said Hodge, there was Ordnance Sergeant Murphy and his family, burned out one winter's night with all their savings, and the old man dreadfully scorched in trying to rescue his strong box from the flames. It must have been Barclay who looked after the mother and kids all the time the old man was moaning in hospital. They moved him into a newly furnished and comfortable shack inside of a fortnight, and the Murphys had another saint on their domestic calendar, despite the non-appearance of his name in the voluminous records of their Church. All this and more did Hodge tell of Barclay, as in duty bound, he said, after first telling what other fellows long said of him, – that he was close and mean, a prig, a namby-pamby (despite the way he fought Crow-Killer's warlike band), a wet blanket to garrison joys, etc., etc.; and yet they really couldn't tell why. He subscribed just as much to the hop fund, though he didn't hop, – to the supper fund, though he didn't sup, – to the mess fund for the entertainment of visiting officers, though he didn't drink, – to the dramatic fund, though he couldn't act, – to the garrison hunt, though they said he couldn't ride. But he declined to give one cent towards the deficiency bill that resulted when Sanders entertained Steele at an all-night symposium at the sutler's and opened case after case of champagne and smoked box after box of cigars. "It was a senseless, soulless proceeding," said he, with brutal frankness. "Half the money you drank or smoked up in six hours could have clothed and fed all the children in Sudstown for six months."

"Lord, but they were mad all through," said Hodge, when describing it. "There wasn't a name they didn't call him all that winter."

"And yet I hear," said Mrs. Tremaine, a woman Fort Worth loved and looked up to as the – th did to Mrs. Stannard, "that for a long time past they have called him Sir Galahad instead of Galbraith."

"Oh," said Hodge, "that's one of old Gleason's jokes. He said they called him 'Gal I had' when he went to Omaha and 'Gal I hadn't' when he got back," – a statement which sent Major Brooks swearing *sotto voce* from the room.

"I don't know which I'd rather kick," said he, "Hodge or Gleason. I'd rejoice in Barclay's coming if it weren't – if Lawrence were only here, if Winn were only away."

CHAPTER III

An unhappy man was Major Brooks that gloomy month of March. The news from Washington *via* Department Headquarters was most discouraging as to Lawrence. He was both looking and doing ill. It seemed to "break him all up," said a letter from a friend in the Adjutant-General's office, that so few could be found to urge the Secretary to do something for him. What could they do? was the answer. Admitting that Lawrence had been grievously wronged, "whose fault was it?" said the Secretary; "not mine." He had only acted on the information and recommendation of officers to whom this work had been intrusted. If they had erred, he should have been informed of it before. "How could you be informed," said the Senator who had championed the poor fellow's cause, "when you resorted to a system that would have shamed a Spaniard in the days of the Inquisition, or the Bourbons with their *lettres de cachet* and the Bastille?" No one dreamed that Lawrence was in danger until he was done to death, and so, out of money, out of clothes, out of hope, health, and courage, poor Ned was fretting his heart out, while tender women and loyal friends were keeping guard over his shabby army home and caring for his two motherless lambs away out on the far frontier, awaiting the day when he should be restored to them.

It did not come, nor did Lawrence. An old comrade of the

Sixth Corps, a gallant volunteer brigade commander, then in prosperous circumstances at Washington, had given him the shelter of his home, only too gladly keeping him in rations and cigars, as he would have done in clothes and pocket-money, but he shook his head at whiskey. "For God's sake, Ned, and for your babies' sake, leave that alone. It can't help you. You never were a drinking man before. Don't drink now, or your nerve will give out utterly." This and more he urged and pleaded, but Lawrence's pride seemed crushed and his heart broken. Legal advisers told his friends at last that restoration was impossible: his place was filled. He had only one course left if he would listen to nothing but restoration to the army, and that was to accept a second lieutenancy and begin over again at the bottom of the list. They broached it to him, and he broke out into wild, derisive laughter. "Good God! do you mean that a man who has served fifteen years in the army, fought all through the war and served as I have served, must step down from the squadron captaincy to ride behind the boys just out of the Point? be ranked out of quarters by my own son-in-law the next thing I know! I'll see the army in hell first," was his furious reply.

