CHARLES KING

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A Story of the Apache War

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ILLUSTRATIONS

TONIO
SON OF THE SIERRAS

CHAPTER I.

"Does it never rain here?" asked the Latest Arrival, with sudden shift of the matter under discussion.

"How is that, Bentley?" said the officer addressed to the senior present, the surgeon. "You've been here longest."

"Don't know, I'm sure," was the languid answer. "I've only been here three years. Try 'Tonio there. He was born hereabouts."

So the eyes of the six men turned to the indicated authority, an Apache of uncertain age. He looked to be forty and might be nearer sixty. He stood five feet ten in his tiptoed moccasins, and weighed less than little Harris, who could not touch the beam at five feet five. Harris was the light weight of the —th Cavalry, in physique, at least, and by no means proud of the distinction. To offset the handicap of lack of stature and weight, and of almost cat-like elasticity of frame and movement, he saw fit to cultivate a deliberation and dignity of manner that in his cadet days had started the sobriquet of "Heavy," later altered to "Hefty"; and Hefty Harris he was to the very hour this story opens—a junior first lieutenant with four years' record of stirring service in the far West, in days when the telegraph had not yet strung the Arizona deserts, and the railway was undreamed of. He had only just returned to the post from a ten days' scout, 'Tonio, the Apache, being his chief trailer and chosen companion on this as on many a previous trip. The two made an odd combination, having little in common beyond that imperturbable self-poise and dignity. The two elsewhere had met with marked success in "locating"

rancherias of the hostile bands, and in following and finding marauding parties. The two were looked upon in southern Arizona as "the best in the business," and now, because other leaders had tried much and accomplished little, it had pleased the general commanding the Division of the Pacific to say to his subordinate, the general commanding the Department of Arizona, that as the "Tonto" Apaches and their fellows of the Sierra Blanca seemed too wily for his scouting parties sent out from Whipple Barracks, and the valley garrisons of McDowell and Verde, it might be well to detach Lieutenant Harris from his troop at old Camp Bowie and send him, with 'Tonio, to report to the commanding officer at Camp Almy.

Now the commanding general of Arizona had thought of that project himself, and rejected it for two reasons: first, that the officers and men on duty at Almy would possibly take it as a reflection; second, that 'Tonio would probably take it as an affront to himself. 'Tonio, be it understood, was of the Apache Mohave tribe, whose hunting grounds had long been the upper Verde and adjacent mountains. 'Tonio had no scruples as to scouting and shooting Chiricahuas and Sierra Blancas or the roving bands of Yaquis that sometimes ventured across the "Gadsden Purchase" from Mexico. 'Tonio had done vengeful work among these fellows. But now he was brought face to face with a far different proposition. The renegades of northern Arizona in the earliest of the seventies were mainly Tontos, but many a young brave of the Apache Mohave tribe had cast his lot with them. Many had taken their women and children, and 'Tonio would be hunting, possibly, his own flesh and blood. The junior

general had ventured to remonstrate by letter, even when issuing the order indicated, but the senior stood to his prerogative with a tenacity that set the junior's teeth on edge, and started territorial and unbecoming comparisons between the division commander's firmness on the fighting line a decade earlier, and far behind it now. San Francisco was perhaps five hundred miles from the scene of hostilities, and those farthest away seldom fail to see clearer than those on the spot, and to think they know better, so Harris and his dusky henchman came up to Almy with little by way of welcome, and back from their first scout with nothing by way of result. Therefore, the sextette of officers that had been but lukewarm at the start became lavish in cordiality at the close. The failure of Harris, the favorite of the chieftain of the big Division, meant that no further criticism could attach to them. If Harris could accomplish nothing worth mention, what could be expected of others?

Therefore, while awaiting the return of the courier sent up to Prescott, with report of what Harris had not accomplished, and asking instructions as to what the gentleman would have next, the commanding officer of the old post, built by California volunteers during the Civil War and garrisoned later by reluctant regulars, set a good example to his subordinates by doing his best to console the "casuals," as visitors were officially rated, and his subordinates loyally followed suit.

But Harris seemed unresponsive. Harris seemed almost sulky. Harris had added silence to dignity, and spent long hours of a sunny day sprawled in a hammock, smoking his pipe and studying 'Tonio, who squatted in the shade at the

end of the narrow porch of the old officers' mess building, still more silent and absorbed than his young commander.

