

LETITIA: Nursery Corps, U. S. A.

“The essential most necessary to make the admirable army woman is that instinct which, on a night’s halt, can create the feeling of home out of Dougherty cushions and blankets if it should come to that. In the nomadic life of the army, stability and morals are represented in the home.”

From the porch conversations of Mrs. Colonel Ganeau.

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Letitia

Letitia

NURSERY CORPS, U. S. A.

BY

GEORGE MADDEN MARTIN

AUTHOR OF EMMY LOU



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DEDICATION

TO ELIZABETH, THE MOTHER OF MARIANNA, AND TO THE MRS.
RONALDS, AND THE MRS. GANEAUS OF THE ARMY, WHOM
IT HAS BEEN MY PRIVILEGE TO KNOW, THESE FEW
STORIES ARE DEDICATED, AS A SLIGHT TRIB-
UTE OF ADMIRATION OF THEM, AS
INDIVIDUALS AND AS TYPES

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SINCE army conditions encourage a prejudice against too much baggage, babies now and then stand a chance of being looked upon as a superfluous part of a nomadic menage.

Letitia's mother therefore, had to defend herself when unencumbered ladies condoned or sympathized.

"I assure you she was an accident not calculated for in any of our plans," she retorted sharply once, compassioned too far. It might almost have been a crossing of swords between the ladies.

"A woman has as many haters of herself on a post as there are ladies she excels in looks," she also put it sweetly after one of these sword-crossing contests. There had been eight ladies, at bridge, present at the moment referred to, herself included, and the seven were homely.

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But that occasion and that post were ancient history now. Letitia was nearly eight and had moved six times.

“You get on the train and when you get off, it’s another colonel’s way,” was her version of it.

“And another home?” an adult fellow-traveler on the sleeper taking Letty and her officer papa and her officer’s lady mama to this last remove, asked her.

“House?” queried Letty in her turn, the vocabulary at eight evidently being limited to the words which from experience are known.

It was a new post and a new house at which she and her father and mother were arriving now. It was evening. The army ’bus was bringing them up from the dock. Everywhere was loose deep sand, white glaring sand, and as the ’bus horses plowed through it they looked discouraged and their heads hung. Sand-flies made vicious nips at Letitia’s calves dangling from the ’bus-seat.

Along the oyster-shell walk, two soldiers were conducting a prisoner whose head hung too; then he stumbled, stopped, and despite his captors, showed fight.

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“Nice hole this,” said papa, “faugh!” And papa, who was slim, trim, neat-footed, bit at his small, fair mustache.

“Cattle is the business of the ranch,” said mama; “as the brand is the same at every post, what did you expect to find?”

“Is it a niland, or just shore?” asked Letitia. She had been at both.

Now it was an inviolable rule never to be lightly broken, not to talk to mama, still less to papa, toward the end of a journeying and the arrival at the post at that journey’s end. It has taken all the money to break up again and get Letty and mama there, you know.

“Can’t you keep her quiet?” said papa to mama so politely that Letty sat painfully still.

“Begin now, I would, on top of the other delights of arrival,” said mama. She was stooping a little to adjust her veil by the strip of mirror between the ’bus-windows, for a bit of veil bisecting chin and cheek and lobe of ear and caught to a tilted hat-brim behind makes a lovely mama even lovelier, a matter always to be thought of by pretty ladies as they are arriving anywhere.

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As the 'bus turned onto p'rade, Letitia could have told you retreat had sounded even if the gun had not that moment boomed. P'rade squared on three sides by headquarters, barracks, and guard-house and on the fourth open to the sea, presented a spectacular appearance of men and band and fluttering stars and stripes with a fringe of civilian spectators on the outskirts, while led to across the arm of the ocean by a blood-red path, the sun was setting in a ball behind the city spires across the bay.

"*Oh, say can you see — ?*" the band here demanded of Letitia in crashing strains, but the 'bus had turned off the edge of p'rade and was trundling briskly along the back of a row of houses. There were no fences, no trees, no grass, only sand, with here and there a clothes-line or a sagging chicken-coop.

Part of an ever-moving caravan, is it to be expected that army officers or their ladies are going to plant vines and fig-trees for a mere night's lodging beneath, as it were? That were to presuppose in human nature far too great altruism. Let the colonels and the Government do their own beautifying. Posts vary, the last had been

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impeccable. It depends largely you see, upon the commanding officer.

Not that Letitia thought to these conclusions, she only knew that this one felt lonesome.

Behind each house sat a dingy tin garbage-can.

Mama spoke. "Run down at heels. With an easy colonel again and no brace up, I see your finish, Buckner," she said to papa sweetly.

All of which had taken perhaps two minutes of time, during which the 'bus turned a corner and came round to the front of things.

The new house, No. 17, stood one of a row, all alike, facing the breakwater, the beach and the sea.

"— *and the home of the brave!*" exultantly declared the band to Letty, then ceased with blatant crash, and as the vehicle backed to the oyster-shell walk, the sun sank, the sea faded gray, and the air grew chill.

The soldier-driver descended, strode around, opened the door, came to attention and s'luted, whereat papa and mama got out, leaving him to bring in the impedimenta. Of it he chose Letty first, who took his hand to walk up the

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twenty feet of oyster-shell path while he in his other, carried satchels. There was one little shrub in Letitia's new white sand yard overlooking the wide gray sea, and it shivered.

"It's a noleander," the soldier told her when she asked, or so she understood.

He loosed her hand at the veranda and she followed papa who followed mama, into the last remove.

Later a detail of soldiers came from quarters to uncrate.

Now an empty house is full of strange sounds which Letitia had learned are called echoes. Boxes, crates and gunny-sacked rolls lay about on the bare floors.

The detail filed in and saluted.

"Knock those beds out and up," said papa curtly, acknowledging.

"Hands off, Buckner," said mama sharply if softly to papa. "I choose my own striker and with no black eye from you for No. 17 beforehand."

Which meant that mama, her veil and hat on the mantel now, her tossed and ruffled hair only the lovelier for it, her lovely self jauntily perched on a high box, her natty foot swinging,

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—that mama was going to choose for herself from one of these men, if one proved available, that soldier who should tend the furnace, brush and keep in order papa's clothes and shoes and ——

Of course if one is very very nice to a striker there are other things he may do if he is so minded, though he is not supposed to nor yet, far from it, required to. No soldier has to be a striker unless he feels thus inclined to add to his earnings; moreover, if he become one, what else he is willing to do is a matter between the good nature of himself and the lady of the officer employing him and to be kept between them. For a colonel, or even a company's captain to come for instance, on a uniformed United States soldier counting the clothes out for wash ——

Lovely mamas are pretty, which is one kind of thing, and lovely mamas can smile pretty, which is another. Mama, as a rule, Letty had noticed smiled pretty at strikers, and at quartermasters who deal out the things appertaining to new households, at captains and at colonels. She did not bother with ladies or with papas. She was tired then.

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Now much, you must know, in Letitia's life, depended on this condescendingly pleasant smiling by mama at the striker, who would under the successful operation of the same, stay with Letty when the cook would not, for instance when there was a bridge at the colonel's — if indeed it was one of those fortunate times when there was a cook.

Once within memory, and remembrance at something this side of eight does not go overly far back — a cookless time this chanced to be — mama and papa felt obliged to start before the striker got there.

“It's an infernal —” papa began, for papas do not like to be detained for Letitias or strikers either.

“He will be here by the time we are started,” said mama reassuringly, and so they went.

But he never came, having been pinched which is to say put in the mill officially known as the guard-house.

Now you call what is generally responsible for getting a striker in the guard-house or to be exact, you did at that particular post, “peso,” or “blind tiger's bite,” but when it happens to

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your papa (not the guard-house), mama calls it "Scotch."

And so this time within memory, Letitia's striker did not come and he did not come, and strange noises, as you know, promptly begin in houses as soon as there is no papa or mama or cook or striker in them; also Things which are not really things, of course, fly back into corners when you sit up and look, and "nawful" words, once told you by a little boy, such as "raw-head an' bloody-bones!" recur to you inconveniently; and while, in fact, you would rather not, you are impelled to think of fearful happenings which the Old Sergeant, swinging you up on the big ancient unmounted gun, "Old smash-'em-all," has told you concerning Injuns who coming c-r-e-e-e-ping up in those days on the sleeping frontier post —

And matters having reached this point, Letitia, braving the things likely to clutch her if she went because of worse things sure to do so if she stayed, slipped fearfully out of bed and more fearfully down the awful stairs and out of the house and patted it barefooted and in nightie 'cross p'rade, itself unexpectedly vast and boundless, un-

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familiar and tenantless by night, to non-com row and there turned the knob of Mrs. Sergeant Crashaw's door.

This person being non-com, Letty could not by any means have played with her children by day, but when everybody along Off'cers' Row has gone to the colonel's party, a non-com mama can wrap you in a blanket comf'y, good as any, and rock you consolingly; and can be trusted to rouse her sergeant-husband to carry you home when the party is over and mamas along Off'cers' Row have returned.

These non-com mamas have leisure, too, if you slip over there by day, to slap the iron on the stand and tell you a story of the Philippines, the awed little non-coms standing about listening also; time also to cut and dispense slices of bread all around, spread with sugar, between the peeling of the spuds for dinner. Potatoes you call these last in off'cers' row but when you mingle with strikers and non-coms, they are spuds.

Non-com ladies, moreover, have time to make their little girls enviable pina cloth dresses for Sunday, in which they go out walking holding to their sergeant-papa's hand, and with which



Concerning Injuns

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they wear wonderful hats with wreaths of feather-flowers thereon.

A real mama such as one's own on the contrary, is the busiest lady in the world, so busy that the joy of life in order to help her, is to stand and silently hand her, as she is ready for each, file, rosy polish, buffer, or shell pins, combs, curling-irons.

But Mrs. Sergeant Crashaw, you see, lived back at the last post, while here life had to begin all over again with p'raps no friendly Mrs. Sergeant across in non-com row. Hence Letitia was deeply concerned in the matter of striker, for as is generally conceded there is not much to be hoped for in cooks. Cooks won't clean shoes as a striker will, or thaw the water-pipes, or brush mama's muddy skirts, or lay out papa's dress uniform, or clean his razors, or fly around for the brandy and soda those times which mama calls "the morning after," or stand to attention and s'lute when papa slings forceful words such as "damn." Cooks won't take these things. They go. And then what you get to eat, in Letitia's experience, depends very much on the capability and good nature of your

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striker. Therefore she now watched the choosing of this functionary earnestly.

To do so, she got the burlap off her own little chair and pulling it to one side, for mamas and papas have a way of being provoked if they fall over their little girls, sat down.

The detail of soldiers worked busily with hatchet and hammer since the new-comers had to have beds and bedding to sleep in that night. The four of the five men were mere types of the private anywhere, Letitia could have told you that; types even in names, Murphy, Batts, Kinsey, and McAdams being the ones they answered to, for mama asked them. And then swinging her pretty foot in its natty Oxford, she smiled with a gracious condescension at Murphy, Batts, Kinsey, and McAdams, who fell to afresh with tempestuous zeal.

After which mama, from her playful perch on the box, ordering papa to delve farther in that chest and he'd find the sheets *were* there, narrowed her eyes consideringly at the fifth man. So Letitia looked at him too.

“And your name, Corporal?” mama asked.

Now some ladies would never have noticed his

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chevrons. Letitia had of course, since she knew the very soul of a soldier, and she sighed contentedly that mama had not failed her little daughter's faith in her and settled again in her small chair.

Now the corporal was swollen about the lids and the lower face and he was heavily red. Letty knew the thing as a matter of course. It happens when a soldier has been to town and is also closely allied to pay-day, and it is following this phenomenon of appearance that a man gets pinched which is to say, put in the guard-house. That is privates and corporals get pinched, or get their belts pulled, papas, as known by Letty's own, sleep it off.

The corporal with the heavy, sulky lids and swollen face was hitting the cratings as if he might mean to demolish them instead. He was straight and powerful on his legs and broad in his back, his eyes were blue and his short, clipped hair was black. He could have played bones with any two of the other four men with one hand, as the cannibal king did with the missionaries in Mrs. Sergeant Crashaw's Pacific island stories, and he scowled red.

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But mama, regarding him consideringly, asked, "And your name, Corporal?"

"Leg'r ," said the man at attention, if sullenly.

Letitia had gathered from mama before this, that when one is asking a service along the way, of any one from a colonel on post to a cabman at the curb, it costs no more to be gracious. Within the proper degree one may be gracious even to an enlisted man. Mama, for her own needs, chose to assume this one to be worthy of her appeal to him, and as an enlisted man is what he is made to feel himself to be, the effect on this one was immediate. He straightened. His "attention" seemed to become a voluntary and straightforward affair. The toughest rookie there might be on a post, was always deferential to mama.

"Thank you for setting together Letitia's little bed up-stairs, first," said she politely, just as though Corporal Leg'r  had thought himself to do it, instead of papa having shortly ordered him. "And Corporal, if you will lift the tray of that trunk which is unstrapped behind you there, and hand Letitia the little gown on top, she can go up-stairs ——"



Non-com mamas have unlimited time

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Now strikers as often as anybody else, thus far in life, had shared the responsibility of finding Letitia her gowns. They looked startled about it at first, these soldier-men, just as huge Corporal Leg'r  did now who blushed with a suffused violence through his swollen red as, obeying orders, he lifted the object pointed out by his officer's lady. But since it was accepted as a matter of course by Letitia's mother and by her officer papa, himself issuing sharp orders to the other men, and by that little person herself, the blush became a blush because of the blushing. Which is how mama meant it to be with soldier strikers, and so as the big corporal moved to the next thing to be done, she again smiled graciously.

Now not only is it entirely optional with a soldier whether he be a striker or not, but it is the exception for a corporal to be one. Still pretty mamas can secure concessions from colonels, and naturally a corporal is the better man if one can get him. Therefore Letty, arising from her little chair, her gown in her arms, was at peace. She knew the curing of that personage was accomplished.

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The kitchen range, No. 17, Off'cers' Row, stood cold and overflowing with ashes even onto the floor. A brimming bucket, with bloated, swollen biscuits, egg-shells, and lettuce leaves afloat on its surface, sat under the sink. The clock had stopped.

Letitia, in the doorway, knew the signs. Since mama could do so much with lieutenants and captains and even more with colonels and strikers, Letitia often wondered why she did not try it with cooks.

It was not so early, no matter if the clock which had stopped, did say so, for the bugle had awakened Letitia some time before, in its energetic and lively way protesting that

*You can't get 'em up,
You can't get 'em up,
You can't get 'em up in the morning,*

though some people do call the same reveille. Since then mess-call had sounded a bit ago, so that Corporal Leg'ré ought by now to be coming.

Though he had been with No. 17 that space of time called a month, there is always the

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recurring danger of pay-day, which was yesterday. Cooks are liable to go any time whereas if a striker fails you, it's sure to be the morning after that day. And this was Corporal Leg'ré's first pay-day since —

The fear weighed heavily on Letitia.

Then the outer door opened and huge Corporal Leg'ré filled the space where he paused as if he too, knew the signs.

"Gone, ma'am?" said he, for regardless of age, all the ladies of an officer's household were "ma'am" to this Corporal Leg'ré.

Letty nodded. Then facing around and backing, she presented her small self to the corporal who, seeing the situation, shut the door and went to buttoning up the lines of buttons and holes thus presented. Slowly but accurately proceeded Corporal Leg'ré, for fingers that however huge and blunt, can teach Letty to make hitches and clove-hitches, double-sheet bends, bowlines and sheep-shanks with a bit of twine, can button underbodies, and waistbands and gingham aprons, if you give 'em time.

And Corporal Leg'ré (which is how you called

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it, though you spelled it Legaré), like Letitia, had read the kitchen signs too.

“I suspicioned it when I saw her switchin’ her head from side to side last night. None of ’em aren’t no manner of account whatsoever, ma’am. Are the quarters up-stairs comfortable?”

Letty thought they were.

“Then I won’t shake down the furnace, till I set her goin’ here.” He meant the kitchen range. “No. 17 will be rippin’ wide if it comes down and no breakfast doing.” Which meant papa.

Letitia understood and looked up, for the comfortable thing about a striker is, he understands too.

“It’s the morning after, Corp’ral Leg’ré,” she explained.

“No, ma’am?” said that person, regretfully. “Nothing needed then but his java,”—*java* with a striker being a generic term for coffee—“which he’ll be wanting black and strong and right away; where’s the coffee-pot, I wonder?”

It was in the dish-pan along with other unwashed tins, and was full of grounds.



A real mama, on the contrary, is the busiest lady in the world

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Letitia knelt upon a chair while Corporal Leg'ré dumped the contents of the coffee-pot in the sink.

"What'd *you* have for breakfast?" she queried, for papa and mama dining out the night before, Letitia had not had a great deal herself, the nature of cooks being as it is.

"Slum and sinkers, ma'am," avowed Corporal Leg'ré.

Now slum and sinkers, otherwise known in Officers' Row as hash and dumplings, are not to be despised.

"What'll I have?" queried Letty.

"No hardtack?"

"No." For Letitia had looked. The bread-box was empty.

"Eggs?"

But a search, once the kettle was on and the coffee-pot ready, revealed none, though Corporal Leg'ré while investigating, made another find.

"Dope," declared he gravely even if triumphantly as he lifted it down from the shelf. "Dope" — which meant pie — "and pone dope at that!" — which meant apple.

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And the water being ready, soon Corporal Leg'ré went up with coffee to his superior officer, while Letitia kneeling on her chair at the kitchen table, ate dope.

And papa gone, presently mama's call came down over the front stair banister, mamas as Letty knew them, not coming down for their breakfasts, you know.

Corporal Leg'ré, hearing, came hurrying up from the cellar and furnace, and he and Letitia went up with *her* coffee and to break the news about the cook. She was sitting on the top step with her lovely chin in her lovely palms, and looked amused and also inquiring as the two appeared. Haply a mama's hair, being lovely too, is lovely tumbled any way and her pretty feet, thrust into high-heeled little red slippers, patted marching time beneath the edge of her kimono for Letty as the two came up, whereupon Corporal Leg'ré, raising his eyes as he turned the landing and finding himself in the presence of his off'cer's lady, came to such a rigid, not to say reverent attention, the cup skipped on the tray, after which Corporal Leg'ré stood stiffly while Letty told about the cook.