"No, Ned, not hell, but Texas. Take it; go back to the line, and once you're back in the army in any grade we'll legislate you up to the majority you deserve: see if we don't."

But Lawrence had lost all faith in promises, or in Congressional action. He turned in contempt from the proposition, and in early April came the tidings to San Antonio

that he was desperately ill.

Meanwhile Mr. Hodge had lost the *prestige* of his first appearance at Worth, and fell into the customary rut of the subaltern. People found him as monotonous as did the martyrs of the Upper Platte, and, from having been the most sought-after of second lieutenants, he dropped back to the plane of semi-obscurity. This was galling. Hodge's stock in trade had been the facts or fables in his possession concerning the absent Captain Barclay, whose present whereabouts and plans were shrouded in mystery. A rumor came that he had decided not to join at all; that he was in Washington striving to arrange a transfer; that his assignment to the regiment and to the post where he must meet the woman who had jilted him for a cavalry subaltern was something unforeseen and not to be tolerated. The muster roll couldn't account for him other than as permitted to delay three months by Special Orders No. So-and-so, War Department, A.G.O., January 25, 1871. This gave Hodge unlooked-for reinforcements. A fortnight passed in March without a bid to dinner anywhere, without a request for further particulars as to Sir Galahad. So long as that interesting personage was expected any day to appear and answer for himself, it behooved Hodge to be measurably guarded in his statements, to keep within the limits of his authorities; but one day there came a letter from a lady at Department Head-Quarters to Mrs. Brooks, and before Brooks himself was made aware of the contents, he being at the club-room playing "pitch" and therefore beyond the pale of

feminine consideration, the news was going the rounds of the garrison.

Mrs. Pelham, who was spending the winter in Washington, had written to an old and devoted friend of Major Waite's some very interesting news about Captain Barclay. The captain was in Washington a whole week, but had not called on Mrs. Pelham, though she had done everything she could think of for him when he was wounded. (The Pelhams were then at McPherson and near old Waite's summer camp, but no one ever heard of her ladyship's ever taking the faintest interest in Barclay until after he developed into a mine-owner and had been jilted by Laura Waite.) But let Mrs. Pelham talk for herself, as she usually did, as well as for every one else. "He spent the first week in February here, leaving just before poor Captain Lawrence came. No wonder he didn't wish to meet him! And Mrs. Waite was there, buttonholing everybody to get her pension increased, and wearing the costliest crape you ever saw, my dear, and – think of it! – solitaire diamond ear-rings with it! She had a room in a house where several prominent Congressmen boarded, and was known as 'the fascinating widow.' She sent to Barclay, – would you believe it? – and begged him to come to see her, and he *actually did*; and Mrs. Cutts, who lives in the same house, told me that you ought to have seen her that day, – no solitaire ear-rings or handsome crape, mind you, but tears and bombazine; and Mrs. Cutts vows that he gave her money. That woman is angling for another husband, and has been ever since poor Waite's death, and if anything were

to happen to Mr. Winn it's just what Laura would be doing too. It runs in the blood, my dear. You know, and I know, that all the time she was at Omaha Barracks and the major in the field, she – a woman with a grown son and a graduating daughter – was dancing with the boys at the hops and riding – yes, and buggy-riding – with bachelors like those wretches Gates and Hagadorn." Buggy-riding was the unpardonable sin in Mrs. Pelham's eyes, she being "too massive to sit in anything short of the side seat of an ambulance," as said a regimental wit; and Mrs. Pelham looked with eyes of disfavor on women who managed to "keep their waists" as Mrs. Waite did.