And this was the condition of things when the Latest Arrival appeared on the scene, fresh from head-quarters, some ninety miles northwest and two thousand feet higher. He had come late the previous afternoon. He had skated down the flinty scarp of Misery Hill, with the wheels of his buckboard locked, and hauled up at the adjutant's in a cloud of dust and misapprehension, with barely time for a bath and a shave before dinner. He was a new aide-de-camp of the department commander. He had served him well and won his notice on Indian campaigns afar to the north in the Columbia valley, where gum boots and slickers were as indispensable as here they were superfluous. He had never been, he said, so dry in his life as when he scrambled from his mud-colored chariot to the steps of the official residence. The temporal wants had been spiritually removed, but not the impression. Now, some eighteen hours later, he wished to know if it never rained at Almy, and there was no white man could tell him. So, one and all, they looked to 'Tonio, whose earliest recollections were of the immediate neighborhood.

And 'Tonio proved a reluctant witness. Urged by Stannard, the senior captain referred to, Harris put the question in "Pidgin" Apache, and 'Tonio, squatting still, gazed dreamily away toward the huge bulwark of Squadron Peak, and waited for respectful cessation of all talk before he would answer.

At last he rose to his full height and, with a sweeping gesture the length of his arm, pointed to the domelike

summit, dazzling in the slant of the evening sunshine, that seemingly overhung the dun-colored adobe corrals on the flats to the south, yet stood full five miles away. 'Tonio so seldom opened his lips to speak that the six men listened with attention they seldom gave to one another. Yet what 'Tonio said was translatable only by Harris:

"When the picacho hides his head in the clouds, then look for rain."

"Lord," said the doctor, "I doubt if ever I've seen a cloud above it—much less on it! If it weren't for the creek yonder the whole post would shrivel up and blow away. Even the hygrometer's dead of disuse—or dry rot. But, talk of drying up, did you ever see the beat of him?" and the doctor was studying anatomy as displayed in this particular Apache.

Five feet ten 'Tonio stood before them, not counting the thatch of his matted black hair, bound with white cotton turban. Five feet ten in height, but so gaunt and wiry that the ribs and bones seemed breaking through the tawny skin, that in flank and waist and the long sweep of his sinewy, fleshless legs, he rivalled the greyhound sprawled at his feet. "'Tonio has not half an ounce of fat in his hide," said Harris, in explaining his tireless work on the trail. "'Tonio can go sixty miles without a gulp of water and come out fresh as a daisy at the end." 'Tonio's eminently fit condition had been something Harris ever held in envy and emulation, yet on this recent scout even 'Tonio had failed him. 'Tonio had complained. To look at him as he stood there now, erect, slender, with deep chest and long, lank arms and legs, trammelled only by the white cotton breechclout that looped over the waist belt and trailed, fore and aft, below

the bony knee, his back and shoulders covered by white *camisa* unfastened at the throat and chest, his feet cased in deerskin moccasins, the long leggings of which hung in folds at the ankles, one could liken him only to the coyote—the half-famished wolf of the sage plain and barren, for even the greyhound knew thirst and fatigue,—knew how to stretch at full length and luxury in the shade, whereas 'Tonio, by day at least, stood or squatted. Never in all their long prowlings, by day or night, among the arid deserts or desolate ranges along the border, had Harris known his chief trailer and scout to hint at such a thing as weariness. Yet, within the week gone by, thrice had he declared himself unable to go farther. Did it mean that at last 'Tonio would purposely fail him, now that there were some of his own people among the renegades?

'Tonio had stoutly denied such a weakness. The few young men with the hostiles, said he, were more Tonto than Mohave—fools who had offended their brothers and dishonored their tribe. Chiefs, medicine men, even the women, he said, disowned them. The braves would kill, and the women spurn, them on sight. 'Tonio pointed to the "hound" scouts with the Verde company—Hualpais, some of them—splendid specimens from the mountains; Apache Yumas, some of them, not quite the peer of the Hualpais; but many of them—most of them, in fact—Apache Mohaves, fiercest, surest trailers of the wild Red Rock country, familiar with every cañon and crag in all the rude range from Snow Lake to the Sierra Blanca. "All brothers," protested 'Tonio. "All soldiers. All braves, unafraid of a thousand Tontos, eager only to meet and punish their traitor fellows who had taken

the White Chief's pay and bread, pledged their best services and then gone renegading to the fastnesses of the Mogollon," adding with scorn unspeakable, "taking *other* women with them."