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Mama took the tray and set it on her knees.

“Yesterday was pay-day, Leg’ré?” said she briskly.

“Ma’am, yes.”

“And you went to town?”

“Ma’am, yes, ma’am.”

“And you are here to look after Letitia and me this morning?”

Corporal Leg’ré grew red, even apologetic, but stood his ground.

“Corporal Leg’ré,” said mama graciously and kindly, “why?”

The corporal, towering and rigid like a man of bronze, cleared his throat. “No. 17’s got to be looked after,” said he husky with embarrassment. “I’ll get leave till guard-mount, ma’am, and come back. Things are in a regular woman’s mess, meaning cooks, below quarters.”

“Thank you,” said mama. “And what about finding another cook for us, Corporal?”

So you see there is nothing like a striker, if you choose him right. Corporal Leg’ré turned and departed to get leave. And mama having finished her coffee, went back to her room, found her new book on bridge and pulled the couch

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around to the window on the sea. The one little bush nodded gaily down there in the morning sun. Letitia could see it.

“Run along, Letty,” said mama, “I can’t be bothered now. ‘*May you play out?*’ With the colonel’s grandchildren, I suppose you mean? Letitia, you know I do not allow you to play so much with other children on a post. I’ll not have you learning things you shouldn’t know; and besides as I’ve told you, it would mean they’d be coming here next, spying and carrying tales. ‘*Play with your little bush,*’ you mean? What a curious child you are, Letty. Why, yes — no, it’s in the front yard, and you are too untidy, it would mean somebody dress you. Go stay with Leg’ré while he’s cleaning, or at any rate, run along — I can’t be bothered now.”

Another pay-day was come and gone. The senior captain’s wife was giving a bridge to-night.

“Don’t you ever tire —” began papa on the afternoon of it. Papas, you see, have days of brooding dejection.

“Never,” said mama.

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“Don’t you ever think of Letitia ——”

Now and then, you see, papas thus do think of their Letitias.

“Always. I’m expecting you to get permission for Leg’ré as usual. Why this sudden concern for Letty?”

“I’m tired of it, tired to the soul,” said papa, slim, trim papa, biting at his little fair mustache, “of it all — of myself, first. I — it meant something different to me from this at the start. I meant to ——”

“I can go without you at any time, you know,” said mama, accommodatingly. “The doctor, always, or Toddy, will be more than glad or ——”

But papa went with mama. Toddy was a bachelor and a captain and he came to drink afternoon tea and brought Letitia chocolates and Chinese beads. Yet papa did not like Captain Todd, but then, as Letitia tried to fight against admitting, papas seem to have a way of objecting to pleasant things. So papa went with her.

Corporal Leg’ré held mama’s scarlet cloak for her as they were starting.

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“It’s bath-night, Letty,” said she remindingly, which proves that she did think of Letitia, you see.

Now the first thing learned by a Letitia and a Corporal Leg’ré at the very beginning of life’s setting-up, when they were but mere rookies both, is to obey.

So face about, up-stairs they went, and Letty squared around, and slowly but accurately Corporal Leg’ré slipped buttons out of holes. Then he found towels.

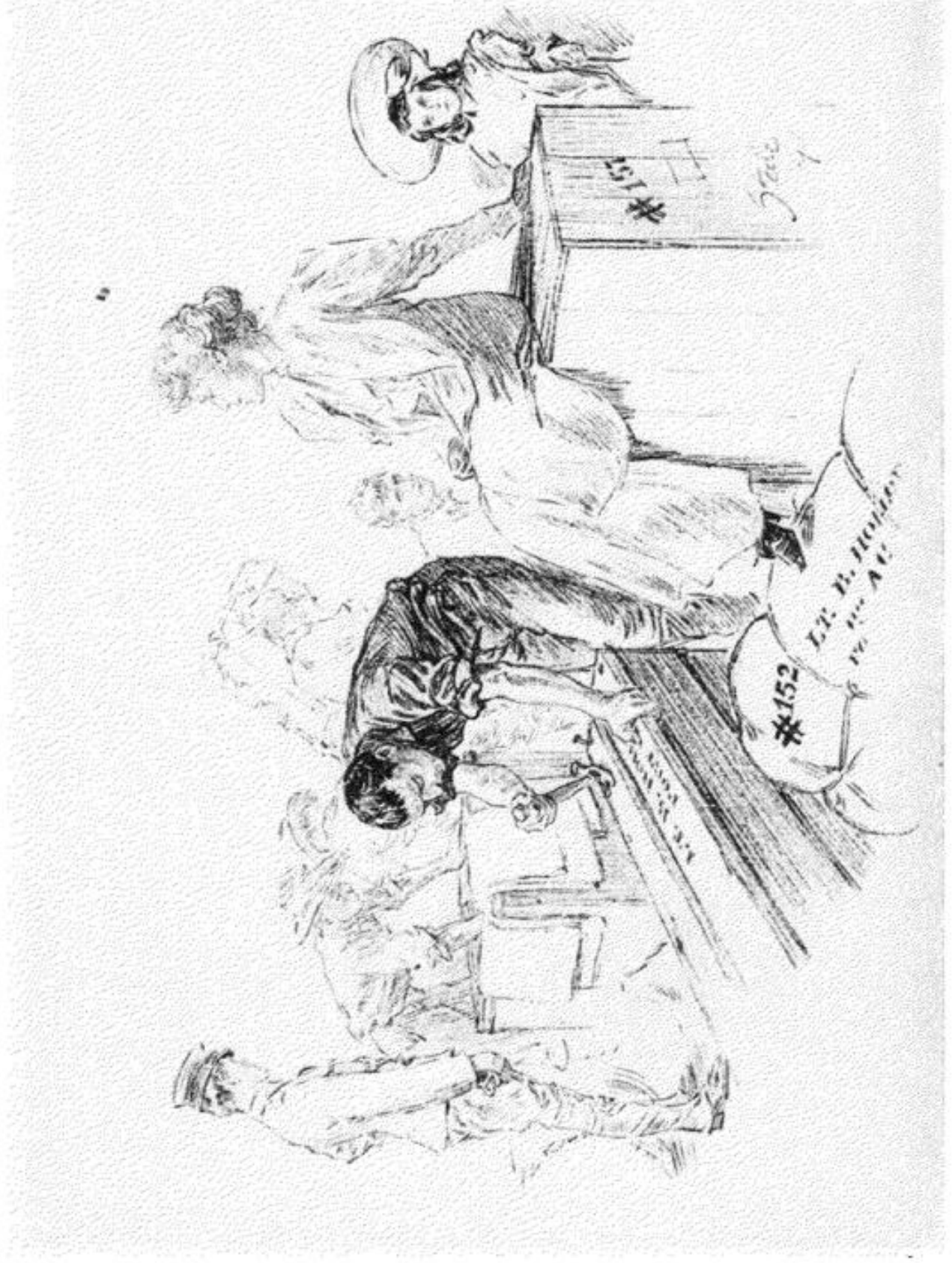
The passage to the bath-room was long and dim, so that Letitia, holding loosened garments with one hand, sought Corporal Leg’ré’s hand with the other.

Then he big and grave, filled the tub, which takes a bit of time.

Letitia knew company affairs like an old sergeant.

“And you haven’t said *why* company’s cookie is in guard-house?” she reminded him.

“’Twas a question of that which they do call grammar, ma’am,” said Corporal Leg’ré, as equal to equal in discussing company affairs and easing on the hot-water supply, “and which they



Letitia, therefore, now watched the choosing of the striker earnestly

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do say too, no disrespect meant, ma'am, the off'cer in question ain't strong on. Says he to cookie, who'd had schoolin' 'fore his failin' led him to enlistin'—says he to cookie anent a small row in the kitchen —

““Was you the man that did it?” says he to cookie, up for trial.

““I *were,*” says cookie, solemn like. And there you are, and guard-house it was. And baker's bread and reveille is all we are like to get, reveille being dry hash as you know, ma'am, and it being the extent of 'Sisty's repertoire, as far as we're finding out,” and Corporal Leg'ré felt the temperature of the water with a judicious finger.

Then he went.

“Right outside the door,” called Letitia.

“Here, ma'am,” answered Corporal Leg'ré.

But a bath-room is a lonesome place, and water makes echoes.

“Corporal Leg'ré?”

“Ma'am, here.”

“Whistle, so I'll know.”

At attention, outside the door, Corporal Leg'ré whistled — first call, reveille, assembly, mess-call —

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Now porcelain tubs are big and slippery, and Letitias are but baby affairs, and so when, following a splashing sound which might be a fall, she cried out, it could be depended upon that she was hurt.

And so she was, and with her gleaming baby self lifted onto a towel on Corporal Leg'ré's big knees a moment after, gravely they examined the blue welt lifting on the little thigh.

And then, after she had raised her chin for Corporal Leg'ré to button the band of the gown slipped over her head, she remembered to cry some more. It is a rare luxury with a Letitia, you see.

Next Corporal Leg'ré led her back by the hand down the long, dim passage.

"Prayers," said he, not that he had instituted them but that, having learned what the manual of a Letitia is, a Corporal Leg'ré puts her through it unflinchingly.

"Prayers," said he.

"You too," said Letitia. It was the condition.

"Ma'am, yes," said he seriously as with one who knows his duty, and he and Letitia went

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down together. It was some preceding instructor's form of prayer Letitia favored, Corporal Leg'r  being no innovator.

Four corners to my bed,

said Letitia and the corporal together,

Four angels at my head.

One to watch and one to pray,

And two to bear my soul away.

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John,

The bed be blest that I lie on.

When Letitia next spoke, it was from her pillow. "You won't go?" she asked.

Corporal Leg'r  had fetched in his superior officer's shoes and a shoe-brush.

"Ma'am, no," said he, getting to work.

On the return of papa and mama, something waked Letty. Perhaps it was mama's voice speaking sharply. "Better see him to his room, Leg'r ," she was saying.

But Letitia unworried, was already asleep. It is the mere routine of things that papas have to be helped to bed in a Letty's experience in them.

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Cooks, following Christmas dinner, leave until next morning. Holidays spent at home seem gloomy affairs to papas and mamas too.

“Toddy has just sent for us to join the rest at his house for eggnog,” said mama about dark.

“You told him we would not?” returned papa.

“I told him that we would.”

“We’ll stay home — with Letty,” said papa.

“Leg’ré will, certainly,” said mama.

“You shall not ask him to give up his Christmas evening — the men have a jollification on ——”

“It’s all arranged. Are you going with me, Buckner?”

Papa started up. “If you do, I’ll go to town,” said he; “I warn you.”

“As you please,” said mama, pleasantly. “You can’t afford to play too high though, if you do, after *last month* ——”

When papa went he was in civilian’s clothes. The crash of the door after him sounded above the raging wind and the boom of the sea. Christmas nights on a post are depressing times when it storms.

COM AND NON-COM

Mama's dress when she was ready, was scarlet and her slippers were scarlet too. Letty, standing on a chair, laid a gauzy red scarf about the lovely shoulders before the scarlet wrap should go on. She adored to wait on mama.

Afterward, because on Christmas night children are allowed to stay up, Letty and Corporal Leg'ré sat with the story-book before the downstairs fire, she in his lap. Outside the wind and the sea raged. It made her creep close to her companion.

The story-book had been sent to her by the chaplain at the last post and moreover it was fairy-tales.

"By one Andersen who sets it down his being a Christian," explained the corporal, examining the volume; "the same, no doubt, ma'am, pleasing to a chaplain."

Corporal Leg'ré, left to himself, would read to one straight through a book marking the place from time to time with a straw, but Letitia, on being consulted, preferred to choose. "The Red Shoes," which she elected to hear, he, after starting, said he couldn't get onto, on account of its being mighty peculiar.

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Letitia on the contrary thought she liked it, though at times she clutched the corporal close and heard it fearfully. Christmas nights seem to be creepy times at best.

In the story which the corporal read, so much of a passion for red shoes had lovely Karen and so averse was she to being parted from these shoes in which her feet tripped so charmingly, that she went in them to confirmation; and taking the golden cup of the sacrament from the priest's hands to her lips, she thought impatiently of the time lost from tripping it in her red shoes; these things, and others, did Karen; and again, grown older, stealing by night away from home, she danced at the ball while the one to whom she owed most, lay at home, dying. And so, dancing, dancing lightly in the red shoes, suddenly it was they dancing and not Karen at all, who herself had no power to stop; and it was the red shoes that danced Karen out of the ball-room and down the stairs and into the street and out of the town gate, in spite of herself.

She was frightened. She tried to pull off the red shoes, but they clung fast. She tore at her stockings, but the shoes were grown to her feet,



Slowly but accurately proceeded Corporal Leg're

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COM AND NON-COM

and she was borne on, on, over field, over meadows, even to the churchyard. Never believe the dead dance in the churchyards! They are better employed! It is the Karens in their red shoes, the Karens whom you know, the Karens I know!

And while Karen would gladly have sat, for even one moment, and even on a pauper grave where the bitter fern leaves grow, for her there was no rest. And as she danced on past the church door, behold, it was no Gothic arched door filling the space, but an angel, his wings from his shoulders to the ground, enfolding him.

“Thou shalt dance,” said he to Karen tripping it there among the dead, “dance in thy red shoes till thou art pale and cold and thy skin shrivels to thy skeleton. Thou shalt dance, and shall knock at doors where men and children live that they may hear and be afraid ——”

But already the red shoes had borne Karen away across the fields and the highways, dancing, dancing, ever dancing ——

There was more; but Letty buried her head in Corporal Leg'ré's blouse and they stopped. It was only the clock ticking — that noise ——

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No, not the clock —

“It’s mama!” cried Letty, and she and Corporal Leg’ré hurried to open the door. Mama it was, and early, it being even more than an hour to taps!

The light from the red globe of the hall fell on her. The rain sparkled in her hair, a little disheveled now. And something sparkled in her eyes. Was it anger?

“What drunken brutes enlisted men are, Leg’ré,” said mama sharply, dropping her cloak. “It’s disgraceful! There’s a big row on among them, most of them I suppose been to town to-day, officers called out, all sorts of heads broken, the colonel furious — you’re wanted —”

“Ma’am, yes, thank you.” Corporal Leg’ré came to attention before turning to go, his big face perturbed. “It’s sorry they’ll be, to-morrow. I’ve been there myself, ma’am; it’s sorry they’ll be, the shame they’ve brought on the post and the off’cers.”

And Corporal Leg’ré went out with haste.

“While as for *our* pleasure —” said mama. “What do you want, Letty?”

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For Letitia was touching mama's hand as they two, alone, and at a creepy time like Christmas night, were left. Mere vagaries, such as are indulged in by human natures, com, non, or private, did not disturb Letitia, she had something that really mattered at heart.

“Was the little bush lonesome, mama, did you notice, as you came in?”

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IT was at Letitia's next post, when she was all of nine years old, that she attended Marianna's party.

Your K. O., which is to say, commanding officer, commissioned officers such as captains, papas, and shavetails, non-com officers and privates, together with those attached to these in the way of mamas and families, go to make up an army garrison, as everybody knows.

If you are an officer's little daughter, you live in the row facing the sea. Should you chance to be the little daughter of a sergeant-papa, or more deplorable still, of a private, you would live on the other side of post affairs, 'cross p'rade, to the rear of canteen and bakery. Mere unattached privates such as Haines, the present soldier striker at Letitia's house, are relegated to that quarter known as barracks.

Moreover the lines on a post being strictly

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drawn, private with private, chevron with chevron, bar with bar so to speak, being the natural and inviolable way of it, why, it behooves everybody, strikers and little girls not excepted, to observe these lines.

Haines who was songfully given, had a refrain which seemed to combat this. He said he had learned it at the recruiting-station where he enlisted.

You'll yet be Major-General of the Ar-r-r-my,

trolled the joyous Haines at his tasks, such as putting ice in the refrigerator, or filling the water-cooler.

Letitia perhaps because she had been longer in the army than he, felt compelled to take a less sanguine view as to this. Her observations had led her to gather that there is only one thing to be counted as less in the scale of things than a private and that is a civilian, and this, because whereas a private has only the contumely of the rest of the army to reckon on, the cit has the eloquent opinion of the private in addition. Another thing in the private's favor, too, is that he learns the truth as regards himself early, and

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is humbled accordingly, whereas no civilian ever was as yet, who ever glimpsed a *suspicion* of facts as concerns his own worthiness.

Still Haines was not as humble, judging from his optimistic soarings in song, as a well-conducted private ought to be; but for that matter Letitia, an officer's little daughter, was not without fault herself in the social aspiration line, only her yearnings shockingly enough, went the other way. From the isolation of her eminence on off'cers' row, Letitia longed to cross the line between and go play with the youthful non-com populace.

There is always something doing in non-com row. Only yesterday Mrs. Henchy reproached Mrs. Hagan by means of a wash-board used over her head, for talking too sociably with her man. And last night a new baby arrived at Corporal Corley's, and Corley was on a bat in consequence to-day, which, however, is a thing to be looked upon leniently when it is because of a new baby.

From Letitia's standpoint of observation, babies are excellent things to have on off'cers' row too. By some singular phenomenon, the

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more babies a mama on the row is possessor of, the more time she has to plant vines along the porch railing, and to keep the cook contented, and to take an interest in the chaplain's plans to get hold of the men. Babies have other uses in the army, too. Mrs. Sergeant Crashaw knew of an off'cer's lady in the Philippines who would take the newly arrived, homesick cub-lieutenants home with her and have them make friends with her babies. Mrs. Sergeant Crashaw said it saved 'em from worse, meaning the cub-lieutenants, whatever worse may be, and she said too, slapping her iron on the holder and pausing to say it, she said the more babies that followed the flag, the better for the flag and the guns and the men and women beneath it.