"But let me tell you about Captain Barclay," continued the letter. "General Corliss called to see me two evenings ago and said he heard that Barclay was actually a millionaire, – that he had large interests in Nevada mines that were proving fabulously rich. You can understand that I wasn't at all surprised to hear that the general had intimated to Mr. Ray, of his staff, that it would be much better for him to go and serve with his regiment awhile. Ray wouldn't be an acceptable son-in-law; he has no money and too many fascinations, and there are both the Corliss girls, you know, to be provided for, and Miranda is already *passé*, and Ray has resigned the place, and the place is vacant, for – would you believe it? – they say the general tendered it to Barclay, and Barclay declined. Why, when we were all at McPherson there wasn't anything satirical the Corlisses didn't say about Barclay, and now that he has money they bow down to and worship

him." ("Something Mrs. Pelham wouldn't do for the world," said Mrs. Brooks to herself, with an odd smile.) "And when the general was asked about it yesterday he couldn't deny having made the offer, but said the reason Captain Barclay declined was that he would very probably resign in a few weeks, his business interests being such as to render it necessary for him to leave the army. So, my dear, you won't have the millionaire in Texas, after all, and I fancy how deeply Laura Winn will be disappointed. No matter how much she cares for her husband, she wouldn't be her mother's daughter if she didn't try to fascinate him over again."

Fancy the comfort of having such a letter as that to read to an appreciative audience! Mrs. Brooks fled with it to Mrs. Frazier, who thought it ought not to be read, – it was too like Dorothy Pelham for anything. But Mrs. Brooks took and read it to neighbors who were chatting and sewing together and had no such scruples. And that night it was dribbling about the post that Barclay had decided to resign, had refused a detail on the staff of General Corliss: somebody else would get Ned Lawrence's troop. Brooks heaved a sigh and said to himself he was glad of it, and the women heaved a sigh and wished he might have come, if only for a little while, just to make things interesting: "it would be such a novelty to have a millionaire mine-owner in garrison and actually doing duty as a captain of cavalry." Finally they began to wonder what Mrs. Winn would say now, she having had nothing at all to say.

That very evening it chanced to occur to Mr. Hodge that

he had not returned Lieutenant Winn's call (by card, – the cavalryman having dropped in when he knew the new arrival to have dropped out), and when Hodge presented himself at the Winns' (he had spoken of his intention at mess in the presence and hearing of the negro attendant, who had mentioned it without delay to the Winns' colored combination of cook and serving-maid, who had come over to borrow a cup of cooking sherry, it being too far to the sutler's, and that damsel had duly notified her mistress of the intended honor), he was shown into the dimly lighted army sitting-room, where, toasting her feet before the fire, sat dreaming the young mistress of the establishment, who started up in apparent surprise. She had heard neither the step nor the ring. Very possibly she was dozing, she admitted, for baby was sleeping aloft and her husband was gone. She was attired in a silken gown that Hodge described somewhat later at the major's as "puffickly stunning," – a garment that revealed the rich curves of her beautiful throat and neck and arms; women who heard wondered why she should be wearing that most becoming evening robe when there was not even a hop. She looked handsomer than the gown, said Hodge, as she rose and greeted him, her cheeks flushed, her eyes languorous and smouldering at first, then growing slowly brilliant. She apologized for the absence of Mr. Winn. He was spending much time at the office just now. "He is regimental commissary, you know, or at least he has been," she explained. Hodge knew all about that, and he also knew that if what he heard about the post

was true it would have been better had Winn spent more time at the office before. Then Mrs. Winn was moved to be gracious. She had heard so many, many pleasant things of Mr. Hodge since his arrival. She was so honored that he should call when he must be having so many claims on his time, so many dinner-calls to pay. She and Mr. Winn were so sorry they had been unable to entertain Mr. Hodge, but, until the cook they were expecting from San Antonio came, they were positively starving, and could invite no one to share their scraps. "That cook has been expected a whole year," said other women, but Mrs. Winn paraded him as the cause of her social short-comings as confidently as ever. Then Mrs. Winn went on to speak of how much she had heard of Hodge at Omaha, – dear Omaha. "What lovely times we had along the Platte in the good old days!" Hodge blushed with joy, and preened and twittered and thought how blessed a thing it was to be welcomed to the fireside of such a belle and beauty and to be remembered by her as one of the gay young bachelors at Sidney. "Such wicked stories as we heard of you scapegraces from time to time," said she, whereat Hodge looked as though he might, indeed, have been shockingly wicked, as perhaps he had. Indeed, she feared they, the young officers, were "a sad lot, a sad lot," and looked up at him from under the drooping lashes in a way that prompted him to an inspiration that was almost electric in its effect on him. Hodge fairly seemed to sparkle, to scintillate. "Sad! We were in despair," said he, "but that was when we heard of your engagement – oh, ah, the second one, I mean,"

he stumbled on, for it would never do, thought he, to mention the first.