And still Harris was not content. Harris had sent a runner back when the scout was but half finished, with a note to be relayed to Prescott, to tell the general of his ill success and his evil suspicions, and the chief being himself out a-hunting, what did his chief of staff do but order the Newly Arrived down to Almy to meet the home-coming party and see for himself—and his general!

And of all men chosen to meddle in matters concerning "Hefty" Harris, perhaps the latest suitable, in some ways, was his classmate and comrade lieutenant, though in different arms of the service—Hal Willett of "The Lost and Strayed," so called from the fact that they had been sent to desert wilds in '65, scattered over three territories, and despite some hard fighting and many hard knocks, had never, said their detractors, been heard from since.

Rivals they had been in cadet days and more than one pursuit. Rivals they still were in the field of arms, for the name Harris had won for himself in Arizona Willett had matched in the Columbia, and now, fresh from the ill-starred campaign of the Lava Beds, was one of the few men to get something better than hard knocks, censure and criticism. Until the previous evening, not since the day they parted at West Point had they set eyes one on the other, and, knowing nothing of what had gone before and never dreaming of what would come to pass, a benighted bureau

officer had sent the one down to find out what was the matter with the other.

And thereby hangs this tale.

For, as luck would have it, there was even then stationed in that far-away land a luckless lieutenant-colonel of infantry who had started with good prospects in the Civil War, had early been given command of a brigade of volunteers and within the month had had his raw concourse of undrilled, undisciplined levies swept from under him in the first fierce onset at Shiloh. What else could have been expected of men to whom arms had been issued but ten days before, and who had not yet learned which end to bite from the cartridge? Hurled from his terrified horse, the general had been picked up senseless, to see no more of fighting until Stone's River, eight months later, where with a more seasoned command the same thing happened. And still he persisted, when well of an ugly wound, and, while juniors in years and length of service were now heading corps and divisions, with double stars on their shoulders, and he had to begin again with a brigade, he got into line for Chickamauga with his usual luck just within range of the fatal gap left by a senior in command—the gap through which poured the impetuous gray torrent of the Southland—and for the third time everything crumbled away in spite of him, while he was left for dead upon the field. He had done his best, as had other men, and had fared only the worst. It was a case of three times and out. The impatient North had no more use for names linked only with disaster. When, finally exchanged, he limped back to duty, they put him on courts, boards and other back-door business until the war

was over, then sent him to the Pacific Slope, with the blanket brevet of March, 1865, and here he was, eight long years thereafter, "The General" by way of title, without the command; silver leaves where once gleamed the stars on his shoulders; silver streaks where once rippled chestnut and gold; wrinkled of visage and withered in shank; kindly, patient, yet pathetic; "functioning" a four-company post in a far-away desert, with grim mountain chains on east and west, and waters on every side of him, four long weeks and four thousand miles by mail route from home, and much longer by sea; with nothing to do but send out scouts, sign papers, sing an old song or two when the spirit moved him; with not a thing in his soldier past to be ashamed of, nothing much in his soldier present to rejoice in, nothing whatever in his soldier future to hope for, finding his companionship in the comrades about him, and his sweetest comfort in the unswerving love of a devoted wife, and their one unstinted pride and delight, Lilian, their only daughter—their only surviving child.

Many of these eight years of what then was exile, while he, at first as a major of foot, was campaigning in regions long since reclaimed from savagery, and rusticating at frontier forts long since forgotten, Lilian and her mother had dwelt in lodgings at "The Bay" that the child might have the advantage of San Francisco's schools. Only once each year, until of late, had he been able to visit them, usually at Christmas-tide, but by every runner, courier, stage or post there came to them his cheery letters, bearing such old-time, outlandish post-marks or headings as "Lapwai," "Three

Forks, Owyhee," and later "Hualpai," or "Hassayampa," until finally it became mild, civilized, pacific, even "Almy."

The uniform of a general, that the law had let him wear just as long in peace as had been the war in years, was finally packed in camphorated hope of resurrection, and the garb of actual rank resumed in 1870. He could bear the title *ad infinitum*, but not the sign.