On this present post, while tradition, which went back all of two years, had it that off'cers' row had blossomed with baby buggies and toddlers within recent memory, yet such is the mutable nature of garrison life, that right now besides Letitia, there was only Marianna. She, it is true, was infantile and chubby and seemingly made for bigger little girls to lead across drains and over gutters and generally to superintend

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and adore, but unfortunately Letitia's mama did not seem able to fancy the mama of Marianna, Mrs. Leigh. Indeed, she said so to papa. He had been curt about it. He said every post was the better for more like *her*. "And is there any woman you ever do fancy?" he asked.

"I can't say as a rule there is," said mama amiably; "as a general thing I prefer your sex because they prefer me. To be sure I've never done much to win my own but on the other hand, women are not generous in attitude toward my type. It hardened me toward my sex early. I remarked to Mrs. Leigh, not knowing then that she was the chaplain's right hand of appeal, that before they herded the men into collars and cuffs for an evening of weak-tea magic-lantern pictures, or placed a full edition of Samuel Smiles on their library shelves, they had better take a lesson or two from the experiment of offering them ginger-ale for beer. Whereat Mrs. Leigh came back at me on the score of strikers, my uses of whom she assumes to criticise, and asked me whether I found Haines the better nurse-girl or housemaid? Naturally I am not going to have Letty over there the enduring time

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after that. And whatever *my* gain, you *know*, Buckner, you've admitted it, my way hasn't been to the detriment of strikers. Everything that is best in them comes out in their care of Letty and me. Never for one instant has a striker, as I have found them, failed to remember his place as an enlisted man. Letty's and my dependence on them, keeps them steady, too. As for the other part of it, Letitia is the only thing of my sex that ever has given me even the benefit of the doubt; I've kept that, please credit me, Buckner, but the realization of the rest has only hardened me."

Marianna thus being interdicted for daily, not to say hourly intercourse, Letitia looked over toward the non-com quarters with longing.

In the army you must not question, you must accept. Occasionally however, if you are very human, you will be moved to seek light on certain matters. Letitia's best-informed friend on post was Sergeant Mason and she opened up this question of social lines with him, joining him for the purpose one Sunday afternoon down on the breakwater wall. The friendship between these two dated from earlier, and for Letitia, prehistoric

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days, though they had not seen each other for a number of posts between. It was he perforce, who had recalled it on Letitia's arrival some months back, taking his big watch out for the purpose and showing her a ring of little dents thereon.

"Gettin' your second teeth kind of late, too, aren't you?" he had inquired whereupon Letitia's tongue sought the gap left by a missing molar and speech being thus rendered impracticable, she lifted her gaze to his and nodded, and thereupon the friendship was taken up on the old footing.

On her joining him this Sunday afternoon, Sergeant Mason promptly promoted her to a seat by his side on the wall where they chatted pleasantly and sociably together.

The sight of a non-com papa out walking with his offspring up the beach beyond the wigwag station, which is to say beyond the line of the officers' houses, brought Letitia to her point, which was that she craved to be bunkie, which is to say again, playfellow with somebody near her own size.

"Is it *a reason* why off'cers' little girls can't play with non-coms?" she queried of her friend,

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for a reason like a colonel's edict, is final, and when an interdiction is because of either of these things you give up at once.

"Is it a reason?" therefore she repeated.

It was at this same moment her own striker, Haines, came sauntering around the wigwag station dazzling in the splendor of his Sunday dike and taking the beach as it were.

Begun with as a raw and turned out in time from a drill instructor's hands, a Haines is then what you call well set up. And when he puts it all on with a joyous splendor, and an air of owning the soil, you accuse him of bucking for orderly; unquestionably you would have accused Haines of it now, but that you saw it was because of Mrs. Leigh's pretty nurse-girl, Maggie, out walking with a young lady friend, this being the unexplained and peculiar effect of pretty nurse-maids on privates.

But the sight of joyous privates however innocently engaged, is even more marked in its peculiar effects on sergeants, than is that of nurse-maids on the private, only in a different way. Letitia long had noticed that such a sight rouses sergeants to unexplainable fury. And in



Is it a reason why off'cers' little girls can't play with non-coms?

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answer to her query as to the reason she could not mingle with non-coms, Sergeant Mason made a sweep up-beachward with his pipe and including the swaggering Haines in its circle, made answer.

“There’s the reason,” said he with gloom not to say ire; “there’s the reason, which same truth is what his super’or instructors endeavors hard and early to beat into his rookie head with lip-laborin’ langwidges.”

Letty in her time had seen a raw recruit, which is to say rookie, or two, herself, under process of being made into something more promising. It is done with violent ejaculation and the language of contempt, along with more or less of an incidental thing called drill.

To address a jaunty and well-set-up Haines after all his months at being a soldier-man, in any such fashion as is habitual toward a rookie, is to call him down. To assume there is anything a Haines has still to learn, is the acme of bitter cruelty.

Yet Letitia’s sergeant friend proceeded to do that thing now. Not that Haines could hear him at all, being some several hundred yards up the

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beach nearer the pretty Maggie. It was only that it is imperative for sergeants, at sight, of a private out on a joyous hike, to have to ease their minds somehow. Sergeant Mason eased his now.

“Stand up, my buck,” he adjured the distant Haines, in the language of a raw squad’s own tender nurse and instructor, “throw up your head, drag in your chin, suck up your stomach, wipe that smile off your face! What’re you tryin’ to celebrate? You think you’re Major-General Miles? Says you, if I recall *you* right, my man, when requested to set us straight on how to wheel by fours, says *you*, ‘Number One stands fast and marks time in his tracks and Number Four wheels on a radius of ninety degrees.’!”

Which to Letitia, sitting attentive on the breakwater wall, hardly seemed to elucidate the matter she was seeking to understand. She approached it from another side.

“Ranney can play with non-coms,” she suggested.

Now Ranney was the wash-lady’s son, and he lived across the commons which bounded post and came with his mother on Monday mornings to Letitia’s house for the clothes. It seemed to

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Letty that Ranney was blessed with many privileges. "*He* can play with the non-coms," she repeated not unenviously, to her old friend.

But that person's scorn was even larger. "Which is all you'd look for in a bloomin' cit," was his prompt not to say contemptuous reply.

From Letitia's standpoint, however, a Haines has his value. For one thing he always has the news. Later in the evening of this same day when he reported in the kitchen of No. 7, he had an item for the cook and Letitia of no little moment, which he had from the pretty nursemaid.

The attitude of a Haines toward the life about him is jocular. If he likes his colonel that superior person is an old fox, and if the contrary is the case, he is a goat. Pleasantly enough the present elderly and bachelor colonel was a fox. Also so jolly and laughing even if outspoken a lady as Mrs. Leigh is sure to be popular with her captain-husband's men. Marianna, just about to be four years old, had been promised a party by her mama as Letitia knew, though she had wondered who besides herself there was to go to

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it. According to Haines, Mrs. Leigh had wondered too.

“And so,” he here related, “didn’t she up and ask the colonel if she might have the non-com young ’uns over for it, and didn’t the old fox agree?”

The best of us are egotists. “And me?” inquired Letitia anxiously.

Mrs. Leigh had the all-embracing soul of true democracy. “You and the quarters and Ranney Geoghagen,” stated the reassuring Haines, “and oh, my eye, in consequence, won’t there be hustling along non-com row?”

There was; preceded first by awed consternation, and next by fevered reviews of the wardrobes of every little boy and girl thereon. Succeeding these things, as Haines faithfully reported, the mamas and the big sisters of that quarter of post made hurried trips over to town, after which machines hummed and needles flew, and there was hurry and flurry and agitation up and down the line.

Hearing this, Letitia was visited with no little doubt as to what she herself had to wear, but when the day came mama, who was dressing

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to go over to town to a bridge, settled it practically.

“Your pink gingham is clean,” she said, “and bring your ribbon, and I will tie the bow on your hair.”

Then when both she and Letty were ready, she advised a mutual start, for it was the cook’s afternoon out.

“And I can’t miss this boat,” explained mama.

It might have been embarrassing to get there so ahead of time but that Mrs. Leigh called down to the premature guest to come up-stairs. When she arrived she found that lady and Mrs. Jamie, the adjutant’s wife, who had come over to help the party along, both on their knees before Marianna. Mrs. Leigh was a merry personage who laughed at pleasantries and perplexities alike. Haines said she was the lady on post most popular with the ladies and mama the one most popular with the gentlemen, whatever popular may be.

Mrs. Leigh had a laughing way of saying she was too old a hand at this business of being a mama, since her captain-husband demanded

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so much mothering, to worry over so small an affair as Marianna, but the news she now confided to the guest seemed to that person to be calamitous.

As a general thing Marianna was garbed in gingham rompers, thereby adding to her peace of mind and to the saving of the washing.

“But behold,” her mother explained to Letitia, “she has grown so plump inside of them and all unsuspected, there’s nothing festive of her summer dresses we can get her into for the party.”

And yet the mama of Marianna could laugh!

Marianna herself, plump and solid, showed a threatening attitude of mind. “I’ll be four years old at my party,” she stated ominously.

It might have been all right if the two ladies had not laughed even more, Letitia felt that. But when Mrs. Jamie, by opening seams, got the straining wristbands of a dress over the plump hands, and when Mrs. Leigh had tied a sash about her little daughter’s circumference with a view to bridging the gap behind, and both then sank back from their knees on the floor, overcome with the mirth of it, Letitia felt that Mari-



As a general thing Marianna was garbed in gingham rompers

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anna's eyes were not turning from one face to the other for nothing. Indeed her gaze seemed to be demanding, was her mama laughing at *her*?

Suspicion makes us cross.

"It pinches," said Marianna indignantly, holding out a wrist.

Mrs. Jamie shrieked and fled into the hall and when later, Letitia took Marianna's hand to lead her down, that plump person went slowly step by step, with a mind full of evident doubt and threatening uncertainty.

"Does Marianna know it's non-coms coming to her party?" inquired Letitia, for the guests were beginning to arrive.

"Marianna is a baby, Letitia," explained Mrs. Leigh; "she doesn't know what non-com means," which later went to show that mamas don't *always* know.

The daughter of big Sergeant Finney came first, brought by her mama to the door. She was a little thing, pink and white, and her yellow-white curls still damp, were ranged in a painstaking tier about her head. She held tight to Mrs. Leigh's finger when her own mama went away, and her name uttered in a whisper Letitia

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caught to be Wosemawi. When her piqué cloak was removed, Wosemawi proved to be lace-edged and beruffled in further painstaking tiers from the hem upward, and adorned with a chain, a locket and blue bows besides.

Letitia sought Marianna's hand and held it tight. You could not tell from her ominously set little face what Marianna thought but still —

Freddy arrived next in a velvet suit, a ruffled shirt and a pink tie, and explained that the little brother whose cap he here removed was named Larry. Like the curls of Wosemawi, the edifice known as a roach surmounting Larry's small brow, was still damp. Freddy had a birthday present for Marianna tied in tissue-paper with a pink ribbon and at this it developed that Wosemawi had one too, tied with a blue ribbon. Mrs. Leigh looked overcome and as if the presents were an unexpected feature.

But she had to turn from them to Harriet Maud and after receiving at her hands a package tied with scarlet ribbons, to help her out of *her* wraps. Not that Harriet was so small but that she was so fine. Her plaid silk skirt stood out at right angles to her young person and together

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with a multiplicity of embroidery-edged under-affairs rustled when she moved, while the hair of her was braided and tied with four sizable ribbon bows, N.E., N.W., S.E., and S.W., of the points, so to speak, of her young head.

And then so fast did they come, Augusta, Fritzie, Katy, Victorine, Bettina, Albert, Theodore, Henry, Chaffee, Wilhelmina, Nora, that it was only presently that Letitia realized Ranney was arrived too, the civilian guest, and clothed with such an air of large and beaming cheerfulness as with one agreeably lending himself to the moment, that one forgot to notice what he had on. And packages now, tied with every hue, piled the table votively. It was one Eileen however, who precipitated the affair. Being divested of *her* tiny wraps, everything at the party became mere background for her. Arrayed in gauzy jussi cloth, the same held by bows and bows alone onto her bare baby shoulders, Eileen, whose eyes were darkly blue and whose cheeks were of the rose of dawn and whose locks were hyacinthine, and who had the feminine air of knowing it, modestly if archly held up her skirts and began to revolve on her feet, like an animated infantile

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lay figure, with the benevolent, even altruistic purpose at heart, it would appear, of affording all equal opportunity to enjoy her.

Moreover Eileen sparkled when she laughed, and seeming to have been born laughing, such abandonment to gaiety robbed baby egotism of its gross quality.

"She is Quartermaster Sergeant O'Reilly's, she is," explained a voice, the voice of Ranney, who with almost the air of host, seemed to know everything.

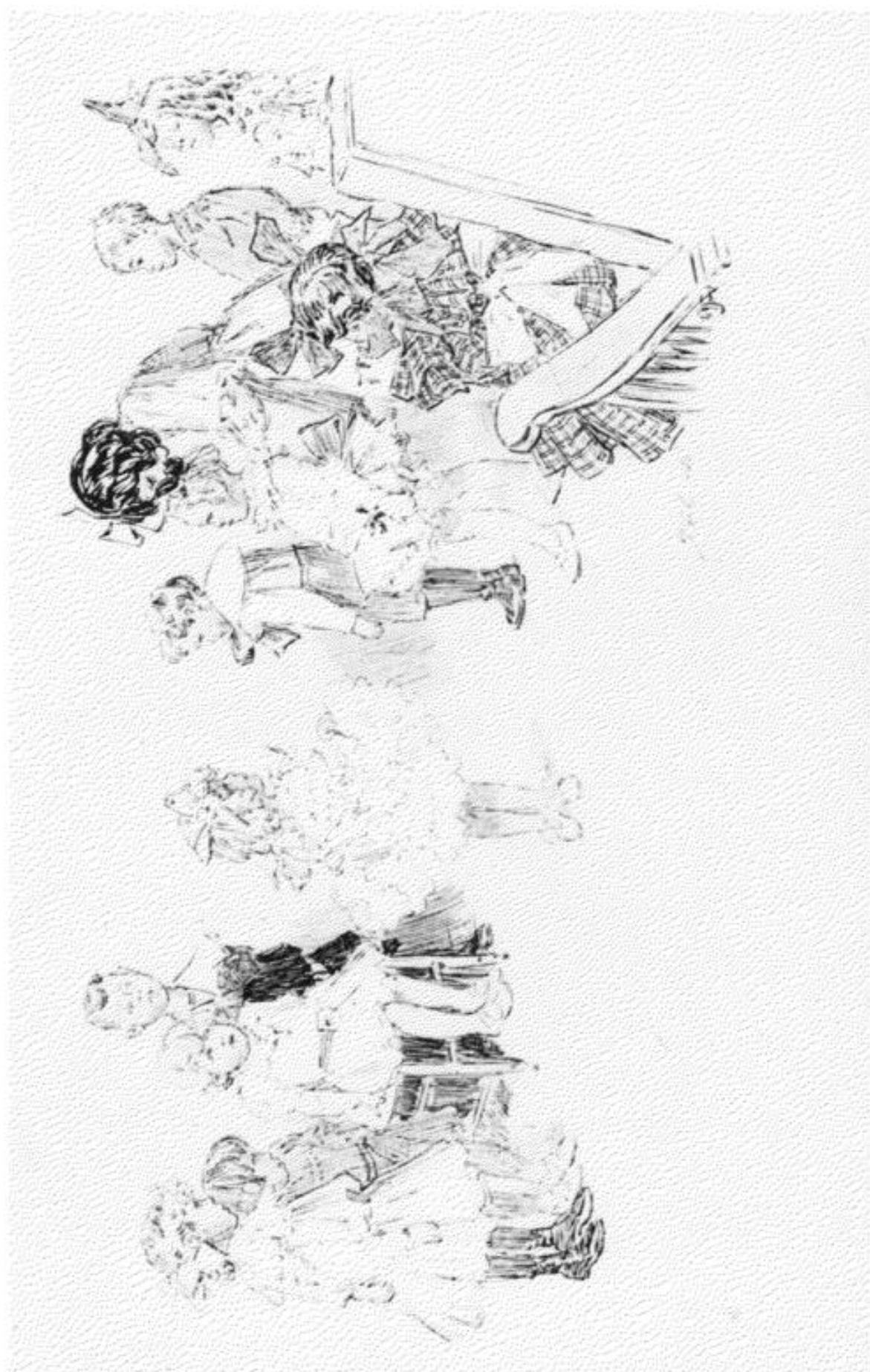
"And her mother is a French girl, I've heard, whom he married in New Orleans," added Mrs. Jamie over heads, to Mrs. Leigh.

But Eileen had not yet revealed all.

"See my pettitoat?" she inquired with confident and general appeal, and lifted her gauzy jussi layers if possible, higher.

And truly, no wonder! Crowning injury of maddening frivolity that petticoat was, witness to the depletion of unnumbered bargains in five and ten cent store lace, run through with ribbons, and further, picked out with tiny bows at intervals around.

And it was *Marianna's party*. Letitia felt that.



Everything else at the party became mere background for her

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And so, it proved, did Marianna. Could she have been asked to bear more? Could she be expected to stand it further?

Evidently not. Scarlet and bursting from her habiliments, the sash altogether inadequate behind, Marianna stepped forward and slapped Sergeant O'Reilly's Eileen in her astonished baby face.

"You're nothing but a non-com anyway," avowed the weeping Marianna with sobs.

And then it was that her astounded, her incredulous, her shocked mama led her little daughter out of the room, and the party was urged to go on.

Parties, as you may know, are self-conscious affairs. Told to go on, this one stood in its arrested tracks about the room rigid and as it were, smitten dumb. And after a time there comes to be something disconcerting even alarming, in the awe of prolonged and appalled stillness. Wosemawi and Larry emitted respectively, a tear and a whimper simultaneously, whereat Eileen, released from the paralysis of her baby amaze, clung to Mrs. Jamie's hand and gave indignant vent to her sense of outrage.

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"Games," said Mrs. Jamie, as soon as possible, and with a sprightliness born of desperation; "at parties we play games!"