But he need have had no hesitation. Laura Winn had heard from other and obscurer sources something of the rumors floating over the post that very day. She had planned to drop in at the colonel's, where the Fraziers entertained at dinner and music that very evening, in hopes of hearing accidentally something definite, for Winn was one of those useless husbands who never hear anything of current gossip. But women might not talk if they thought she wished to hear, and fate had provided her a better means. She saw here and now the opportunity and the man. It was Hodge who had told so much that was of vivid interest to her. It was Hodge she had been longing to meet for days, but Winn had held him aloof, and now here she had this ingenuous repository of Barclayisms all to herself until Winn should return; the chance was not to be lost.

"I love to live over those dear old days when I was a girl," she said. "Friends seemed so real then, men so true, life so buoyant. Sometimes I find myself wishing there were more of the old friends, the old set, here. We seem – so much more to each other, don't you know, Mr. Hodge?" And Hodge felt sure "we" did, and hitched his chair a foot nearer the fire.

"Of course I was younger then, and knew so little of the world, and yet, knowing it as I do now – I can say this to you, you know, Mr. Hodge, – I couldn't to another soul here, for you were *of* us, you served with father's column" (Hodge's service was limited

to playing poker with "those wretches Gates and Hagadorn" and others of Waite's command on one or two memorable occasions, and the resultant hole in his purse was neither as broad as a church nor deep as a well, but 'twould serve). "I've often felt here as though I would give anything to see some of the dear old crowd; not that people are not very lovely here, but, you know, we army friends cling so to the old associations." And now the beautiful eyes seemed almost suffused, and Hodge waxed eloquent.

"I am thrice fortunate," said he, recalling the lines of his Maltravers, "in that I am numbered among them." And now, like Laura, he looked upon Worth as cold and dormant as compared with the kindling friendships of the distant Platte.

"Indeed you are!" said she. "You bring back the sweetest days of my life, and some of the saddest. I have no one to speak to me, you know, – of course – until you did a moment ago. Tell me, is – is his life so changed as – as they say it is?"

"I never saw a man so broke up," he responded. "He never smiled after you – after – after it was broken off, you know." Barclay's smile was as rare as a straight flush anyhow, he admitted to himself, but the assertion sounded well.

"And – of late – what have you heard of him?" she asked. And Hodge poured forth his latest news, and added more. He, too, he said, had had a letter from an intimate friend. Captain Barclay had declared that the assignment to the Twelfth Cavalry was impossible, Texas was impossible. His business interests would

necessitate his declining if, indeed, there were no other reasons. General Corliss had tendered him the position of aide-de-camp and made Billy Ray of the – th resign to make way for him, and the moment Barclay found that out he went to Ray and told him the whole business was without his (Barclay's) knowledge, and sooner than displace him he would refuse. "Yes," said Hodge, "that's the way my friend heard it from Ray himself. Now, if Barclay could only get a detail on McDowell's staff in California it would have suited him to a tee; then he could have looked after his Nevada interests and his Wyoming pensioners too."

Did Mr. Hodge know surely about Mr. Barclay's wealth? Was it all true? he was asked.

Oh, yes, there wasn't a doubt of it, said Hodge. It was just another of those cases where a man had money in abundance, and yet would have given it all, he added, sentimentally, but here she uplifted rebukingly her white, slim hand, – or was it warningly? for there came a quick footfall on the porch without. The hall door opened sharply, letting in a gust of cold night wind, and, throwing off his cavalry cape with its faded yellow lining, Lieutenant Winn strode through the hallway into his little den at the rear.

"You will come and see me again," she murmured low, while yet the footsteps resounded, "it has been so – good to see you, – so like old times. We'll have to talk of other things now. Mr. Winn doesn't like old times too well."

But Mr. Winn never so much as looked in the parlor door until

she called to him. Then, as she saw his face, the young wife arose with anxiety in her own.