The silver leaf, as said, had come to replace the worn and tarnished gold by '73, then mountain fever had seized and laid him by the heels, and then all the Indians in Arizona, or the army women out of it, could not dissuade Mrs. Archer from her duty. She and Lilian were the heroines of a buckboard ride from Drum Barracks to the Colorado, from the Colorado to Prescott, from Prescott down through wild and tortuous cañons to and beyond the valley of the Verde—to the wondering eyes of the waiting garrison and the welcoming arms of the fond husband and father at Almy.

And this was but the week gone by, just before the "Newly Arrived" had reached Prescott—just before "Hefty" Harris had returned from scout. Not until this very morning—the first since their reunion of that warm, yet winter's evening of the previous day—had the two classmates set eyes on Miss Archer (it was as she rode away by her father's side for a canter up the valley), and not until this late afternoon, as the sun was dipping behind the black range of the Mazatzal, did they have opportunity to speak with her.

Even as 'Tonio stood, silent and statuesque, while the doctor went on record as to the rainfall of the Verde watershed, there came suddenly into view, jogging quietly up the winding road from the lower ford, three riders,

followed by half a pack of lagging, yapping hounds—"The Old Man," the maiden and the orderly—and all men on the wooden porch of the unpainted mess building, rose to their feet in deference to the united "powers above," rank and age, youth and beauty, and presently the commander was saying for the benefit of the two new-comers: "My daughter, gentlemen. Lilian, Mr. Harris, Mr. Willett."

Inadvertently he had named them in the inverse order of rank—a small matter, though Willett had been promoted to his bar a year ahead of Harris. Otherwise, it was with a fair field and no favor the old-time rivals of cadet days stood for the first time in the presence of the only army girl at that moment to be found in the far-flung shadow of the Mazatzal—stood side by side, facing both the starter and the prize in what was destined to be the last great contest of their lives.

CHAPTER II.

"Come and dine with us this evening, you two," the "Old Man" was saying, a few minutes later. He had been home long enough to consult the "Commanding General," as he frequently referred to that smiling better half, and to compare notes as to the condition of the larder and cellar. He had flung conventionality to the winds, as most of us had to in early Arizona days. "You others," he said, "have suffered so often from my steaks and stories, you're glad not to be included. To-day I'm bidding only these two youngsters. You know our dining table holds only six. No, never mind about the call!" he interposed, with uplifted hands, one to receive the toddy Briggs was stirring for him, the other in kindly protest, for both the youngsters were on their feet confusedly striving to make it understood that they had only been waiting for the cool of the evening to come to pay their respects. "And never mind about spike tail and shirt fronts either—come just as you are!"

"Indeed, I'll *have* to, sir," said Willett, whose undress uniform fitted him like a glove and was cut and made by the then expert military artist of the far East. They had not taken it too kindly, these others in white cotton sack coats, hewed and stitched by the company tailor, or even in canvas shooting rig, as was Harris, that the young aide-de-camp, after brief siesta in the mid-day lazy hour, should have appeared among them all, fresh-shaved and tubbed, and in faultless, bran-new, spick-and-span cap and blouse and trousers, with black silk socks and low-cut patent leather "Oxford ties." Harris, hammock slung, and moodily

studying 'Tonio, looked approvingly, but made no remark whatever. Stannard, ever blunt and short of speech, had shoved his hairy hands deep in his trousers' pockets, a thing no sub would twice venture in his presence, looked Willett over from head to foot, then, with a sniff, had turned away, but Bentley and Turner had indulged in whimsical protest, "Gad, man, but you put us all to shame," said the surgeon. "I've seen no rig to match that since I came to this post. It's rarer than rain."

"What *do* you wear when you call on the commanding officer?" queried the Latest Arrival, with jovial good-nature. "Thank you, Briggs. That *was* a good toddy."

"Never had a family here until this week," said Bentley, "and such calling as I've done has been in what I happened to have on, and even then I've wished we dressed like 'Tonio there. Why, Mr. Willett, only once since I came to this post has there been an officer's daughter with us. Only twice has there been an officer's wife. Even Mrs. Archer wouldn't have tried it if the general hadn't been sick."