But Harriet Maud wouldn't. There are grades, you see, other than between coms and non-coms. Every one was directed into place but Harriet, who respread her plaid breadths on Captain Leigh's Morris-chair, and said she didn't care to play.

Such an attitude casts a new damper on reviving spirits and makes pussy-wants-a-corner seem a colorless and unworthy pursuit.

"It's her silk dress," declared Augusta, herself in challis, tossing her head and upheld in this opinion as could be seen, by most of her own sex present.

One Katy's was the dissenting voice. "Her mother said to my mother's face, she wouldn't athought buck privates 'd been invited."

And Katy tossed *her* head, she and Wilhelmina and Albert, by reason of their respective papas' standings, being reckoned as buck privates.

It was Ranney who settled it. To mingle alike with all grades on a post evidently enables one to bring a comprehensive understanding to bear

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on the whole posse comitatus of garrison life. Ranney had divined the true source of Harriet's haughty pride.

"She lives at the K. O's," he explained. "Her mother keeps house for the colonel."

It was true. The colonel being a bachelor, Harriet and her mama and sergeant-papa resided in the back of his quarters.

It was here that Marianna was led back. Tears yet hung on her lashes and her little bosom yet heaved beneath the straining yoke, but the moment for which a party is made, nay, which is the party itself, was arrived, the supreme moment of cake, candies, and ice-cream, and Marianna was returned to her guests.

A march, as everybody knows, is the medium by which you approach the supreme moment, and as Mrs. Leigh had confided to Letitia beforehand, the phonograph was relied on to furnish it. To Mrs. Jamie it was assigned to marshal the forces, and here she made her blunder.

"And what little boy shall lead with Marianna?" she asked, and again with a sprightliness intended to lend enthusiasm to the occasion

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which up to now had seemed to lack it. And having thus asked she realized her mistake.

Though there were eight little boys present it was not they, seeing they were given no chance, but the little girls who with fierceness and shrillness undertook to settle the question of precedence.

“Fritzie, his papa’s top-sergeant —— ”

“Sure, but Freddy’s is the longest on this here post —— ”

“Albert’s papa went up San Juan hill —— ”

“Theodore, his has been to the Philip-pines —— ”

“You’re only in the band —— ”

“A master-gunner’s a —— ”

But while bedlam contested, one stood, cool, observant, aloof, outside the seething, feminine maelstrom obscuring the central Marianna, Mrs. Jamie and the little boys.

The eye of the desperate lady espied him. It chanced that she did not know him.

“And who is *this* little boy ?” she demanded probably to mark time, for she was realizing, as Letitia could have told her, that a mistake would go down in local non-com history.

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The freckled son of Mrs. Geoghagen the wash-lady, thus addressed, gave a humorous and indulgent glance from the mêlée to Mrs. Jamie and back. Then he stepped in calmly and plucked the plump and still palpitating Marianna from the midst of 'em.

The disputants fell back, open-mouthed, at such masterfulness.

"Better let 'em fight it out among themselves," he advised genially. "I'll take her in."

Later when the party adjourned, emerging in overflow from Mrs. Leigh's front door, retreat had sounded and p'rade was lively with the band and color as the flag came down. When it was all over the party separated near the flagstaff.

Letitia returned toward officers' row. Non-coms, of course, go the other way. Ranney, with his air of sang-froid and general survey, was left at the foot of the flagstaff.

"Good-by," said Letty.

"Good-by," said the non-coms.

"So long," said the genial Ranney, affably.

Letty overtook mama at the corner strolling homeward, but on reaching No. 7, she sought

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the kitchen. The cook and Haines were yet to be told of the afternoon's affair.

As she had hoped, Haines was there, dropped in for a moment before mess-call, and amiably engaged in a friendly grinding of the coffee for the cook. It was not to be wondered that Haines was a favorite with that class. And grinding away, he was whistling softly through his teeth that lively air:

You'll yet be Major-General of the Ar-r-r-my.

But he paused to hear the news. At its close his remark, while addressed to the cook, seemed to be applicable to Ranney.

“Now ain't that like a bloomin' cit, buttin' in?”

AND THE LAST STATE
OF THAT MAN

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AND THE LAST STATE OF THAT MAN

*May they give you back your beer
Long before this time next year —*

IT was the new ditty to which Private Haines, the striker at Letitia's house, shoveled coal into the furnace, for she, papa and mama were still at No. 7.

Though she was a big girl now there was school for her, or not, according to the convenient location of the post, the favorable condition of the family finances, and a few other contingencies such as the trouble of starting her. Right now, owing to the condition of finances, there was not, but, after all, much is to be studied and pondered which is not taught at school, as for instance this new and menacing arrangement which had come about on posts, and concerning which everybody, colonel, captains, papa, sergeants,

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who was not grave, was gloomy. Exactly what it was Letitia had not grasped, but she did know that the present song favored of Private Haines, grew out of it.

In the last week, Letty had learned another thing. Papa's Aunt Emma who had raised him was coming to visit at No. 7; she also learned though she could not have said whether from papa's or mama's mention of it or from the letter from Aunt Emma, discussed before her, that she was coming "*to straighten things out.*"

"She'll be so popular on post when her views get about," mama suggested.

"In the present hole we are in we are the ones to talk," said papa with considerable sharpness.

"Well," said mama, "you can go over to town to meet her; I won't."

But when the time came papa proved to be officer of the day and it was Letitia who went and Sergeant Mason, who since he was going to town anyway, was to attend to the baggage.

The day for Letty had started badly, for when she went down-stairs she found Private Haines on hand, true, but not singing ditties.

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Yesterday had been pay-day and when she came down, Haines was sitting on the edge of the cook's kindling-wood box, perhaps from some view of the same as being penitential, his elbows on his knees, his head in his hands. It sounded very like he groaned.

She had her ribbons to get him or the cook to tie up the plaits behind her either ear but beholding him, desisted.

Some claim that English is elegant or not according as it exactly expresses the meaning. Letitia's voice still had a share of its baby quality though she was a big girl now. "Rotgut?" she inquired anxiously, this being the name applied to the phenomenon synonymous with pay-day on this post.

But Private Haines would not allow it. He looked up, a wreck of the spruce and swaggering Haines of the day before and shook his head at the implication.

"Cream-sody," he avowed instead; "the same as tweaks your vitals place o' your nose, an' filtered 'stead o' swallowed, 'd show that tobacco to make a man's further spendin's on cigarettes, wastin's." And moved by this self-

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conjured picture of his sufferings, Private Haines groaned again and forthwith made a clean breast of it. "Six of us on leave," he declared, "an' feelin' our oats a bit, an' this morning here we be, Adams and Kinney and Rudd in the mill and the corporal sure to be busted!"

Now busted means reduced to the ranks. This was grave. And Corporal Jennings boning for a master-gunner's chance, too! It is almost a pity to know so much of company affairs since it makes one so concerned.

Letitia drew near to the knee of the dejected Haines. "Will they jug you?" she inquired solicitously.

Now to jug you is but another term for guard-house.

"Sure to, ma'am," said the penitent sadly; "I've just got in this morning, I haven't reported."

The affairs of Private Haines as Letitia knew, were already involved.

For one thing the bill at the tailor's for the reclaiming of his clothes from the consequences of the previous pay-day was still unpaid; also Private Haines owed two dollars on account

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to his wash-lady, while temporary accommodation by papa, himself as aforesaid, not uninvolved, had had to be effected, to carry Haines through the month at the barber-shop; moreover his sister Mamie in Tennessee each month looked for a trifling remittance from her enlisted brother's munificence.

"Any velvet?" therefore Letitia asked further, which is to say, "Any money left?" the affairs of Private Haines being thus intimately in her keeping.

It was evident that he had not investigated that point himself, and at this, he went down in his pockets hopefully to bring forth a single small metal token, reading "Good for Five Cents."

"White money?" Letitia asked also hopefully, for white money is a species of credit at the post exchange, and it too, consists in being a small metal token bearing legends such as five cents, ten cents, twenty-five cents. But this was not white money. Nor did Private Haines make clear just what sort of specie it was.

"Nope," he responded sadly; "and not a red besides."

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And only yesterday was pay-day! They gazed at each other confounded!

And the cares of Private Haines were still with Letitia when later, she and Sergeant Mason started off together to town to meet Aunt Emma. Crossing p'rade they beheld a detail of prisoners leaving the guard-house going to work on the new running track. The line of them was long.

Letty's heart being with the men, it is natural that her interest should be there, too.

"What makes 'em so many all the time now, do you s'pose?" she asked earnestly.

No one on a post knows better what he is talking about than a Sergeant Mason. He too, had been watching that line emerge and at the question, his brows clipped together alarmingly and turning about on his little charge, so fiercely did he frown down on her, he might have been the giant considering her tender fitness to make his next mouthful, except that Letitia was not at all afraid. Instead her hand was comfortably in his as they turned onto the dock leading to the boat.

"What makes the guard-house so full?" Sergeant Mason's brows clipped together.

"The Aunty Cantys," said he moodily, and

THE LAST STATE OF THAT MAN with such gloom withal, the confidence might rather be put down to the easing of his own feelings than to any intended enlightening of his charge, "The Aunty Cantys are doin' it, which is to say them female butters-in."

His bitterness about it would seem to have fired him into double-quick time. Or perhaps it was the *General Jackson's* apparent intention of that instant casting off that hastened him. Letitia achieved something between a skip and a run to keep up. But she was interested. You don't have to understand by any means, you know, to be that. She had heard of the anti-canteen, of course, but the other was new.

"Do I know 'em — butters-in? What are they?" she queried, politely.

Sergeant Mason with the care of a wet-nurse, or of a non-com mother, guided her across the gang-plank held for their coming. Once over and up-stairs, he replied, the consequent gap in the dialogue needing no bridging between friends.

"They are — er — h'm — meddlers," said her friend, and though in deference to his company, he swallowed the expletive so nearly out, it seemed to color and tincture the air never-

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theless, "butters-in are meddlers, an' in this here case, female meddlers"; his statements, however, still were gloomy rather than vindictive; "h'Undines and water-nymphs is their h'elite army names but the rank and file, *they* term 'em butters-in."

Now such is the pleasure of being with one's sergeant, Letitia clung to his hand when he would have led her to the cabin, preferring the airy rigors of a March day outside with him. Moreover she could feel that the conversation was getting on familiar and consequently pleasurable ground again for she knew all about nymphs, even if she did not catch the implication here. Her book of fairy-tales had taught her such things, augmented by reminiscences of an old non-com neighbor. "Mrs. Sergeant Crashaw knew a corporal who saw a mermaid off a transport," she reported.

"And no anti-canty then, either?" the other rejoined sardonically. It was evident, however, that he himself had more to say, and Letitia listened politely.

"I'm not saying they didn't mean well," Sergeant Mason conceded, as with one holding

THE LAST STATE OF THAT MAN himself down to be fair, "I'm sayin' they didn't know. Would you expect rank and file, I ask you now, to properly reg'late pink tea drinkin's for the ladies? Or to make rulin's that females shouldn't have no ice-cream set-tos, an' money changings in church parlors? And I ask you further, since the kind ladies were so set on workin' for the poor soldiers, shouldn't they 'a' looked ahead first? Was they figurin' on tepid water bein' the only *dive* bev'ridge, when they took our beer away? Tell me that?"

And again so fiercely did he frown on her, Letitia felt almost as if he considered her to blame. He had still more to ask, too.

"And did they reason," demanded he, "that sars'p'rilla and fizz stomach washes was the only other thirst quenchers savin' beer, tell me that?"

But this brought Letty into the conversation again. "There's cream-sodas," she testified, having it herself from Private Haines.

But her friend this time passed her observation by. The *General Jackson* was making wharf on the city side. "There's one of 'em now," announced Sergeant Mason unexpectedly, and

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with the triumph of a person who offers evidence uncontrovertible however much in itself deplorable. Nor did he mean, as Letitia might reasonably have supposed, one of those well-intentioned if mistaken ladies he seemed to hold such bitterness against; he was referring to a drunken soldier on the dock, being taken back to camp.

“Hospital full of ’em sick from it,” he avowed, “guard-house full of ’em mean from it; for they’ve drove the man what’s goin’ to have his glass now and then, to the gin-mill and the rotten rum and worse, them kind hydropathic ladies did, when they took his glass o’ beer away.”

And Letitia’s feelings being with sergeants and the enlisted man, she held sympathetically to her friend’s hand as he led her across the gang-plank.

Letty, of course, had seen Aunt Emma before. She was a tall and imposing person and a little later, as she emerged through the train-gate, she turned her unflinching gaze on her little niece and looked her as it were, through and through.

Then she kissed her. “So they have kept you

THE LAST STATE OF THAT MAN unspoiled, at any rate," she said, "which is something."

Her utterances were so final there seemed no room, even if there was courage to say more. And then, too, Letitia had not at all followed what it was that she had been *kept*.

"We are to catch the boat back for lunch," she explained remembering her part of it.

But on the arrival at No. 7, Aunt Emma's greetings were terse.

"Well, Buckner," she said. And papa smiled feebly.

"Well, Nina," to mama, whereat mama smiled back sweetly.

"Still presiding, Aunt Emma?" she asked.

That person, it developed later, had never visited on a post before though she had driven about one or two, at West Point when papa was there, and at Washington. "And my observations now that I *am* here," said she that evening to papa, "I intend to embody in a report on the present aspect of the enlisted man's condition for the inter-Western-States' Convention."

"I wish then," said papa even earnestly for him, "that you would let me make you see the

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truth about this thing, and while you are here help you to grasp the real situa ——”

“Not at all,” said Aunt Emma with decision. “I prefer to see for myself, and cannot permit any bias or prejudicing by your comments and opinions. Considering what you have chosen for yourself, how is it possible for you to view the matter fairly from my standpoint?”

“Don’t judge the army by what I’ve done for *myself*,” said papa, sharply. “Don’t make *that* mistake. And believe me when I say the enlisted man lost his best safeguard when they took his beer away.”

“Which untenable and unbelievable position you always have taken,” said Aunt Emma, retorting; “naturally I prefer to see things while I am here for myself.”

“If you really want undercurrents and conditions unbiased by interpretations, let me refer you to Letitia,” said mama.

“Implying a common level of understanding? Thank you,” said Aunt Emma, tartly. “I suppose I am to take your meaning to be that?”

“As you please,” said mama, accommodat-

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ingly. "I meant it the other way, however. 'Unto
babes,' you know ——"

If Aunt Emma did know, she did not show it. She merely turned to papa and asked him if he knew yet, just what his present difficulties this time were going to amount to?

Yet she was kind. "And now that my trunk has arrived," she said next morning to her great-niece, "if you will come up-stairs I will find you the doll I have brought you."

But the while she was getting it, with Letitia obediently standing and waiting, though she had really outgrown dolls by now, Aunt Emma was talking to mama in her own room next.

"Is it to be wondered I feel as I do? Buckner was all a young man raised by a person with my views, should be, when he left me," she was saying. "The rest has been yours, you married him — yours and the army's ——"

"The swing of the pendulum the other way I'd call it, Aunt Emma," returned mama; "you'd had him a good many years. Extremists' children, or nephews, which is the same thing you know, are apt ——"

"I'd have given my right hand any time for

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Buckner," said Aunt Emma. And Buckner meant papa.

Having received her doll, Letitia went out in the hall bound down-stairs and kitchen-ward, the kitchen being the real heart of a house, you know, where one carries her presents to show them, but at the head of the steps she paused and turned about and went to papa's door. Why, she could not have said, only that somehow, for some reason she could not have fathomed, she felt an impelling to him.

He was in his room at his desk, jerking papers and memoranda out of pigeonholes savagely.

"Go on away, I can't be bothered," he looked up to say.

Letitia went. She really would have liked, you know, if he had had time, —

Nor was Aunt Emma one to waste time. Besides straightening things out, which seems an unpleasant thing in the doing all around, she took the intervals to go about to see what a post is like.

Evidently to her it was a place open to suspicion. She made you feel that all the time, for since mama did not seem to care to go, Aunt

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Emma took Letitia, not for guidance at all, knowing exactly what she wanted to do, but for company.

Starting therefore on an initiatory tour of observation she headed straight for the men's side of things.

"We'll begin at the first and investigate them in order as they come," she said, reaching a building and mounting the steps to the penthoused doorway before she turned to look down on Letty. For that person was venturing a remonstrance upward. She could not affirm ladies *did not come* here but she also couldn't remember to have seen them, as a rule.

"Maybe ladies don't, you know," she ventured politely.

"Don't what?" said Aunt Emma, from the top step disconcertingly. It was not that Aunt Emma was sharp, only decided.

"It's — it's the post exchange," explained Letitia. Now it was right enough for Letitia to go with Private Haines to post exchange for purchases, though she did not go as much now as when she was a little, little thing, and while, brought to the point, she had not seen

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ladies there as a rule, perhaps they *could* go. So she retreated behind the mere statement of affairs, "It's the post exchange," she repeated apologetically.

"All the better," said Aunt Emma; "I'll never learn younger what the post exchange is."

And she faced about and entered, whereupon Letitia mounted the steps after her. Since Aunt Emma would, you see, —

A rookie at the reading-table looked up from his illustrated paper. Evidently then, Letitia judged, even rookies are surprised to see tall old ladies here. Also two men at pool desisted in a hesitant, deferential sort of way, glancing indeterminate from the cues to the balls to Aunt Emma; two others in a far doorway, and in brief garbing, rubbing their heads vigorously with bath-towels, in truth as Letitia could have explained, just from the gymnasium across the hall and shower-bath, shot hastily out of sight; while in the front alcove before which stood a blackboard on an easel, bearing such statements as "Fried Oysters," "Sandwiches," two youthfully boyish soldiers eating pie, blushed furiously.

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Now the shelves on one side of the building in which Aunt Emma and Letitia stood, gave the place the appearance of a corner grocery or country store. Aunt Emma, were she noting, could have seen canned goods, crackers, sweet cakes, olives, pickles, shoes, shirts, razors, towels, soaps, tooth-powders, knives, buttons, thread, what-not, while the man behind the counter was passing tobacco and cigarette papers to a soldier purchaser. A bunch of bananas hung over this same man's head, and in wire baskets were apples, oranges and lemons. On the counter conspicuously displayed, stood bottles of pop, ginger-ale, and sarsaparilla, the same looking dusty and undisturbed, as if they had been there for some time.