"What is it? Where are you going – with your revolver, too? Mr. Hodge, dear."

"Oh-h! Beg pardon, Mr. Hodge. Glad to see you," was Winn's distraught acknowledgment of the presence of the visitor, as he extended a reluctant hand. "My sergeant can't be found," he went on, hurriedly. "They say he's gone to Fuller's ranch, and it may be all right, but the colonel has ordered out a patrol to fetch him back. Don't worry, Laurie; I may have to ride out with it."

And hurriedly he kissed her and bounded down the steps.

For a moment she stood in the doorway, the light from the hall lamp shining on her dusky hair and proud, beautiful face, forgetful of the man who stood gazing at her. Then with a shiver she suddenly turned.

"It's the second time that Sergeant Marsden has been missed in just this way, when he was most needed, and – it's so imprudent, so – and my husband is so imprudent, so unsuspicious. Mr. Hodge," she cried, impulsively, "if you've heard anything, or if you do hear anything, about him or Mr. Winn, be a friend to me and tell me, won't you?" And there was nothing Hodge would not have promised, nothing he would not have told, but the door of the adjoining quarters slammed, an officer came striding along the porch common to the double set, and the clank of a sabre was heard as he neared them.

"Winn gone?" he asked. "Don't worry, Mrs. Winn. We'll

overhaul that scoundrel before he can reach the settlements, unless – "

"But what is wrong? What has happened, Mr. Brayton?" she asked, her face white with dread, her heart fluttering.

"My Lord, Mrs. Winn, I beg your pardon! I supposed of course he had told you. Marsden's bolted. Colonel Riggs, the inspector-general, got here to-night with Captain Barclay, instead of coming by regular stage Saturday, and Marsden lit out the moment he heard of their arrival. Of course we hope Winn isn't badly bitten."

But her thoughts were of another matter now. "Captain Barclay," she faltered, "here? Why, I – I heard – "

"Yes," shouted the young officer, as he went clattering down the steps. "'Scuse me – I've got to mount at once," as an orderly came running up at the moment with his horse. "Riggs has come, post-haste, only Barclay and one man with him besides the driver. It's lucky that Friday gang never got wind of it."

CHAPTER IV

For forty-eight hours Fort Worth was in turmoil. To begin with, the sudden, unheralded advent of a department inspector in those days meant something ominous, and from Frazier down to the drum-boys the garrison scented mischief the moment that familiar old black-hooded, dust-covered spring wagon, drawn by the famous six-mule team, came spinning in across the *mesa* just after retreat, no escort whatever being in sight. Cavalrymen had trotted alongside, said Riggs, from two of the camps on the way, but they had made that long day's drive from Crockett Springs all alone, trusting to luck that the Friday gang, so called, would not get wind of it. Just who and how many constituted that array of outlaws no man, including its own membership, could accurately say. Two paymasters, two wagon-trains, and no end of mail-stages had been "jumped" by those enterprising road agents in the course of the five years that followed the war, and not once had a conviction occurred. Arrests had been made by marshals, sheriffs, and officers in command of detachments, but a more innocent lot of victims, according to the testimony of friends and fellow-citizens, never dwelt in Dixie. Three only of their number had been killed and left for recognition in the course of those three years. One only of these was known, and the so-called Friday gang managed to surround its haunts, its movements, and its membership with a mystery that defied civil officials and

baffled the military. Escorts the size of a cavalry platoon had been needed every time a disbursing officer went to and fro, and a sizable squad accompanied the stage whenever it carried even a moderate amount of treasure. At three points along the road from the old Mexican capital to the outlying posts, strong detachments of cavalry had been placed in camp, so that relays of escorts might be on hand when needed. At three different times within the past two years, strong *posses* had gone with the civil officials far into the foot-hills in search of the haunts of the band, but no occupied haunt was ever found, no band of any size or consequence ever encountered; yet depredations were incessant. The mail-stage came and went with guarded deliberation. The quartermaster's trains were accompanied by at least a company of infantry. The sutler's wagons travelled with the quartermaster's train, and the sutler's money went to San Antonio only when the quartermaster and commissary sent theirs, and then a whole squadron had been known to ride in charge. Anything from a wagon-train down to a buckboard was game for the gang, and soldiers, ranchmen, and prospectors told stories of having been halted, overhauled, and searched by its masked members at various times, and, whether found plethoric or poor, having been hospitably entertained as soon as robbed of all they possessed. Only four days before Riggs made his venturesome dash, three discharged soldiers, filled with impatience and whiskey, had sought to run the gauntlet to the camp at Crockett's, and came back, in the robbers' cast-off