Willett laughed again, good-naturedly as before. "Well," said he, "in the field 'The Lost and Strayed' didn't dandy much, but here I had not even unpacked my trunk; had a whole buckboard to myself after we left Captain Wickham at the Big Bug, so I just fetched 'em along. This is light, you see—nothing but serge," and he held forth his arm. "Up there, of course, we had no use for white. Gunboats and 'plebeskins' was full dress half the year round——" And just then it had occurred to him to put that question: "Does it never rain here?" and in so doing he had appealed rather to Stannard and his fellows of the line, quite as though he

thought Bentley doing too much of the talk, especially since Bentley's bent was criticising. But Stannard, as we have seen, had referred back the question, whereat the doctor, defrauded of his game, yawned languidly and turned over the matter to 'Tonio, thus dragging Harris, all unwilling, into the tide of talk, and presently out of his hammock. Next thing noticed of him he had disappeared.

To no man as yet, save the lieutenant-colonel commanding, had Willett told the purpose of his coming. Late the previous evening Archer had come to his office to receive the aide-de-camp, and there listened to his message. "The Old Man" looked up suddenly as he sat in the lamplight at the rude wooden table that served for his official desk, surprise and concern mingling in his kindly face.

"The *general* said that?" he asked.

"No, sir: the adjutant-general who was left in charge. The general is away hunting."

"I might have known that," said Archer to his inner self. To the aide-de-camp he merely bowed—bowed most courteously. He liked boys, and the Lord had seen fit to take back to himself the one lad poor Archer had liked most, and loved unspeakably.

"I think I shall say—nothing of it," said he, presently, after some reflection, "and—you can find out, through Harris, all there is to be told."

And not a word had he said, even to the post adjutant, from the moment of Willett's reporting to him at nine the night before, yet every man of the officers' mess knew well that something had sent the young staff officer to Almy—

that something was to be looked into—and every man, including Harris, felt it in his bones that that something was the recent and unprofitable scout. That being the case, it placed them all on the defensive, and Willett, unhappily, upon his mettle.

A silence fell upon the party when it was found Harris was gone. 'Tonio himself had risen again, had stood gazing awhile along the eastward mountains, tumbling up toward a brazen sky, then had slowly vanished from sight round the corner of the adobe wall.

"Sticks closer'n a brother," said Stannard, epigrammatically, with a look at Turner, his comrade captain, whereat the latter shot a warning glance, first at Stannard, then toward the unconscious N.A., now hobnobbing with Briggs at the mess-room door.

"Harris doesn't like the young swell! What's the matter, d'ye s'pose?" asked Bucketts, the post quartermaster, a man of much weight, but not too much discrimination.

"Bosh! They're classmates and old chums," was Stannard's quick reply. "Harris is hipped because his scout was a fizzle, and he simply doesn't feel like talking."

"All the same, he doesn't like Willett, classmate or no classmate. You mark my words," persisted the man of mops and brooms, and Stannard, who had seen the youngster's face as he turned away, knew well the quartermaster was right. Therefore was it his duty, for the sake of the regiment, said he, to stand by Harris as hailing from the cavalry. He scoffed at the quartermaster and began to pace the veranda. 'Twas high time for evening stables, and the brief and perfunctory grooming the short-coupled, stocky little

mountain climbers daily received. The herds had been driven in, watering in the shallows as they forded the stream full fifteen minutes before. There were only the surgeon, the adjutant, the quartermaster, and Lieutenant Willett seated on the veranda when Harris presently came back, silent as before, but clad in undress uniform, as neat and trim as that of the Latest Arrival, if not so new. Then came General Archer, his daughter, and the meeting. Then, a few minutes later, the bid to dinner, and then, barely an hour from that time, the dinner itself—a function the classmates marched to almost arm in arm when either would rather have been without the other.