Now one thing Letitia did know and this was that the person behind the counter was a retired non-com and a sergeant at that, and that if one was not afraid, it would help Aunt Emma on her way to tell her so; for truth to say, she had her own peculiar methods of address on post not calculated to make her popular.

"What is the nature and purpose of this place I find myself in, my man?" said she approach-

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ing the counter and accosting the retired non-com sergeant. Aunt Emma addressing the soldier made one think of the chaplain on this post when he stopped to chat with the little boys and girls. For Letitia's part she always hurried into the protection and hiding of No. 7 when she saw him coming. There had been a chaplain or sky-pilot, as the men call 'em, on a previous post, whom Letitia on the contrary, ran to overtake.

But if the square-shouldered old sergeant objected, he did not show it. He had been too long a soldier, you see. He gave attention properly though he did look a little at sea at the lady's question.

Letitia emerged from the background. She and the old sergeant were acquainted.

"She does not know exactly what the post exchange is for, Aunt Emma doesn't, you know," she explained.

The post-exchange steward at this comprehended and cheered up. "It's for the men, yes, ma'am," he responded, addressing Aunt Emma; "the profits go back to the companies' funds you see, yes, ma'am."



What is the nature and purpose of this place I find myself in, my man?

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There once was a captain on a post, who would meet a man up for charges, with a fore-finger tapping the air and the salutation rapidly and disconcertingly enunciated, "Guilty, I suppose, guilty? Let's get through with this thing, of course you're guilty?"

And to much this same reassuring method of approaching a subject, Aunt Emma added further the air of one who says, "*and no evasions, mind now.*"

"Profits? what profits?" she returned promptly and with embarrassing conciseness to the retired sergeant. "And when you say 'the men,' am I to understand that you mean the enlisted soldier?"

The enlisted soldier to the number present, was listening. It is pleasant and raises a person perceptibly in his self-respect to hear himself thus audibly discussed in the lump as it were, with himself cognizant.

The retired non-com behind the counter, eyed Aunt Emma with a lowering suspicion based on a deeper and older affront from over-zealous ladies than this. His clean-shaven, square-jawed and grizzled countenance as well

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as his rejoinder expressed sarcasm quite sardonic.

“Profits, ma’am? Did you ask ‘*what*’ profits? Lord love you,” and had a bit of change in manner come in his way of addressing Aunt Emma about this time, too? — “Lord love you, there ain’t much doin’ in the way of pink shirts and pretty pocket-handkerchee profits from files-on-parade, these days! The money goes where the booze offers in this world. And when it’s rot-gut they sell a man, what tears at his in’ards like a Mauser, it turns him mean an’ sends him to worse, beggin’ your pardon for plain speaking, since you wanted to know, an’ he ain’t apt to be let go to find his way back to camp till he’s broke. Oh, we do a little along here. Most of the men keep a credit with us. The eats sells best now, an’ the pool tables do fairly well, but men are men an’ they ain’t comin’ here to guzzle pop when they want their harmless glass of beer, an’ which is just what they ain’t goin’ to find offerin’ ’em on the outside, either, when they go. He’s robbed of his harmless glass all around, for there ain’t enough profit to the seller in beer, you see, ma’am.”

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According to her light, well-meaning Aunt Emma saw. "Which is a very excellent thing," said she with emphasis. "The less profit in any intoxicating liquors whatever, the better."

"Lord," said the non-com sergeant to this under his breath, while the enlisted man to the number present, unquestionably if guardedly, snickered.

But Aunt Emma having seen so exactly, on account of the soldier-man's language and references being so familiar to her, was going on, "And what did you tell me is the name of this place I find myself in — post what?"

The retired non-com's mouth stood open! She hadn't even then —

He gathered up his tobaccos and began to put them back into the show-case. "Post-exchange corner grocery," he told her briefly, "some call it canteen."

And since this was the name of it familiar to Aunt Emma, at last that excellent lady understood.

"And very orderly and quiet and reputable it seems under the present conditions," she said to Letitia outside, as they went along,

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probably because there was no one else to say it to; "except for a very regrettable atmosphere of tobacco."

And then Letitia, considerably in the dark as to Aunt Emma's point of view, but doing her wondering best to follow, gave forth her famous apothegm behind which lies all philosophy of any female understanding of men. "Men smoke," said Letitia politely. And if she had known she might have said further, "And adjust the rest to that, Aunt Emma."

Now in No. 8, which was next door to papa and mama and Letitia, lived Captain and Mrs. Osborne who owned a dog. White and stubby of hair though the animal was, and hideously bowed of legs and aggressively broad of chest, with a leering droop in his one black eye and an evil and rolling intelligence in his albino pink one, Bill Osborne nevertheless, had a friendly and sociable nature one would not have looked for in so menacing an exterior. In fact, the most of his leisure he gave to No. 7 and the society of Private Haines and Letty.

Letitia on her part, was addicted to frequent and tender lovings of Bill, lovings meaning to

THE LAST STATE OF THAT MAN put her arms about Bill's neck while his head and her cheek rubbed each other pleasantly, the comfort derived in the process being that since mama and papa did not care for that sort of thing, there was Bill who did.

He and Letitia and Private Haines were in the back entry when Aunt Emma came out to them, one after-breakfast. This hallway was off to itself, with its door opening onto the rear view of life, and Private Haines used it for his part of the affairs of No. 7 and the paraphernalia thereof. This morning he was sitting on the door-sill step of the passway cleaning the brass-handled fire-irons, and Letitia and Bill were watching him do it. Absorbed in his work, Private Haines was whistling softly,

*May they give you back your beer
Long before this time next year —*

when Aunt Emma appeared, whereupon he arose promptly and desisted.

“Young man — ” began Aunt Emma. You would have thought Aunt Emma, a week now at No. 7, would have *known!*

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“Haines, ma’am,” said that individual, “Private Haines I’m called.”

But Aunt Emma who palpably did not like interruptions, ignored this. “I have been told,” said she, “that the proper way to get at an understanding of the army, is to talk with the men. I — ah — suppose now, that the place you still, and improperly, I’m glad to be able to admit, call canteen, is a very different place from what it was?”

Did Bill Osborne really leer at Private Haines, or was it only that Haines lowered a lid at Bill? Moreover, Haines’s gaze meeting that of Aunt Emma a second after, was so emptied of all but attention as to be open to suspicion. And since she wanted him to talk it would seem he was going to do so. Perhaps that was what the wink at Bill meant. Still Letitia looked from Haines to Aunt Emma doubtfully. Was there an intangible something in his manner to that lady just as there had been in that of the canteen sergeant, which Letitia felt ought not to be there? Perhaps this elderly Auntie wanting to talk with the men, just as the chaplain evidently desired to do with the children, did not know how to go

THE LAST STATE OF THAT MAN about it? Perhaps the sergeants and the Haines like the children, if they cannot get away from it, use their own methods of resenting it?

“Canteen different now, ma’am?” repeated Private Haines humbly; “Lord bless you, yes, you’re right, beggin’ your pardon for the term, which slipped out; canteen different?” Then innocently, “Why, it was a reg’lar old woman’s day nursery, *then!* Watched like suckin’ babies at the bottle, we were *then!* It was your harmless glass of beer those days, an’ sit at your table an’ chin, an’ go home sober, whatever your in’ard nat’ral man’s cravin’s for more were, *then* ——”

Aunt Emma took the chair which Private Haines, removing his paraphernalia therefrom, had offered her.

“But you must realize,” said she with some asperity, “that such temptation as was offered to the soldier and countenanced, no longer disgraces the army?”

Private Haines agreed with her readily if humbly. “Right you are, ma’am,” said he, and even gratefully too, it seemed, for the chance to agree; “you are right there. Nothing whatever to tempt a man to the canteen now. No’m, no’m,

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you don't *have* to remind us," for Aunt Emma had tried to intersperse a word, "we *know* as we owe it to the ladies, thankin' 'em kindly for the takin' of us up and doin' for us so intelligent an' helpful an' fair all around. Glad I am willin' to talk and hope that I'm genuine in my feeling about it, ma'am? Lord bless you, what should a mere enlisted man's opinion about what's best for himself be worth, I ask you? It's for the kind ladies what's studied the question for us, to tell us how we ought to think and do. I've heard too, as how even *the saloon-men* were on the ladies' side, against the burnin' shame to the country of canteen, an' I shouldn't wonder nor doubt it, comin' to understand more about it since, myself. An' speakin' of the ladies, why, ma'am, — since you want me to talk, — such was the horror of them over such a wicked thing as canteen, I was at Myer myself when they were pourin' in the town, time the matter was up, an' such evident was the ladies' horror, I saw 'em myself, flocks of them kind ladies passin' Myer, being taken out to Arlington, an' never one could bring herself to stop, so far as I heard of, to see such a wicked place as canteen for



*Right you are, ma'am . . . nothing whatever to tempt a man
to Canteen now*

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THE LAST STATE OF THAT MAN *herself!* They do tell, yes'm — an' when I've talked enough, you know, jus' stop me, — they do tell there was one old lady thought it was a beer-can, or some'n' with handles, to drink out of. Which is how, too, queer as it seems, the ign'rant soldier-man had rather the ladies would know about such things, an' I've heard that old lady's health drunk in consequence, — oh, *no*, ma'am, not in *beer*, — a hundred times, if once, since. Yes'm," cheerfully, "canteen's a changed place an' the *beer-guzzler* is about nigh gone from the army, an' the credit for the same to the ladies."

But Aunt Emma only eyed Private Haines steadily, as if she would suggest no flippancy. Moreover she would show this soldier she knew something of matters. "And what is this I hear of drinking on the outside?" she asked him.

"The same which I can't deny," said Private Haines readily. "An' since the ign'rant soldier-man has to go off post to get it and it costs more, an' p'haps he's pressed for time and don't know when he'll get any more, he seeks the best action for the least money, which you'll allow is human nature, ma'am, an' so there's sev'ral assortments

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of stomach washes and temp'rance drinks come into popularity, set up by them friends to the kind ladies, the saloon-men, such are called, f'r instance, peso and water-wagon tap an' eye-openers an' nickel-shooters, an' strip, an' one-stamp goods. Mild and harmless, all of 'em, yes'm, mere oolongs an' cream-sodys to your beers! What are they, ma'am? Lord bless you, how should *I* know? Gawd A'mighty and the rectifiers only can tell you that."

And while Bill Osborne's stump of a tail beat the floor ecstatically during the process of being loved by Letitia, her anxious understanding thus seeking some distraction, Private Haines looked Aunt Emma virtuously and blandly in the eye.

Whatever that person thought about it, she changed to another subject here. "A further thing I wished to speak to you about," said she; "I have found a place near the post where I can get yard eggs for my breakfast, instead of the storage desiccations my niece and nephew are willing to consider eggs. I saw hens about the side yard gate of a place yesterday afternoon as I passed, and went in. Just before you turn off

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the cinder-path on the way to the trolley, is a small grocery. The man was not disposed to accommodate me at first though I was willing to pay him well for them until I told him I could send a soldier from the post for them. Then he agreed, saying he could not promise delivery himself. Go for me daily during your hours here and get them. I, of course, will expect to recompense you for your trouble. The name of the man who keeps the place is Hawkins."

Letitia stopped loving Bill; the conversation had come again to matters of which she had more ken. Very often a Private Haines cannot explain or excuse himself to a superior as a Letitia can do for him.

"Why, but Aunt Emma," said she, surprised, "the colonel don't ——"

She stopped. However unexplainable might be Haines's awful wink at her, still it was a wink. Very often, even big girls start to tell things they ought not, and after some such fashion as this, have to be checked. A Letitia must not by any means tell all she knows, this one had learned from her elders some time ago,

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not even to Aunt Emma it now seemed. Perhaps it was because of this person's general attitude to the army.

"The colonel what?" inquired Aunt Emma at the pause.

"It was between 'er an' me, ma'am, beggin' your pardon," said Private Haines, humbly. Now Haines had achieved regimental fame in company minstrel shows for his impersonation of his brother in khaki, Tommy Atkins, since which time when he desired to be particularly jocular he juggled his h's. He did so now. "And what, ma'am," urbanely, "was the name of 'im, did you say, has keeps this grocery-store? Did I hunderstand you to say the name of 'im was 'Awkins?"

For the remaining week of Aunt Emma's stay, the eggs were fetched with gratifying regularity. And since mamas do not come down to breakfast and are not the ones to be troubled with the details of domestic matters anyhow, while still less are papas, this arrangement chanced to remain a matter among Aunt Emma, Letitia, the cook, Private Haines and Mr. Hawkins.

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“Haines is drinking,” said mama to papa, briefly, a day or two later.

“He has had no leave off post since pay-day,” said papa.

Nor had he any money either, Letitia could have explained. So where and how and why was he getting credit ?

About this time Captain Osborne complained to papa that Private Haines was encouraging Bill to follow him about. In previous days a striker at No. 8 had been detected in the borrowing and training of Bill for sporting purposes of his own and had been fired in consequence.

Papa said he would speak to Haines and moreover he did so, and promptly.

Letitia coming in as papa went out from doing it, Private Haines, bloodshot as to the eyes these last several days and a trifle swollen about the lower face, treated her to a huge wink and a molasses cookie produced from the egg-bag on the kitchen shelf, a cookie of the kind peculiar to glass-fronted cracker-boxes, and rendered further delectable by a dab of pink icing in its center. And the manner of

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Haines being joyous and cheerful and he continuing to chirp ditties while he polished shoes, Letitia was disarmed. She had been afraid he would prove sulky after reproof. But no such thing!

It was on the Sunday following, his tasks done, that Haines departed from No. 7 with the Osbornes' Bill following at his heels. The cook remarked on it to Letitia, for when there is company and Letty is eating in the kitchen in consequence of her place at table being needed, she and the cook remark on many passing things. But since Bill followed at a distance, afar off, as the cook pointed out, she and Letitia agreed it was a case of Bill in the matter, and not Private Haines, this type of the private always proving mellowing in its influence on cooks. Still it was a pity Haines had not noticed since it was forbidden Bill should go.

On this same Sunday afternoon, Aunt Emma elected that she and Letitia should go for a walk. She was departing for home next day.

"And I wish to note for myself a post's observance of the day," she told papa.

"The post is all right," he said with implying

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emphasis; "it is Sunday these days on post all
right."

His emphasis is what probably led Aunt Emma to extend the walk to the territory about post, she having every intention of being fair.

Moreover she had *straightened things out*, and perhaps with her departure of to-morrow in mind, paused before going now, for a few last words.

"Letitia is to start to school at once, remember," she said; "and you, Buckner ——?"

She meant papa. And did her elderly hand tremble as it laid itself on his arm?

Papa bent suddenly and touched the hand with his cheek even as Letitia might have done. "And you hope better things of me?" he asked her.

Aunt Emma's hand *did* tremble. "And shall," she told him; and then with grimness she added, "And now Letitia and I will go for our walk."

Accordingly they set forth in the gay spring sunshine. Aunt Emma took her little niece along on these occasions because she considered her a lonely child but she rarely listened to her. Letitia skipping, ran ahead, for the spring sunshine gets

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into a little girl's blood; perhaps it gets into the blood of a Private Haines too.

Unquestionably there was an air of Sunday calm on post. P'rade was deserted. Canteen together with headquarters, bakery, barracks, and hospital, was having a Sunday sleep. Such was the Sabbath calm everywhere it might have been said to be lonesome.

But Aunt Emma was going farther afield to note matters. The way led through the unsightly surrounding settlements beyond, consisting of unpaved streets, cinder-paths, rickety tenements, cottages with unsodded yards, one-storied barber-shops, small groceries with their blinds reputedly down for Sunday. Only the clang of the trolley-car around the corner disturbed the Sabbath decency of things even here, at least to the uninitiated.

Letitia still skipping ahead, came round this corner first; a high, close-boarded fence was an adjunct to the small, discreetly curtained grocery-store occupying the site, while a gate hardly noticeable in the length of the paneling, was set therein close to the building itself; moreover, over the top of the wooden barrier was wafted an

THE LAST STATE OF THAT MAN odor known to those familiar with it to be from tan-bark, and as Letitia turned the corner, two women who had alighted from the trolley, were knocking at the entrance.

Strange-looking ladies they were, oddly pink of face except where they were oddly white, ladies with all their bravery on, sails filled and streamers waving, an amber scent of odorous perfume their harbinger. Turning as they waited, they looked at Letitia who pausing in her skipping looked at them, and since to look is not always polite, tentatively smiled. But the ladies only stared and the gate opening, they passed in.

Letitia waited for Aunt Emma just emerging around the corner.

"I see nothing to object to anywhere," said Aunt Emma decidedly; "it seems gratifyingly reputable and quiet to me."

Letitia was happy when people were pleased. "*This* is where the rookies mostly go," she explained sociably; "the older ones go to ——"

She checked herself. She remembered that for some reason Private Haines had warned her. She had been about to say "Hawkins'."

But Aunt Emma, her mind not always given

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to Letitia, only smiled benignly. Her humor was mild this afternoon. "I dare say," said she with pleasant absentness, but then it is doubtful even if she had heard, whether she would have known that rookie means the recently acquired soldier-man still raw.

"I dare say," said Aunt Emma.

So on around the trolley-loop they went and then home the other way.

It led past Hawkins'.

Now this personage occupied a corner lot also and his curtains were decently lowered too. But his high board fence began at the rear of his grocery building and extended backward along the side street thereof.

Letitia gazed at the whole with awe. It had the name of being the worst of any near the post. Of *any what*, she had no exact idea, but *whatever* they are, seventeen of 'em had sprung up around the post in the three weeks following that new and menacing arrangement so deplored when it came into being, called anti-canteen. Letitia had heard papa, talking to a civilian gentleman visiting the post, say so.