clothing, to "take on" for another term, having parted with their uniforms and the savings of several years at the solicitation of courteous strangers they met along the route. Nothing but an emergency could have brought Riggs, full tilt, for he was getting along in years and loved the comforts of his army home.

Emergency it was, as he explained to Frazier instantly on his arrival. The general had indubitable information that ranches to the south had long been buying government stores, bacon, feed, flour, coffee, etc. The source of their supply could only be the warehouses at Worth, and Marsden was a "swell" sergeant, whose airs and affluence had made him the object of suspicion. Those were the days when cavalry regiments had a commissary, but Congress did away with the office, and Winn, whom an indulgent colonel had detailed to that supposedly "soft snap" when regimental head-quarters were stationed at Worth, had been left there with his bulky array of boxes and barrels when the colonel and staff were transferred to a more southern post, the understanding being that he was to turn over everything to Frazier's new quartermaster as soon as that official should arrive. Frazier's appointee, however, was a lieutenant from a distant station. The War Department had not improved the appointment when made. Correspondence had been going on, and only within the week was notification received that the choice was finally confirmed and that Lieutenant Trott would soon arrive. Meantime Winn remained, but the stores were going. Somebody had money enough to bribe the sentries nightly

posted at the storehouse at the northern corner of the big rectangle, and wagon-load after wagon-load must have been driven away. Outwardly, as developed by the count made early on the morning following Riggs's coming, all was right, but a veteran cavalry sergeant scoffingly knocked in the heads of cask, box, and barrel, and showed how bacon by the cord had been replaced by rags and boulders, sugar, coffee, and flour by bushels of sand, molasses and vinegar by branch water, and tea and tobacco by trash. "Two to three thousand dollars' worth of rations gone," said Riggs, at noon, "and the devil to pay if Winn cannot." Vain the night ride to Fuller's ranch in search of Marsden. That worthy had long since feathered his portable nest, and on one of the quartermaster's best horses had left the post within the half-hour of Riggs's coming, no man knew for what point after once he crossed the ford. Hoof-tracks by the hundred criss-crossed and zigzagged over the southward *mesa*. Thick darkness had settled down. Fuller's people swore no signs of him had been seen, and, though patrols kept on all night, poor Winn came back despairing an hour before the dawn to face his fate; even at noon he had hardly begun to realize the extent of his overwhelming loss.

"Go home and try to sleep," said the colonel, sadly, to the dumb and stricken man. "You can do no good here. I'll send the doctor to you."

But Winn started up and shook the old fellow's kindly hand. "I cannot go. My God! I must know the whole business," he cried. "I cannot sleep or eat a morsel."

"Whatever you do, don't drink," said Riggs, in not unkindly warning. "Go and see your wife, anyhow, for an hour or so. She has sent three times." But words were useless. Sympathetic comrades came and strove with him and said empty words of hope or cheer, — empty, because they knew poor Winn had not a soul in the world to whom to look for help. Kin to half a dozen old army names, it helped him not a whit, for no one of them was blessed with means beyond the monthly pay, and some had not even that unmortgaged. Twenty-five hundred dollars' shortage already, to say nothing of the cash for recent sales, and more, no doubt, to come. The very thought was ruin. Refusing comfort, the hapless man sat down at his littered desk, stared again at the crowded, dusty pigeon-holes, and saw nothing, nothing but misery, if not despair.