The members of what there was of the mess, six officers in all, sat waiting the summons to their own board, and gazing idly after. Stannard, the only married captain whose wife had had the nerve to go to that desolate and distant station, was sitting under his own figurative vine and fig-tree represented by a pine veranda, about which neither vine nor fig nor other tree had ever been induced to grow, but that was not without other extravagances, since it represented to Uncle Sam an aggregate sum that could be best computed at a shilling a shingle. Stannard, hearing footsteps on the sandy soil, glanced up from the columns of an *Alta California*, ten days old, and growled through the adjacent blinds "They're coming now," whereat there was sound of rustling skirt within, and between the slats there came a glimpse of shining, big blue eyes, alive with womanly interest, and parted lips disclosing two opposing rows of almost perfect teeth, all the whiter by contrast with the sunburned, "sonsy" face that framed them. Together,

yet separated, this Darby and Joan of the far frontier sat and watched the coming pair. "Isn't it good to see the real uniform again?" said she. "Isn't it absurd to think of trying a dinner here?" said he. Then both subsided as the two young officers stepped upon the resounding boards of the next veranda to the south, knocked at the commander's open door and were promptly welcomed.

"Now, Luce, they're going to have a very *nice* dinner," protested Mrs. Stannard. "I was in there helping over an hour, and Mrs. Archer's a wonder! Even if the dinner didn't amount to much, there would be Lilian."

"They can't eat *her*," persisted, grimly, the man.

"She looks sweet enough to eat," responded the woman. "You ought to see her. After a six hours' ride she looks fresh as a daisy, all creamy white with—but you wouldn't understand——"

"What on earth kept them out so long?"

"Didn't I tell you? Why, they went away to Bennett's ranch. Couldn't find a vestige of vegetables nearer. Mrs. Bennett has a little patch where she raises lettuce and radishes. The orderly carried a basket full of truck, and leaves and flowers, poppies and cactus, you know, and you've no idea how pretty they've made the table look."

Stannard sniffed. "Take their Sauterne hot or lukewarm?" he asked. "Fancy a dinner without ice, fruit or cream!"

"Of course they haven't white wine here, Luce! But there's claret—famous claret, too, and the water in the big *olla's* even cooler than the spring. They'll have French dressing for the salad. They have tomato soup even *you* couldn't growl at, and roast chicken, with real potatoes, and

petits pois, and corn, and olives; then salad cool as the spring; then there's to be such an *omelette soufflée*—and coffee!—but it's the way the table *looks*, Luce!"

"Men don't care how a thing looks, so long as it tastes right. How *does* it look?"

"So white and fresh, and sprinkled with green and purple and crimson, the leaves and the poppies, you know. She ——" But Mrs. Stannard broke off suddenly. "What is it, Wettstein?" she asked, for their own particular *chef*, a German trooper, with elementary culinary gifts, appeared in the hallway.

"It's Suey, mattam, says would Mrs. Stannard come over a minute. He's stuck, mattam."

"Stuck! Heavens! how?" cried Mrs. Stannard, up at once in alarm, and vanishing through the dim light of the blanketed window. The presumably punctured Chinaman was even then in full flight for his own kitchen door, some fifty feet away, and Mrs. Stannard followed. No Roman in Rome's quarrel was ever more self-sacrificing than were our army women of the old days in their helpfulness. Had the hounds ravished the roast again, as once already had happened? If so, the Stannard dinner stood ready to replace it, even though she and her captain had to fall back on what could be borrowed from the troop kitchen. No, the oven door was open, the precious chickens, brown, basted and done to a turn, were waiting Suey's deft hands to shift them to the platter. (No need to heat it even on a December day.) Mrs. Stannard's quick and comprehensive glance took in every detail. The "stick" was obviously figurative—mere vernacular—yet something serious, for Suey's olive-brown

skin was jaundiced with worry, and the face of Doyle, the soldier striker, as he came hurrying back from the banquet board, was beading with the sweat of mental torment. Soup, it seems, was already served, and Doyle burst forth, hoarse whispering, before ever he caught sight of the visiting angel.

"Sure I *can't*, Suey! *The General's sittin' on it!*"

And Suey's long-nailed Mongolian talons went up in despair as he turned appealingly to their rescuer.

"Sitting on what, Doyle? Quick!" said Mrs. Stannard.

"The sherry, ma'am! The doctor sent it over wid his comps to s'prise him, an' my orders was to fill the little glasses when I'd took in the soup, an' I put it under the barrel chair——"

But Mrs. Stannard had heard enough. Even though convulsed with merriment, she seized a pencil and scribbled a little line on a card. "Give this to Mrs. Archer," she said, and a moment later, in the midst of his first story, the veteran was checked by these placid words from the head of the table:

"Pardon me, dear, but you are on the lid of the wine cooler. Let Doyle get at it a moment."