"I see nothing to object to, anywhere," said Aunt Emma

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But since Aunt Emma crossed the street before they turned out the thoroughfare boarded by Mr. Hawkins' side fence, it so followed that she and Letitia went along on the other side. It seemed to the younger pedestrian that she heard faint muffled sounds indicative of congregated humans behind that back-yard fence. Or was it yelps?

"It sounds like cheers if it were louder," said she anxiously, respecting the muffled sounds.

"What does?" said Aunt Emma.

"But dogs too," said Letitia troubled.

"You'll have to explain yourself if you expect me to understand," said the other with not unpardonable tartness. There was no connection in her small niece's ejaculations that Aunt Emma could see, nor relevance either.

But Letitia did not explain. She went on, silently troubled in her own mind.

Now the colonel had graciously acceded to an invitation to late Sunday dinner this same day at No. 7. Papa was doing all possible to honor Aunt Emma. This K. O. was short and stout, white-haired and choleric, and from an

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infantile pink of complexion grew to purple when incensed.

Letitia had been told she might come in for the strawberries since it was Aunt Emma's last evening, and at the joint moment of arrival of her small self and the berry-bowl that person was talking. Also papa was coughing and mama looking lightnings at Aunt Emma. And was the colonel choking, or was he only glaring at that lady too?

“ — and believing my nephew to be as unreasoningly and unfairly biased and prejudiced as some of his own men, after my two weeks' investigation of this thing, it is a sad blow to me, Colonel, and a regrettable one, to find the same violence and prejudice in yourself regarding the anti-canteen — ”

Mama was trying to get into the conversation but Aunt Emma waved her back authoritatively.

“And since I may say,” said Aunt Emma, “that I did as much as any one woman sent to Washington to fight for it, it has been a great opportunity for me to come here in the face of testimony such as for instance yours and my nephew's, and see for myself — ”

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But mama here walked into the conversation determinedly and decidedly. The empurpled colonel turned from Aunt Emma to her as she spoke. But she was changing the subject.

“What is the matter with you, Letitia?” she said.

For despite previous lavings and applications to her features at the pantry faucet before entrance, it was evident to all that Letitia had been weeping.

But she, swallowing, only looked mutely at her parent. Mamas at all times are to be obeyed and more than at any time before one's colonel, but on the other hand, the more because the colonel *was* there and the heart of Letitia is ever with the enlisted men, she did not want to say.

Papa took it up. “Out with it,” said he, who himself had been called away from the table during the serving of the soup and knew what had happened.

Letitia this time gazed mutely at him. She did not want to have to tell.

“Speak up,” said papa sharply.

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“It’s — it’s Bill,” then faltered Letitia, swallowing painfully and with effort; “he’s chewed up, he’s — he’s just meat, — he’s over on Mrs. Osborne’s porch — ”

“Rot-gut whisky at Hawkins’ ‘Sunday at home’ as usual, with a dog-fight extra to-day for lure,” said papa comprehensively. “Also a free-for-all fight at the close. Private Haines provided the Osbornes’ dog. They are putting the men in the guard-house as they come in.”

“So it would seem,” said mama sweetly and with a smile, raising her brows.

For the spring night was soft and the windows were open wide, and through the rear casements as she ended, from over on the men’s side of things came a tramping of feet as with a squad, while above the measure of the tread came too, a maudlin voice vociferously raised in song.

Perhaps the yet purple little colonel knew the words. Breathing hard and still glaring, he arose with deliberation, his goblet in hand. Now the glass held but charged water but still, the colonel arising, lifted it in air. Perhaps too,

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he timed matters as the chorus of the vociferously caroled ditty came round.

Sadly enough all the inmates of No. 7 beginning with Letitia, unless it was Aunt Emma, knew to whom belonged that voice now on its way to mill.

*May they give you back your beer
Long before this time next year-r-r-r —*

it pleaded in maudlin if vociferous appeal.

Whereat, "Amen," said the colonel of that soldier.

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“HIMSELF HE COULD NOT SAVE”

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“HIMSELF HE COULD NOT SAVE”

THIS is the story of how Private Garr saved the goat to the battery, and incidentally of how one Smith wanted speech with his captain. It happened on the field artillery and cavalry post where papa and mama and Letitia next were stationed, a friendly, merry garrison where the cub-lieutenants danced attendance on pretty visiting girls, and where there were riding-parties and teas and hops for every day.

It was a post full of color and bustle too, and the clatter of troop drill and of horse training on the bull-ring and manœuvering hikes afield with the guns; and where, company days, the riding-hall doors fly open to the burst of, say Garry Owen, and the blue-shirted troopers dash in and around the hall, a part of them as the gates clang to, throwing their mounts and sitting on them — Koontz feeding sugar to

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vicious Baldy unbeknownst to keep him down; while the remainder, emptying their Colts as they ride, manœuver around and between their prostrate comrades until, through the blue powder wreaths and above the music and the snorting of the horses — that of the yellow guidon's bearer rampant, pawing the air — the cheers of the civilian spectators arise.

Of course there are things to be deplored on every post. For instance *here* was Sergeant O'Grady. Hitherto Letty herself had reason to think highly of sergeants, but she was not here over-long before she gathered that the men did not like O'Grady. It is when they won't talk, rather than when they will, that one gathers these things. Papa did not fancy O'Grady either. He said he was too smooth, but that he did his work and kept his men well under.

Things generally went with a snap and a precision here, for it is with K. O's like it is with mamas. Letty's mother never nagged, she never had whipped Letitia in all her little life. She said do it or don't, and easy and offhand as the way of saying it might be, Letitia did it, or desisted. It has a simplifying result on life to

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have colonels and mothers this way and saves many misunderstandings. Moreover Letitia's whole passion in life was for mama. To come near her was to touch cheek to her arm while listening to the message, or to possess oneself of her hand and caress it while she explained. After which Letty went and did the errand.

And it is so with K. O's. As mama had announced on arrival, there was brace-up in the air of this garrison, which means things as they should be so far as a K. O. can have them and which also means a popular colonel.

To be sure there was O'Grady. But then there were those between who ought to have known about O'Grady long before it reached the colonel. Papa said he had just made up his mind about him when it all happened. O'Grady, you see, being smooth, stood well with his officers.

Matters with papa and mama had cheered up too, since the post where Aunt Emma came and straightened things out.

If you don't owe, mama said, you can take heart of grace to be an ensample of godly life, but when you do, how can you make the rest of

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the world believe in your views on the higher life ?

She said all this to Mrs. Billy the new lieutenant's wife, who was nineteen and a bride and just come into the army.

Lieutenant Billy who in consequence of being married, was now a husband, was also a shavetail and just out of the academy in June last. There are a good many things which shavetails just arrived and their young civilian wives have to learn, though as a class they are not given to thinking so.

Since there are always ladies on posts pleased to show an interest in cub-lieutenants, mama said it was up to her to be a sister to Mrs. Billy because, she claimed, this youthful person was pretty, and not thoughtful where the older women who were not so pretty, or who had daughters who were not so pretty, were concerned, and because too, Mrs. Billy was unreservedly fond of a good time, all of which mama claimed, gave her a fellow-feeling for her.

Therefore she and mama and Letitia met often in off-hours on their respective porches,

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or walked down to drill or to band-practice or guard-mount together.

“I was nineteen and a bride too when I came to my first post,” mama told Mrs. Billy, “and I was also the product of a so-called finishing school not a hundred miles from West Point where the munificence of an uncle had placed me. And it was just as improvident for Buckner and for me with our tastes, to marry on his second lieutenant’s pay as it probably was for you and your Bill from what you anxiously tell me. It looks big and easy until you’ve tried it. The wedding hardly over however, with a shave-tail classmate for best man, and the ices in the shapes of unmounted guns, all this over, and your little visit to *his* people done with, when you found what it was going to cost Billy to get you and your and his crated plunder (unless your people paid for yours) to your first post, and when you also learned from your Bill’s unwilling lips — he almost straight to you and the wedding from West Point — something of what it had cost him to set up his lieutenant’s wardrobe, why, getting his point of view, perhaps the honeymoon became slightly eclipsed with dollar-

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marks preceded by minus signs, young Mrs. Army Bride?

“And then with Buckner and me, Letitia here came before we had caught anywhere near even on the first involving. And like as not too, a second lieutenant’s people have been a little frank as to his haste in marrying on his pay. And if so, little sister Billy, and you ever come to find yourself involved, and pride or circumstances won’t let you ask help from your own people or from his, don’t, *don’t* let your Bill be led to seeking *financial accommodation*, whatever else in your young innocence you do. You make me think of myself; you’re pretty, you haven’t had your fling out, nor your dancing days either. And so I’m telling you. Debt burrows into your moral flesh and eats at your peace of mind, and after a bit, Mrs. Billy, you grow hard and frivolous even reckless, to forget it; and also your Bill, first terse, then irritable, then morose, seeks forgetfulness according to his disposition. In other words, you are overcome, you and your Bill by wretchedness and recklessness in proportion to your original good intentions and conscience, though there are those who would not credit *me*

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with either. And now I’ve opened my lips as I’ve never to any woman before because you sought me out with your eyes away across a crowded room that first night as if you liked me. Women have not been generous to me as a rule, on posts or off, they never are to what they call a man’s woman, and the effect on the type of woman is hardening. Oh, I don’t doubt somebody will tell you that I represent the pernicious, the regrettable type of the modern army woman, the one that does the service harm, the type which if we are segregated in severals, gives a post a black eye. Maybe I am all that but it has not helped me to have other women say it. As a general thing however, there is a community of interests on a post; you are free to draw on your neighbor for almost anything at the moment you are short in from the bridge score-pad to the mothballs——”

“It was a coffee-pot,” admitted Mrs. Billy, “that first morning.”

And so mama and Mrs. Billy were friends which, of course, is to say Letitia and she were friends also. There was so much this lady did not know that it made Letty feel concerned and

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anxious for her. For instance, there was a trooper on post, a boy from Mrs. Billy's own town and she recognizing him down near headquarters one day, rushed up to him and held out her hand and called him Tommy and told him to come to see her and hear the home news, to the consternation and overcoming of the embarrassed Tommy. And even after her Billy had raved to her, she could not seem to realize what she had done.

"He's a good boy and from my own town even if his people are plain," Mrs. Billy declared defensively; "and for that we both stand for the same thing, don't we, being Americans?"

"But he's an enlisted man," explained the earnest Letitia, "and you're a shavetail."

A friendship with a Letty thus you see, means a liberal education not only along social and official lines but along others in which the ladies of posts might reasonably be expected to be deficient. Indeed it came to be that when Mrs. Billy felt in need of coaching she went and hobnobbed with her youngest friend.

They were hobnobbing thus one early morn-

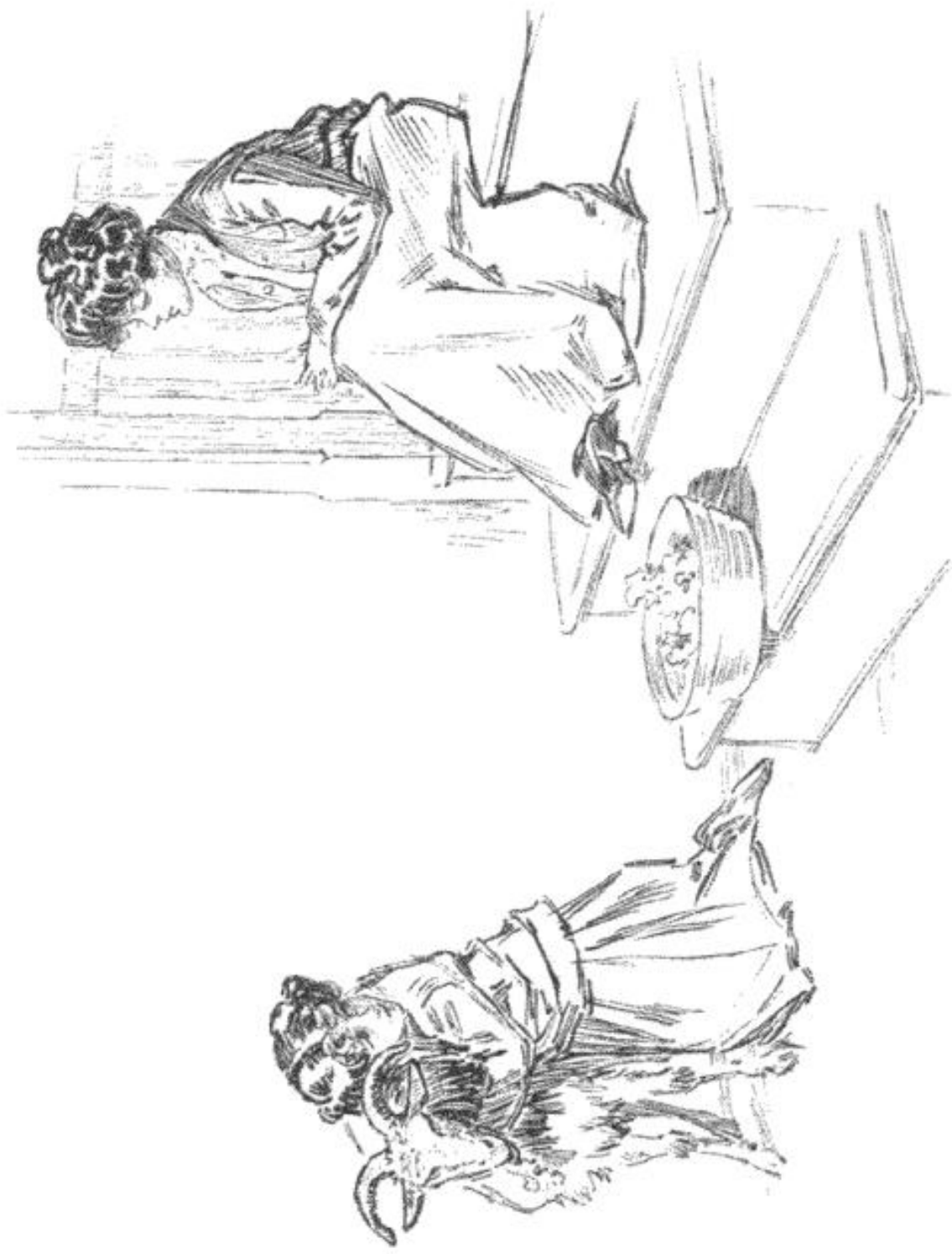
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ing in May, which meant they were sitting on Letty’s back door-steps feeding the battery goat with lettuce leaves grumbly and grudgingly allowed them by the cook. The goat did not belong to Mrs. Billy’s troop but was the property of the battery, Letitia belonging to the one service and Mrs. Billy to the other. Nor was it that the animal had any business where it was either, but only that no means as yet have been devised to keep a goat where he should be on a post or elsewhere.

Perhaps in this case the men could have explained. There is something provocative of glee in the aspect of an ancient and Silenus-eyed billy-goat at any time, but there is still further jocularly in the situation in conceding broken ropes, smashed locks, and the general débris of escape to your goat creature’s satyr cunning. Old stable Sergeant McClosky back in Cuba, had supplied the animal with a name smacking of learning, McClosky, besides being versed in hippology, having been destined in his youth in County Kerry according to his own story, for a priest, though unexpectedly turning out a jockey instead. And it was he they said, who with a

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wink at the goat supplied him with the name of Sylvanus.

Men in the army have to baby something. Riley the oldest battery horse, and Sylvanus the goat, were as valued parts of battery property as the colors, or even Cook Tom that jewel of a masterhand for keeping his mess good-humored. And it is understood that Letitia as far as conditions permitted, in her time had occupied a place with the men fully up to that accorded the horse or the goat, but this, of course, was long ago when she had been a little and a baby thing. As far as the present went, she highly valued and adored Sylvanus herself. Nor are the olfactories easily offended in youth. Letitia, sitting on her back door-step, with Mrs. Billy on a step above, had her arms rapturously about the neck of Sylvanus and her cheek against his wicked old person just behind his horned head. As for the animal himself, with a leaf of lettuce depending sidewise out of his mouth and a soothed even a reflective cast in his evil, slant, small eyes, his pendulous old beard moving sedulously in time to his measured munch, the goat had the meditative air of liking it.



Her arms rapturously about the neck of Syleanus

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Mrs. Billy however, with a visible wariness as to the animal's movements, kept to her higher step. Big, iron-gray, with sides like barrels, Sylvanus had a fetching way of appearing from behind things and, lifting upon his hind feet, offering combat with his forehead frontage to the oncomer. That the men, who had taught him the gentle challenge, boxed hilariously back with their fists, was small comfort to Mrs. Billy hurrying home belated one day, when he emerged from the internal duskiess of a shed-way and confronted, nay, chased her down the line of buildings, the men still at afternoon stables; nor, since she had no business making use of that short-cut, could she reasonably complain; nor but deplore it, either, that her own husband chanced to be officer taking stables that day, though it was he who rescued her.

Even now the goat, munching while Letitia embraced him, seemed to turn his gaze with wandering meditation Mrs. Billy's way.

It kept her anxious and almost prevented her hearing what Private Garr had to say, when that soldier-man appeared, rope in hand, come up from the stables to secure the errant animal.

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Garr was a mountain boy according to Letitia, who had come in during Cuban times, and he was tall and red-haired with high cheek-bones and the color laid on the same in generous patches. He had a mountain people's friendliness and directness of manner, boyish and inoffensive because you realized it was native. He was given to a certain friendly pursing up of his lips too between remarks, in effect half comical, half interrogatory and wholly confiding, and from his nice blue eyes, as they met yours, you received a gaze of good faith with perhaps a hint of the droll therein. Up to the time Garr began to cough he had been striker at Letty's house, and indeed now that he was out of hospital, they were waiting for him to come back. Mrs. Billy, beginning to be more certain of her ground, acknowledged the soldierman's presence. Indeed Letitia had coached her in this.

"*I* can talk to 'em, you see, and let 'em *tell* me," Letty had explained to her, "because I'm only twelve, but *you* can't. You can acknowledge them because that's polite, and if you remember their names to call them by, it'll

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make 'em hold their heads up and feel better
inside.”