Brayton went over at luncheon-time and begged a word with Mrs. Winn. She peered over the balustrade from the second story, with big, black-rimmed eyes, but could not come down, could not leave baby, who was fretful, she said. Oh, why didn't Mr. Winn come home? What good did it do to stay over there and worry? When would they get through? Brayton couldn't say, but Winn couldn't come, — felt he must stay at the office; but if Mrs. Winn would have some tea and a bite of luncheon prepared, he, Brayton, would gladly take it over. Yet even this friendly office seemed to bring no solace. Winn barely sipped the tea or tasted the savory broth. Frazier and Riggs went out to luncheon, leaving him still seated at his desk; and their faces were

black with gloom when they reached the colonel's door. Winn's distressing plight, following so shortly after the dire misfortune that had happened to Lawrence, would have saddened the whole garrison and tinged all table-talk with melancholy but for the blessed antidote afforded in Captain Barclay's sudden and most unlooked-for coming.

And what a surprise it was! All one afternoon and part of one evening had Fort Worth been telling that Captain Barclay had refused the assignment to a regiment and post where he must meet Laura Winn; that he had resigned rather than encounter once more the woman who had played him false; that he was too wealthy to care to bury himself in this out-of-the-way hole in Texas anyhow; and even while they were talking, all unheralded, here he was. The major's hospitable doors opened to receive him within ten minutes of his dust-covered advent, and only by hearsay all that night could the garrison know of his presence. One small sole-leather trunk, with the travelling-bag, rifle, field-glasses, canteen, and lunch-box, constituted all the personal luggage of the new arrival. It could not even be said that any one outside of Brooks's had even seen him, so coated with dust were the contents of that old spring wagon when unloaded at the colonel's steps; and many a woman hastened to her door on the following morning, attracted thither by the announcement that Captain Barclay was on the major's porch.

There, with his host, he stood for quite a while, the major pointing out the landmarks along the westward range, and

indicating, apparently, other features in the landscape. One or two officers, hastening by, raised their caps or ran up the steps and shook hands with the new-comer, but he was presently summoned in to breakfast, and neighbors could only say he was not very tall, not very stout, not very slight, not very anything. Captain De Lancy, who had had three minutes' conversation, said he "seemed pleasant," but that was all. Mrs. De Lancy was confirmed in her preconceived opinion that men were owls, because her husband was unable to add to the military descriptive list of brown eyes, brown hair, brown beard and clothes, any of the particulars she sought. He couldn't tell whether Barclay had fine teeth or good complexion, what his mouth was like, whether he had nice hands and voice. Indeed, he couldn't see why Mrs. De Lancy should be so anxious to know. Not until towards noon was any reliable particular concerning Captain Barclay passed along the line. Then the domestic bulletin dealt out the fact that the millionaire mine-owner wore a flannel shirt and a silver watch, which information was distinctly disheartening.

But that evening, while the colonel and other officers began calling at Brooks's to welcome formally the unexpected addition to the commissioned force, Mrs. Brooks was able to slip out and over to her crony, Mrs. De Lancy, and in ten minutes she had an audience, married and single, that gladdened her heart. She could and did talk almost uninterruptedly for over an hour. Arriving dames or damsels were signalled not to interrupt, and, joining the circle, patiently withheld their questions until she paused for

breath; and then what every one seemed to want to know was, had he said anything or asked anything about Mrs. Winn? He had. He expressed the utmost sympathy with poor Mr. Winn. He told Major Brooks of a similar experience that occurred in the – d Cavalry only the year previous, and how it would probably take the defrauded officer years to square the account. He most delicately inquired as to the general health and well-being of Mrs. Winn, whom he had had the pleasure, he said, of meeting several years before; but more particularly he had asked about Lawrence, and Lawrence's children, and who was in charge of them; it was evident that he was deeply concerned about them and most anxious to meet Captain and Mrs. Blythe.

"Well, that's one thing at least in his favor," was the verdict; for throughout Brooks's battalion, as it was then called, or squadron, as we should call it to-day, there existed an indefinable feeling of antagonism towards this stranger within their gates, thus coming to usurp the place Ned Lawrence held in their hearts and homes, if no longer on their rolls. Some one slipped out and brought in Mrs. Blythe, for whose benefit Mrs. Brooks not unwillingly went over all she had told about Captain Barclay's queries as to the children and their benefactors; and that sweet, tender-hearted, motherly woman ought to have softened to him, but didn't. "He could have heard it all at San Antonio for the asking," she declared. "But he didn't stop two days at San Antonio," explained Mrs. Brooks. "The moment he heard that Colonel Riggs was going on by special ambulance he begged to be allowed

to go with him, and Riggs couldn't see a way to say no, and later confessed he was very glad he had said yes."