The general was not the nimblest-witted man in the service, but long experience had taught him the wisdom of prompt observance of any suggestion that came from his wife. Dropping his napkin, and the thread of his tale, he rose to his feet. Blushing furiously, Doyle bent, and with vigorous effort pried off a circular, perforated top, revealing a dark, cylindrical space beneath, from the depths of which he lifted a dripping bucket of galvanized iron, and sped, thus laden,

away to the kitchen, to the music of Mrs. Archer's merry laughter and a guffaw of joy from the general's lips.

"How came you to put it there, sir?" demanded he, a moment later, as Doyle circumnavigated the table, filling, as ordered, the five little glasses with fragrant Amontillado. "I must tell you, gentlemen, this is one of the pleasant surprises that most admirable woman yonder is forever putting up on me. Life would be a desert without such."

"Indeed it wasn't mine!" expostulated madam, "though I'm deeply indebted to somebody. Who was it, Doyle?"

"Docther Bentley, ma'am. He said I was to keep it dark, ma'am—'an' in the coolest place I could find——"

But here the peals of laughter silenced the words and rang the glad tidings to listening, waiting ears in the kitchen that all was well. Mrs. Stannard scurried away to explain to her Luce, and the dinner went blithely on.

"You did right, Doyle! you did right!" shouted the general, "and we'll drink the doctor's health. Keep it dark, indeed! Haw, haw, haw!" And then nothing would do but he must tell the story of this precious and particular chair. Furniture, even such as he bought at San Francisco, and would live to a green old age along the Pacific, came speedily to pieces in the hot, dry atmosphere of Arizona. Little enough there was of cabinet ware, to be sure, because of the cost of transportation; but such as there was, unless riveted in every seam and joint, fell apart at most inopportune moments. Bureaus and washstands, tables, sofas and chairs, were forever shedding some more or less important section, and the only reliable table was that built by the post carpenter, the quartermaster.

And so these pioneers of our civilization, the men and women of the army, had had no little experience in cabinetmaking and upholstering. While the emigrants and settlers, secure under its wing, could turn swords into ploughshares and spears into pruning-hooks, as saith the Scriptures, their soldier folk turned clothing boxes into couches, soap boxes into cradles, and pork barrels into *fauteuils*. Chintz and calico, like charity, covered a multitude of sins, as declared in unsightly cracks and knotholes. The finest reclining chair in all Camp Almy belonged to the doctor, a composite of condemned stretchers and shelter tent. The best dining-room set was sawed out from sugar barrels, and, being stuffed with old newspapers and gayly covered with cheese cloth and calico, rivaled in comfort, if not in airy elegance, the twisted woodwork of Vienna. When it was known that Mrs. and Miss Archer had descended upon the camp, and their beloved commander had next to nothing by way of furniture with which to deck their army home, every officer hastened to place his household goods —such "C. and G.E." as did not belong to the hospital—at the general's disposal. The Stannards sent three riveted, cane-bottomed, dining-room chairs and their spare room outfit complete. Captain Turner, whose fair-complected partner had not yet ventured to these destructive suns, sent bedstead and bureau, the latter without knobs, but you could pry the drawers open with the point of a sabre. The post trader drove up from the store with a lot of odds and ends. Even the bachelors were keen to do something. All of which Mrs. Archer most gratefully and smilingly accepted and made mental note of for future return in kind. But, in

spite of the Stannards' contribution, the general stood firmly to his prerogative and sat close on his throne—"The finest dining chair in all Arizona, sir," as he often declared. "Sawed out from a standard oak whiskey barrel at Old Port Buford in '58, according to my own ideas and lines, and sound as a dollar to-day, sir, and it's only been covered three times in all. Look at it!" And here, with a flourish, he would whip off the seat. "Combination chair and butler's pantry, sir. Used to keep my whiskey and tobacco there when the redskins had the run of the post and thought nothing of searching our quarters. And now Doyle's used it as the doctor prescribed, and then gone and forgotten it! Haw, haw, haw! By Jove, but that's capital sherry! Cool almost as if it had been iced! Harris, my boy, you don't drink!"

There was a moment's silence. Then the young officer answered, simply, yet almost apologetically:

"Why—I never have, sir."

CHAPTER III.