So Mrs. Billy spoke to Garr, after which he apologetically proceeded to explain the necessity for removing Sylvanus, though it was plain he was not so grieved over the ambulatory sins of his battery's property as he should have been.

“Something got in the ol' man's gyarden-patch last night,” explained Private Garr, “an' even with a rope and a bar and a padlock this side, and a gate and a hasp that, he's a-layin' of it onto Sylvaney and threatenin' dire. So we're thinkin' it's better he should be tied up before it gets around.”

As Mrs. Billy was new, to include her in post affairs, very often one had to explain. Letitia turned back to her now.

“You know the ol' man,” she reminded her.

Yes, in a way, Mrs. Billy knew the ol' man, by hearsay at any rate, his reputation guaranteeing that much. He owned the rickety frame house and an acre of ground just outside of post. Indeed the nearer to post the better from his standpoint, as Mrs. Billy understood it; for immediately subsequent to anti-canteen, which is to say

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for some year and a half now, the ol' man had utilized his house for the soldier-man's benefit, and had battened and fattened on what had been the profits of canteen together with considerable additional profit on that.

But there was more which Mrs. Billy did not know, and this was that even previous to this period of fat prosperity the ol' man was said to have done fairly well at lending money to the enlisted man at "one per cent," which is to say, he lent one dollar to-day and got back two at pay-day. Not that these things are officially known, there being no proof, but only that they go the rounds on hearsay. So while Letitia did not know at all what one per cent meant, she did know papa said he believed the old fellow stood for it. Afterward it came to light that papa did him injustice. It was Sergeant O'Grady who did the lending, the ol' man merely supplying the money, there being room for a double rake-off, which is what it is called, on things lent at one per cent. But O'Grady's part of it only came to knowledge afterward.

Yet we all have our amiable weaknesses. Letitia, hazy for instance about one per cents,

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knew all about the ol’ man’s vegetable-patch wherein he delved and pottered like any virtuous old gran’pap’.

On the other hand the weakness of Sylvanus was for the succulent crispness of young sprouting things; and the provender for your goat, in a garrison being looked on in the nature of loot to be cribbed from stables by his friends, why, when looted oats ran low, there was the ol’ man’s patch with only a few mild obstacles between, which Syllly’s friends had been known absently to remove were the evening dark, obstacles such as a gate hasp for example. For oddly enough, the ol’ man and his class are not loved by the enlisted man whether he be a patronizer of the same or not.

Still, as Private Garr intimated, it was better that Sylvanus should be found tied this morning should inquiry be on. Curiously, the ol’ man had been known to complain to O’Grady to some purpose before now.

“An’ he’s mad this time, sure,” stated Private Garr; “I’ve heard he’s offering money this morning for Syllly’s hide. And when the ol’ man offers money, he’s mad, bad.”

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So appreciating the wisdom of a speedy retirement of her creature friend, Letitia desisted from making a necklace of herself about his neck and Garr proceeded to attach the rope to his collar.

He was a little long about it after all, deft-fingered as he was and handy, because a bit of coughing seized him. That was why he had not come back as striker. He said hacking seemed to weaken a man's grip on doing and made him lazy.

He was still hacking furtively as he departed stableward with Sylvanus at his heels, soldiermen being inclined to be more or less secretive about it when they get hacks and such things, concealing the fact as long as possible, which indeed is the natural thing to do. Letitia had a cat once that crawled under the house and hid when it was sick, and she remembered a cook who in her misery spells used to enwrap herself, countenance and all in the bedclothes and demand to be let alone. Letty being a normal small person herself, didn't like to confess to sickness and be dosed and put to bed either. Moreover, the general attitude of the world to-

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ward sick persons is that they are reprehensible
in the matter somehow, and are to be regarded
accordingly.

But as Garr departed hacking, the eyes of
Mrs. Billy followed him. It was a pity about it.
She would judge Garr to be a good man, for
even she knew the self-respecting soldier-man
by now when she saw him.

“It would be a pity to lose a man like Garr,”
she said looking after him.

Did she mean because of his hack? Letty
had known other men in her time, lost from
ranks for that reason. There was a song in one
barracks where the thing got bad (they tore
them down on that account afterward), bearing
on the matter. It went this way:

*Twelve khaki soldier-men making up a squad,
One coughed his tubes up and—YOU think that left
odd?*

*'Acking, 'acking Johnny is gone on the shelf,
The woods are full of rookies to make the twelfth.*

But then the average soldier-man will not
admit until he has to that he is ill.

Letitia felt she had to apologize for Garr.

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“He has been to hospital once, and he’s better now.”

“Barker didn’t get better,” said Mrs. Billy. She referred to the soldier who drove the ’bus when she first arrived.

“No,” agreed Letty. “He went to Bayard; he and Garr were in the same squad.”

But so cheerful was she about it, it was obvious Letitia failed to grasp what hacks or Bayard meant either, while Mrs. Billy with all her limitations did, Bayard being the post set apart for soldier-men with hacks.

That afternoon Mrs. Billy asked her Bill a question. Diffidently, for already she was learning that if there is one thing above all others objectionable in a garrison, it is the new-come woman who wants to know about what she cannot help in the end because it does not concern her.

“Billy,” she asked her husband; “after a man has been removed from barracks for tuberculosis, what would be done to the quarters?”

“The medico, or a hospital man detailed by him, would disinfect,” said he; “and beyond that, it is provided that the surgeon on a post shall

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examine into the sanitary condition of all buildings at least once a month.”

“Oh, well then,” said Mrs. Billy, relieved.

Letitia, meanwhile, over on her side of post, had soldier-men’s worries other than this; and anyhow Garr was not worrying. You cannot make the Garrs, nor the Barkers, nor ones like rollicking, popular Batts who went to Bayard ahead of Barker, understand the gravity of these things. They laugh at you for a funny one when you try. There was a chaplain once, and the right sort this chaplain was and a favorite with the men, who gave a lecture with slides about a thing he called The White Plague. You thought you had ’em, when those slides showed up, the men said afterward, and going home the chorus led by the company quartet chanted softly, so it went the rounds next day:

Now would you have thought HE'D be dippy?

Letty’s concern just now was not with Garr but with Smith, that soldier-man detailed in the commissary department to bring around the ice, and who was kicking. He said the service was something no American-born Jefferson Demo-

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crat was going to stand for. He said he wanted speech with his captain and he couldn't get it.

According to the way Letty explained it, when a man wants speech to take a grievance say, to his captain, he speaks to his sergeant through his squad-leader, or else direct to his top-sergeant himself. But your sergeant *may* turn you down. And Smith did not stand in with Sergeant O'Grady. To be sure he went around saying the Philippine thirst and vino if once indulged in, will eat the wital goodness, whatever that may be, out of any man, much less an O'Grady. He also said O'Grady was a crummy old bird, and that when a sergeant's wital goodness has been eaten out, if he does not like you, he is more than apt, don't you see, to turn you down ?

There was more which Letitia did not know concerning her friend Smith. He claimed he had been a little of everything before he came into the army, a medical student among the rest; yet Smith though tough, was tough only in his own way; and when Sergeant O'Grady made a remark in the barrack-room which the other did not fancy, he promptly batted the head of

“HIMSELF HE COULD NOT SAVE” that worthy top-sergeant against the barrack-room wall. He claimed he couldn't stand for O'Grady's language concerning ladies. He said he hoped he *would* go to mill in consequence. He said he'd like that chance to complain because, for all that Article of War, Number 30, claims to do for the soldier-man and his wrongs, *he* had been in the army long enough to know that a man is handling a buzz-saw when he tries to profit by it. But O'Grady did not report him. Still it was not to be expected that he would be apt to favor Private Smith when he wanted speech with his captain later.

It was when Mrs. Billy heard about this latter part of it, which was all Letitia herself knew, that she showed her civilian ignorance. Mrs. Billy was very droll. She could not understand why a Private Smith should not address himself to his captain direct!

Letitia looked shocked. She looked her big amaze. There was a man who did it, who mailed a letter through the post to his young captain, and his punishment for the same was a small matter to the horror that spread over post that an enlisted man should do so terrible a thing!

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Letty did her young best to set Mrs. Billy right. What Smith under ordinary conditions would have done, was ask his squad-leader or better still, ask his sergeant direct, for leave to speak to his captain. She even went into grave and minute particulars.

“What in —” well, it wasn’t a pretty word, mama wouldn’t like her to say it, even for Mrs. Billy, “do you want to report to him now?” would have been Private Smith’s likeliest reception from Sergeant O’Grady.

To which Letitia thought Smith most likely would have said, “What is it to you what I want to report?”

And here Mrs. Billy broke in, pardonably curious to know what it was Private Smith *did* wish to report. But Letty did not know. She only could say that he had been turned down and was kicking.

Later everybody knew, for when Smith ended in trouble, he told his chaplain who told it in his turn. Up to then Smith had had an unreasoning and crooked prejudice against chaplains and also a notion his officers were all against him. There is many a Smith gets a distorted idea so.

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“You can’t make easy fools like Garr and Barker and Batts understand,” he explained in time to the chaplain. “Things have been glossed over in our part of barracks too long. Batts went to Bayard seven months ago and Barker followed Batts. I’ve been here long enough to know what ought to have been done, and if that rowing big medico sent to Manila last year had a been here, would of been done. I don’t care who detailed who, or what, to be done about it; I know it *wasn’t* done. And now Garr’s hacking. And you couldn’t expect an O’Grady who doesn’t want enemies above to report a thing like that, now, could you?”

But Smith told these things to his chaplain *later*. Right now O’Grady had turned him down for the third time and he was kicking.

It was the afternoon when Letitia was telling Mrs. Billy of Smith, as the two sat together on the steps of this lady’s front porch, that mama came over cross yards and reaching the veranda steps, stopped, portentous news in her eyes. Letitia left Mrs. Billy’s side and hurried down to slip her fingers in her mother’s.

“Now, Mrs. Billy,” said mama, smiling half-

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heartedly, for when one is just getting on one's feet financially, it is discouraging to have to move in eleven months from the time it cost to move *here* — “now, Mrs. Army Bride, you'll begin to understand why we older women haven't your array of pretty breakables. Such things won't stand too many cratings. We've our orders, Letty.”

“Mama!”

And Letitia dropped her mother's hand and flew back to Mrs. Billy. In the army you have to cling with ardor to the temporary objects of your adoration while you have 'em, before fate removes them, or you. And now they must leave Mrs. Billy!

“The battery is to march overland with the guns,” explained mama. “Your father wants you and me to stop off on the way North to see Aunt Emma. She isn't enthusiastic over me, but she will overlook that to get you, though I am sure I'm more grateful to her than I ever dreamed I could be to any one.”

The eyes of Mrs. Billy were filling, for she was new to this thing of losing your friends just about the time you have really made them.



Smith . . . was kicking

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“HIMSELF HE COULD NOT SAVE”

But to the ones ordered there is the allure-ment of the unknown ahead, and Letty dropped Mrs. Billy's pretty hand and with her own in mama's went home.

But with orders, calamity fell upon the battery barracks.

Private Garr took it hardest, gnawing his finger-nails in perplexity they said, as he hunted a way out of the situation, for Garr, having brought the goat at a rope's end into camp back there in Cuba, stood in the place of a parent to Sylvanus, and on a march overland the dogs may ride on the caissons, but you can't, so to speak, take your goat on a gun!

Of course the post carpenter may be relied on to loot enough lumber to crate him for shipping but crating is not all; it costs to ship a crated goat with sides like barrels, and there is not always a large showing of velvet on hand by the middle of the stretch between pay-days even when all available cash is produced and lumped together and the results added up. Yet to become separated from one's goat is a thing no soldier-man is willing to contemplate. At the mere threatening of such a possibility, man after man went

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out and boxed a round or two with Syllly that he might be reassured. That is all went but Garr; they left *him* chewing his nails and hunting a way out of it.

In course of time he joined the ring of boxers too. With a sanguine coloring often goes an inventive spirit, and on seeing the lips of Private Garr amiably pursed and the eyes of him innocently bland, the hearts of his messmates cheered. Reading the signs in the countenance of Private Garr, the inference they deduced was, that since *they* were going, Sylvanus the goat was going too.

If you impress around, the necessity of keeping news of orders to march from spreading outside of post, you can confidently rely upon the ol' man hearing about it before night, just as you want him to. And when there is scarce money by the time you have squared with washerwoman, tailor, post exchange, and your friends, to send your mascot goat ahead, why, it is the graceful act to bequeath him to your cavalry brother-soldiers in Troop B left behind. And by sufficiently impressing the secrecy of *this* around barracks too, you can depend upon *it* getting to

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the ol’ man by sundown also. Nor would it increase the ol’ man’s affection for the goat, to hear it.

Letitia did not learn of these things until afterward, by which time the story was about the garrison and the occasion of wide, if unofficial rejoicing; but she did supply the details to Mrs. Billy at the last.

According to Letty, the night following that on which the news leaked out to the ol’ man, something got into that person’s yard by starlight and, according to his telling, ate up his seedling tomato plants even to the tin cans in which they had been sprouted.

Also this same demolishing something danced with a satyr-like capering and ecstasy to judge from results on window-sash hotbeds, to the demolition of cabbage and sweet-potato plants within. And the next morning it spread over post, at least in the battery’s quarters, that the ol’ man had cunningly risen to the extent of four dollars, to a murderous proposition made him by a hitherto model soldierman named Garr, that Sylvanus be secretly delivered to him just before the planned be-

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queathal of him to Troop B, thereupon mysteriously and forever to disappear.

The same day this news of the ol' man's generosity spread abroad, Private Garr went over to town. His report to his mates on return was that the express clerk estimated that it would cost eight dollars for Syllly to disappear.

Whereupon it spread about barracks again, how important it was that news of the moving of the battery being even nearer at hand than had been understood, should not get abroad, nor the fact that Troop B was openly rejoicing over its legacy.

Letitia says, that *this* evening when Private Garr went down again to see the ol' man, he went humming a tune, which as he neared he put into words. Cook Tom, she says, had supplied the song.

"Who saw him die?"

"I," said the fly,

"With my little eye,

I saw him ——"

This is what Letitia says Garr sung.
But the ol' man would not rise but to five.

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And that night Letitia says something ate up four rows of promising pea-vines, something, she claims, attached to the end of a rope which in turn led to a figure sitting on the ol' man's fence in the evening's rain and gloom.

The next day the ol' man raised to six. But to this Private Garr who had strolled over there about noon, shook his sanguine head and departed postward singing:

*“Who saw him die?”
“I,” said the fly,
“With my little eye,
I saw him ——”*

But by the time that Private Garr was well within post, the ol' man's little grandson came hurrying after him to say he would give seven.

*“Who caught his blood?”
“I,” said the fish,
“With my little dish,
I ——”*

sang Private Garr, regarding the little boy darkly.

That small soul not having the clue and perhaps taking it personally, fled, nor, since it

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occurred well within post boundaries, could he or his relatives rightfully complain when Sylvanus, panting a little, as if just hurried along from somewhere to get there, emerged from behind a shed onto the path of flight and arose a yard or two above the infant's head into that rampant attitude invitatory to a bout at boxing.

An hour later it went around post that the ol' man had agreed to eight.

And that night, they tell, at early dusk there was a delivery at his back gate of a rope, at the extremity of which was something whose small eyes seemed to gleam an evil red even in the thick darkness. And with the rope in hand, the ol' man counted into an outstretched waiting palm eight good hard dollars. Whereupon, since those evilly gleaming eyes looked threatening, the recipient of the eight good dollars generously offered to conduct the object just transferred into the coal-shed and tie it securely, for there being danger from soldier visitors to the house this early in the evening, it had been deemed safer that the eternal disappearance should be later.

And then the recipient of the dollars strolled

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sociably into the house with the ol' man for a sort of ratification proffered on the recipient's part, of the good-will and feeling between them.

And in this same space of time, while the ol' man was occupied within, Sylvanus according to bargain disappeared. It would seem, as had often been threatened, the ol' man's premises at last had been raided and a goat was missing in consequence. According to report, so Letitia said, Cook Tom led the raiding-party.

A celebration ensued that same evening down barracks way, wherein Sylvanus with a myrtle vine hung wreathishly about his venerable horns, was led in by Cook Tom, amid an ascension of carrots and other emblems of congratulation curving the air and falling shower-like in greeting, to a chorus softly chanted, “When the roll is called up yonder, he'll be there;” and during it a ghastly thing befell the sanguine-hued, amiable Garr, just in from some errand outside. What with hilarity, rejoicing, and a sudden return of hacking, Private Garr coughed once too often.

And when the ghastly thing occurred, Smith, who was bitter and a sore-head and a knocker

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all times, and who said nobody cared if the men did die off like flies, rose up in his place and smashed in one O'Grady's head with a kitchen-poker which he seized from Cook Tom who had been leading with it in the singing.

Asked afterward why he did it, Smith said O'Grady and his betters had done that cruel wrong to Garr, and to Barker who had gone before him.

And so Garr and O'Grady went to hospital. And Smith? Smith went to the guard-house pending trial.

It was the morning for the battery's departure, and the garrison was out to see it go. The roadway from battery stables through post led by the colonel's corner, and everybody of a feminine persuasion, mama, Letitia and all, were gathered by invitation, on Mrs. K. O's porch to see the going.

She was a handsome, elderly Mrs. K. O., with a decided manner and an Olympian cast of countenance, who, however, fed people sociably the minute she could get them together. And they said too that in the Philippines where a

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regiment is divided into so many detachments,
and sent to so many posts that a chaplain cannot
get around to all his men — they said this Mrs.
Ganeau claimed that it was in these out-of-the-
way places the men needed chaplains worse,
and so she up and did royal chaplain work her-
self.

She could speak her mind too, even as now,
and at such times she told shavetails' wives they
did not know what hardships in the army meant
nowadays.

“When my second baby came unexpectedly
on a half-garrisoned post in Dakota of thirty
years ago,” she was telling one of them now,
while she poured coffee for Letitia to carry
around — “the only woman nearer to me than
three hundred miles, was a corporal's wife.”