"Brooks, you were all growling at the idea of having any outsider, much less a doughboy, take Lawrence's place," were the bluff old veteran's exact words; "but you mark what I say. I was rather prejudiced against this young fellow myself, and it has just taken this jolt together from San Antonio to satisfy me he is grit to the backbone, and you are in big luck to get him."

At least a dozen men called at the major's that evening to pay their respects to the new comrade. It was long after taps when the last one left, but, almost to a man, they gathered at the club-room later to compare notes. Hodge, of course, had called among the first, his claim of intimate or at least old acquaintance rendering it necessary. Barclay's brown eyes certainly lighted at the sight of the face he had known in the far northwest; he chatted for a moment with the infantryman, and expressed his pleasure at meeting him again. Then Blythe entered, with his grave, massive face and courteous yet reserved manner; and Brooks spoke of the fact that Barclay seemed to shake hands more earnestly with him than with any of the others, and to look at him oftener, though striving to slight no one. They sat there, as men will at such times, somewhat awkwardly, only one speaking at once, and generally the same one. Hodge, for instance, had much to say and many questions to ask about fellows he had known in Wyoming, and when he left and others came in, three or four went at the same time, having sat stolid listeners, calmly studying Barclay with

their eyes and finally saying good-night, and "hope to see you when you get settled," etc.

They were talking of him at the store, and wondering when and where he would settle, and whether he would take Lawrence's quarters, and what would then become of Ada and little Jim, who with old Mammy still occupied their rooms there and had all the furniture as poor daddy left it, but who went over to the Blythes' three times a day to take their rations with their army chums and playmates, the little Blythes. "What a godsend it would be if he would buy poor Ned's books and furniture!" said De Lancy. "It would yield enough to send those poor babies home."

"Home," said Blythe, sadly: "what home has a child whose kith and kin are all of the army? They have neither home nor mother."

But no man made the faintest comment on facts the women remarked instant, that Barclay's watch was only silver and his guard an inexpensive little cord or braid of fine leather, worn about his neck; that his travelling suit was of rough gray mixture, and his shirt a flannel *négligé*. But then, as Mrs. De Lancy explained in extenuation of their blindness, he had donned his uniform by the time they called that second evening, and it became him very well.

CHAPTER V

A week went rapidly by. Captain Barclay had gone on duty, and Mr. Brayton, his sub, had not yet "sized him up." Lieutenant Trott, the new regimental quartermaster, had arrived by the Saturday's stage, and was ready to receipt to Lieutenant Winn for all property he had to turn over; but Winn had broken down under his weight of woe and taken to his bed. From Washington came tidings, telegraphed as far as San Antonio, that Lawrence was slowly mending and would soon be sitting up. Mrs. Winn, absorbed in the care of her suffering husband, had accepted no invitations, but the many sympathetic women who called to ask if there were not some way in which they could be of aid reported her as looking feverish and far from well. Some of them had ventured to speak of the new arrival, and, though her ears were evidently open, her lips were closed. That she was willing, if not eager, to hear anything they had to say or tell about Captain Barclay was all very well as far as it went, but what some of her visitors most desired was to hear what she had to say about him; as she would say nothing, one or two had resorted to a little delicate questioning in the hope of drawing her out. Mrs. Faulkner, a young matron of her own age and previous social standing, an army girl like herself, and for some time her one intimate friend at Worth, went so far as to ask, "You used to know him very well, did you not?" and was checkmated

by the answer, "Not well enough to talk about," which answer Mrs. Faulkner pondered over and considered deliberately and inexcusably rude. With the kindest feeling for her in the world, as all the women avowed, and no animosity whatever towards Barclay over and beyond that feeling on poor Colonel Lawrence's account, there was the liveliest interest at Worth as regarded Mrs. Winn and Captain Barclay in seeing what they would do; and, to the disappointment of all Fort Worth, they had done nothing.

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