It happened at a moment when Willett, seated at the right of "the lady of the house," with Lilian at his dexter side, had caught the eye of his hostess, and, after the manner of the day, had raised his brimming sherry glass and, bowing low, was drinking to her health, a feat the general had thrice performed already. "If I'd only known of this, gentlemen," said their host, but a moment earlier, with resultant access of cordiality, "and could have found a drop of Angostura about the post, we'd have had a 'pick-me-up' before dinner, but d'you know I—I seldom have bitters about me. I've no use for cocktails. I never touch a drop of stingo before twelve at noon or after twelve at night. I agree with old Bluegrass. Bluegrass was post surgeon at the Presidio when the Second Artillery came out in '65, right on the heels of the war, and he did his best to welcome them—especially Breck, their adjutant, also a Kentuckian. Then he was ordered East, and he left Breck his blessing, his liquor case, and this admonition—Breck told it himself. 'Young man,' said he, 'I observe you drink cocktails. Now, take my advice and don't do it. You drink the bitters and they go to your nose and make it red. You drink the sugar and it goes to your brain and makes it wopsy, and so—you lose all the good effects of the whiskey'! Haw, haw, haw!" It was a story the genial old soldier much rejoiced in, one that Stannard had bet he would tell before dinner was half over, and it came with Doyle and the chickens. The kindly, wrinkled, beaming face, red with the fire of Arizona's suns, redder by contrast with the white mustache and imperial, was growing scarlet

with the flame of Bentley's cherished wine, when in sudden surprise he noted that the junior officer present, seated alone at his right (there was no other girl in all Camp Almy to bid to the little feast, and Mrs. Stannard, in mourning for a brother, could not accept), had turned down the little sherry glass. Thirty years ago such a thing was as uncommon in the army as fifty years ago it was unheard of in civil life. For one instant after the young officer's embarrassed answer the veteran sat almost as though he had heard a rebuke. It was Mrs. Archer who came to the relief of an awkward situation. "Mr. Harris believes in keeping in training," she ventured lightly. "He could not excel in mountain scouting without it. The general's scouting days are over and we indulge him." Indeed, it wasn't long before it began to look as though the general were indulging himself. Claret presently succeeded the sherry, but not until Bentley's health had been drunk again and the orderly summoned from the front porch to go, with the general's compliments, and tell him so. "This claret," he then declared, "is some I saved from the dozen Barry & Patton put aboard the Montana when I came round to Yuma last year. It's older than Lilian," this with a fond and playful pinch at the rosy cheek beside him, "and almost as good. No diluting this, Mr. Willett," for he saw that young officer glancing from the empurpled glass to the single carafe that adorned the table, its mate having met dissolution when the general's chest was prematurely unloaded in Dead Man's Cañon *en route* to the post. "Dilute your California crudities all you like, but not the red juice from the sunny vines of France. No, sir! Moreover, this and old Burgundy are the

wines you must drink at blood heat. No Sauturnes or Hocks or champagnes for us fire worshippers in Arizona! Lilian here and my blessed wife yonder don't like these red wines for that reason. They want something to cool their dainty palates, but men, sir, and soldiers—— What's this, Bella, Bellisima? Salad—French dressing—and cool, too! Bravissima, my dear! How did you manage it? The olla? Why, of course! Cool anything. Cool my old head, if need be. Hey, Willett?"

And all this time, when not chatting with the debonair officer at her side or saying a word to his bronzed, sun-dried, silently observant comrade opposite, Lilian's fond eyes forever sought her father's rubicund face, love and admiration in every glance. All this time, even while in cordial talk with her guests, Mrs. Archer never seemed to lose a look or word from her soldier liege; never once did her winsome smile or joyous laugh fail to reward his sallies; never once came there shade of anxiety upon her beaming face. "The General" was the head of that house, and they were his loyal subjects. They even sipped at the outermost ripple of the thimbleful of claret each had permitted Doyle to pour. Even when a loud "cloop" in the dark passageway to the kitchen told that another bottle was being opened as the omelet came in, borne aloft by white-robed Suey, crowned with red poppies and blue blazes, and set triumphantly before the mistress of the feast, Harris could detect no flutter of disapprobation. Even when, later still, the general's eager hand, stretching forth for the dusky flagon (it was sacrilege to sweep away those insignia of age and respectability), managed to capsize the candelabrum