But the battery was coming and coffee was
forgotten. Papa had gone some time before. His
orderly had brought his pawing mount to the
door, and he and the soldier-man had gone
ahead, canteen and saddle-bags in place, papa
being quartermaster, which also meant selector
of the camping sites for nights.

And now the battery is following, and one's

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heart leaps at the rumble of the guns, and at sight of one's battery captain on Black Ben, with McAdams, the best bugler in any ten companies, on hard-mouthed Judge. Indeed what with the martial rumble of it, and the leap and the glow inside herself, Letty was moved to slip her hand in that of the nearest lady at hand for sheer need of understanding and sympathy. It chanced to be the plump member of Olympian Mrs. K. O., who bent and kissed her little neighbor's cheek. She and a Letitia are one, when it comes to the army!

And old Tim, Timothy Harty, in other words, has the colors, the scarlet guidon with its crossed guns and the battery's numerals above, and Sergeant Kelly, stolid, mustached, grizzled and keen of eye, on iron-gray Hawthorne, follows him.

And gun after gun with men and horses reflecting glory of being and battery pride, rumbles by, with the newest shavetail, Binny Benton, borne past, flank front or head rear, and face scarlet, because his horse is fresh.

And interest in the first caisson as it comes up, is not altogether because of the men thereon,

“HIMSELF HE COULD NOT SAVE” but because of Tapioca, the Gordon setter, called Taps for short, sitting with seemly dignity on the “cracker-box,” and Terry and Mac the Irish rats, yapping with excitement between the men.

And here Mrs. Billy, behind Letitia on the porch, was heard to draw breath as it came to mere quartermaster wagons and mules, ambulance and such; whereupon Letty dropped Mrs. Ganeau’s hand and slipped her fingers in Mrs. Billy’s, for oddly enough, she is breathing uncertainly. It is new to Mrs. Billy, the pride and the glory of the army, and one adores her because it makes her cry and one hates to go and leave her; but then Letitia hated to tell Mrs. K. O. good-by too, for a colonel’s wife such as this one, can be so much on a post if she will.

But when the battery and the men and the glory of it were gone, and emptiness was settling down like a gray dullness, Letitia and Mrs. Billy saw across the open space, at one and the same moment, over on the hospital porch, a piece of battery property evidently left behind. Its face was waxlike beneath its sanguine hair and it was known as Private Garr. From its stand

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on the porch it too evidently had been watching the men go by, and even now the eyes of it were following the long line and the dust curving around the garrison road ahead.

“The crate is ready for Sylvanus,” said Letty, suddenly remembering, “the carpenter has it made.”

“And Letty and I,” said mama coming up, “are going to lunch with you, Mrs. Billy, according to invitation, and leave this afternoon.”

“And Garr?” inquired Mrs. Billy, nodding toward the hospital porch.

Letitia had not yet grasped the significance of one certain post over others. “Oh, Garr?” she told Mrs. Billy; “after he sees Sylvanus off, why Garr leaves for Bayard.”

THE AMENDE HONORABLE
OF MAMA

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THE AMENDE HONORABLE OF MAMA

“**T**HE essential most necessary to make the admirable army woman,” Mrs. Colonel Ganeau once had said while dispensing coffee on her porch to a circle of listeners, “is the instinct which on a night’s halt, can create the feeling of *home* out of Dougherty cushions and blankets, if it should come to that. In the nomadic life of the army, stability and morals are represented in the home.”

Letitia nearing fourteen, was being bothered, even rendered peevish, by opinions which were no longer mama’s but her own. According to her parent, it was the endeavor to live up to these ideas of her offspring and of those persons of the same way of thinking, which brought about what she styled her amende honorable.

Mother and daughter were on the train going West. Papa, at the lowest ebb of his fortunes

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some time back, had asked for a transfer to another branch of the service and having now received it, was gone ahead, and Letitia and her mother were following.

“With a clean slate and a fresh start in the other service, I’ve a feeling I might win out after all,” he had said.

Mama had been skeptical about it. “And lose what pull I have secured for you in this?”

“Even that,” he had rejoined, “and kindly allow me, Nina, to seek my own pull in my own way, in the future.”

And now mother and daughter were nearing the journey’s end to join him.

Mama was resigned over the whole matter. “From what I can gather,” she told her daughter, “it is a domestic post. The prevailing topics for discussion among the ladies will be puddings and progeny, and Best’s Catalogue will be the absorbing basis for styles.”

Letitia being at the peevish age, frowned, and by pressing her small, dark face against the car-window glass, and looking out, relieved herself of the need of replying. Domestic ladies being deemed food for raillery by one’s own parent, it

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is embarrassing to discover at heart a leaning toward that class; moreover, it was confusing for Letty to find herself differing from mama, and the bewilderment made her cross. Once, the mamas of her world as she understood them, were of a class, except that her own was supreme, unapproachable and impeccable among them. Later in her experience, mamas divided into differing species, the parent of one Marianna being the beginning of a class, to which were added varying types, chief of whom she held to be one Mrs. Colonel Ganeau, already quoted, and whose power for good had impressed itself indelibly on Letitia. A commanding lady can make or mar a regiment or post, as every army-body knows, just as every lady in more or less degree, helps to color a garrison while she is of it.

But mama made light of this class of ladies and their interests, skilfully interpreting until it seemed as though puddings, and patterns for the clothing of the progeny, was all there was to it; whereas latterly it was coming to the daughter that it is that something in these ladies which makes puddings or patterns the immediate business and interest of the moment, which is the

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thing. Can it be that the puddings and patterns are to be looked on merely as symbols for the thing behind? And since in the peripatetic movements of army life, the difficulties of home-making are in proportion greater, are pudding and pattern types of ladies more to be rejoiced in by husbands and progeny there, even than elsewhere?

Letitia remembered to have known one general's wife, and she had been a deified pudding and pattern lady too. So was the commanding Mrs. Colonel Ganeau of this class. Can it also be that these ladies best help to make their husbands into colonels and generals by so well administering the pudding and pattern side of it, which is their part? Is it the home that molds the future colonels and generals into what they come to be, rather than the pull which mamas can secure for them on the outside? Is this what Mrs. Colonel Ganeau meant when she stated her essential for the army woman?

"And kindly allow me, Nina, to seek my own pull in my own way in the future," papa had sharply requested mama.

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The period when a daughter begins to arrive at conclusions which are no longer her mother's deductions but her own, is a painful and a ruffled one. Mamas are beings to adore and believe in, beings that in the very nature of what they are, you must hold to be right —

And Letitia swerved around from the window, and seized her mother's pretty hand and pressed her small cheek passionately against it.

"Why?" said mama, amused. But Letitia did not say.

"You are a baby sort of thing still," remarked her parent, "to be as old as you are, and to have such grasshopper long legs."

Was she? The comment and the conclusion were alike embarrassing on the whole to Letitia, since they left her nothing to say.

"I resented you at the start, you know," said mama.

Whatever she meant, it was a confidence. "Did you, mama?"

"Whereas you've come to be such a habit with me, I'd rather miss you now."

It was a joke, so mother and daughter laughed.

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“And you will grow less literal as you grow older, too,” added mama, hopefully.

By some fortuity, journey's endings with Letitia, always seemed to be toward night when the thought of crated disorder ahead in new quarters is most discouraging.

Papa, with the Dougherty and driver, and an orderly, was at the train to meet them. The last of the travel by rail had been remarkable chiefly for alkali dust, and the way from town by Dougherty out to the post, was characterized by more dust. Other features of the landscape the travelers learned from papa who was cheerful and chatty, were called mesa and cactus, scrub mesquite, cottonwood, foot-hills and desert. The effect of these at dusk is lonesome. The sun was setting as they left the edge of the little town, and shortly the gleams which had flashed from painted rock to painted rock, vanished, and chill shut down with the shadows. It is then that foot-hills and desert become lonesome.

In time the road, beyond a clump of cottonwoods, dipped into an old watercourse and emerging from the same, forked; it was a lonely

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gruesome spot, and one did not wonder that forks of roads have come to have a creepy name. This branched in three directions.

“One leads to Schrader’s Ranch where the neighborhood and garrison children go to school,” explained papa; “the second leads south to the foot-hills, and this main traveled one is ours to the reservation.”

And as he spoke, the turn from the ford was made, and the twinkling lights of the garrison could be seen in the blue dusk far ahead. Farther than it would seem however for the bugle was sounding tattoo before they reached there, and when travelers are just arriving at a new post, amid foot-hills and desert, a bugle has all the effect of melancholy novelty, echoing and re-echoing in a way largely calculated to cause waves of homesickness to wash in out of the lonesomeness and hopelessly engulf one.

Then papa broke the news.

“Mrs. Ronald is expecting you,” he said cheerfully; and even as the Dougherty drew up, that lady was there to take possession of them, bags and all. For this was a domestic post, you see, which according to Letitia, means that the

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predominating proportion of the ladies thereon (and the predominating element colors a garrison) — gave their wifely minds to those matters symbolized by puddings and patterns. As Letitia understood it, these include large hospitality, kindly manners, stationary cooks, genial entertainings and other pleasant evidences of domestic executive ability.

Meanwhile Mrs. Ronald took possession of them, and even in the transit from the Dougherty and the starlit dusk, to the vine-covered porch of this lady's house, one gathered that she was lively and animated and had a way. And because of this lively way the travelers speedily found themselves up-stairs, hats off, and hands and faces bathed refreshingly.

Then Mrs. Ronald kissed Letitia, why, that person had no idea. The kiss was full on her lips, and unexpected, and the laugh which accompanied it was amazingly heartening. Later the two guests had supper which seemed to arrange itself easily, or it seemed so to Letty, possibly because she was allowed to carry in the cream-pitcher and the butter-dish.

Mama seemed appreciative, but a bit sub-

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dued. Then she put on the manner she wore with ladies such as Mrs. Ronald, a hard little manner not just fair to mama's self, as if she were a bit diffident with these ladies and yet defiant of them too. It made Letitia anxious, for with that air mama often said things her little daughter knew she did not always mean.

"I had a beautiful flirtation back yonder with a brother of yours, is he not, Captain Todd?" said she, with the little defiant air.

Mrs. Ronald acknowledged the relationship. "He is not a fledgling," she returned, cheerfully; "it is the young ones that sort of thing is liable to be bad for. Oh, yes, you are going to stay the night, I have doubled up the babies, and it is the easiest thing in the world to have you."

But mama preferred not, since papa had affairs uncrated and moderately into shape at their house, he said. And he and Captain Ronald coming in from smoking and chatting on the porch, the travelers went home.

There is an odd thing characterizing the husbands of pudding and pattern ladies, not alone in the army but wherever Letty had chanced to meet them. She had gazed at Captain Ronald

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a bit fearfully, he being a tall, large-boned person who clipped his words as though they were commands. Later Letitia found they were, and odder still as throwing light on the pudding type of wives, she discovered that just as the enlisted man and also the shavetail, like the finality of a Captain Ronald's commands and authority, so, as apparently, and as cheerfully, do the Mrs. Ronalds and their babies.

But mama did not and she said so, going home. "I heard you and your Captain Ronald talking outside," she told papa, "and caught bits: '*a mounted infantry,*' '*camps of instruction,*' '*an army reserve,*' '*the cavalry service in the Russo-Japanese action.*' I know the type. He will look through and over anything *my* size. Oh, I know he is the sort that 'makes the army what it stands for, and elevates the service,' you wrote all that like a school-boy to me in your letters. He seems to have infected you with the Captain Ronald hero-worship too, as it is evident he has his wife. I know all you would tell me. When he couldn't do anything else for his men in the Philippines, he and his blacksmith corralled a boiler off a trash-heap and

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made it into a bath-tub and rigged up a piping system from the boiler-room; and his kitchen-gardens here in the desert, for the men's benefit, are famous, on account of his irrigating features, and he is the big fighting kind, and if you had been near such a man at the start, you would have seen the straight of things, — tra lala la la, and so forth and so on, your letters have told me all there can be to know about him. What are the prospects in shavetails and lieutenants, Buckner? I will have to live up to you and Letitia and the Ronalds by degrees, you appreciate. Is there no food here at all for *my* powder?"

There was as after events proved, a second lieutenant just well emerged from his shavetail novitiate. He was tall and yellow-haired and as mama said, entirely too nice a boy to have allowed himself to stop at being merely pretty. He being Mr. Richard Hornsby, why, of course it was inevitable he should be known to his friends and the garrison as Dickie.

Mrs. Ronald explained him further, running over the next day to visit on the wing as she said or to help, as wanted; indeed the ladies

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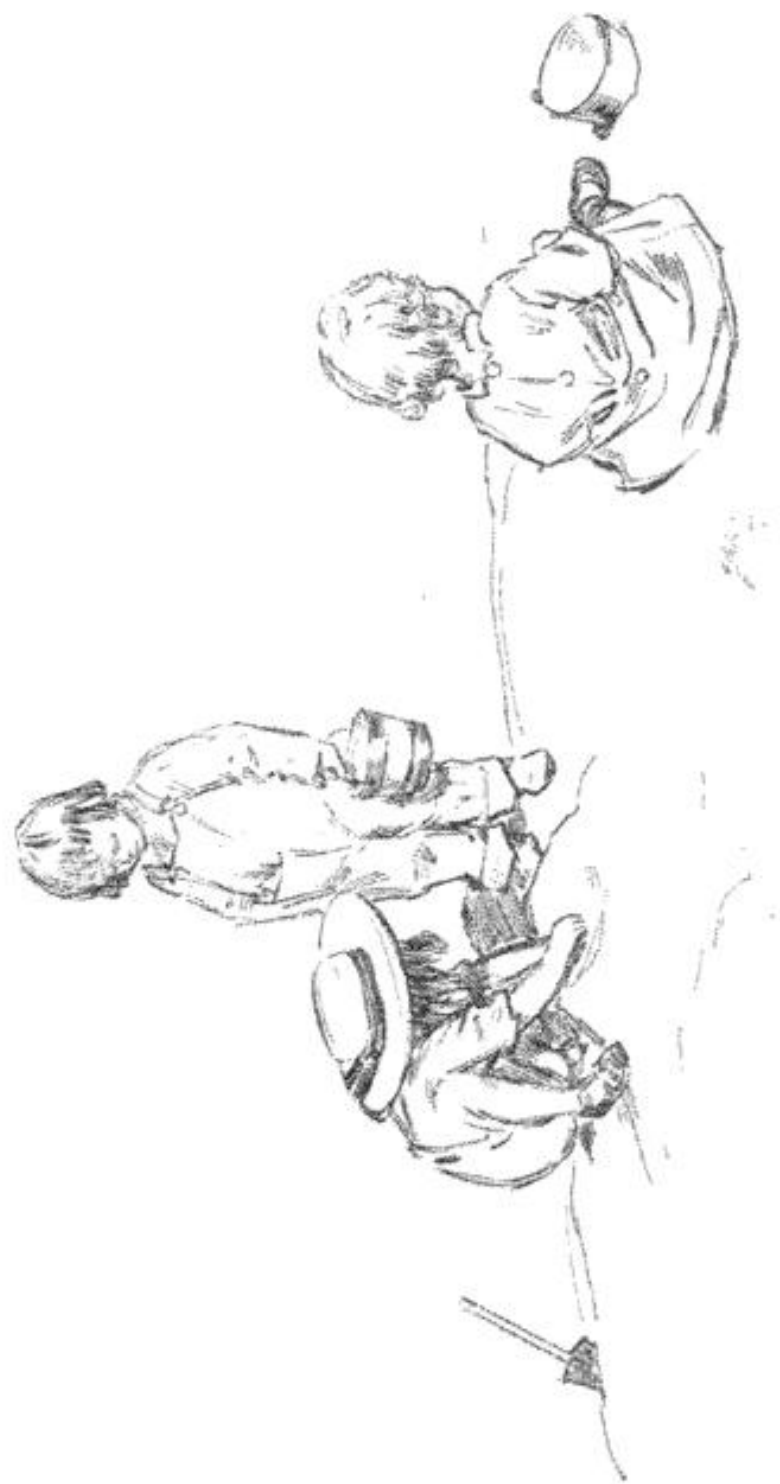
living on either side of the new-comers had already proffered their aid, so friendly a place is a domestic post. There were several things mama wanted to ask Mrs. Ronald as to arrangements adapted to this present mode of living among the foot-hills. In a less friendly garrison, it takes time and mistakes and some discomfort to find out for yourself.

“I’ve the babies along,” Mrs. Ronald apologized, “that is they are out front scooping up your share of desert in their buckets. I have one servant, a Chinaman, who does all, and at prices out here I could not afford a nurse even if I could find one. We face parade, you see, which is in grass, whereas you look out on desert sand to the babies’ envy.”

“We’ll go on the porch where we can chat and have an eye on them,” said mama.

But the babies, one in rompers, the other two by virtue of opposite sex in overalls, were so far afield transporting desert from one spot to another by bucket, that Mrs. Ronald said let well enough alone, and she would call them for introduction later.

It was not a pretty post, Letty and Mrs. Ron-



Transporting desert from one spot to another by bucket

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ald had to admit that when mama after a glance up and down the line of houses, and out past cottonwoods, cacti, and desert to the foot-hills, said so.

Yet Mrs. Ronalds disclaimed this too.

“It’s the army,” she maintained stoutly, even while laughing, which indeed was the way Letitia preferred to feel about it. “The common condition of us all on a post seems to do away with much of the seeming hardship. As a girl in a fairly well-to-do household, I was indulged, well, you know what indulgence of that sort implies in an American household, and my mother cannot comprehend what I mean, therefore, when I say the army is the free-est life for a woman in the world and the most unshackling, and that I would not change with any of my married sisters for all of their several assortments of civic luxuries together.”

“And there is absolutely nothing unmarried on this post?” came plaintively from mama.

“Only Dickie,” laughed Mrs. Ronald and she explained him further. She had engineered him through the shavetail homesick period she said.

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“For he took measles, of all things, while protecting me during a hike afield of Captain Ronald, and he gave ’em to my babies and I had the lot down in bed at my house at one time. I feel I have earned a claim on Dickie. He is a high-minded boy, ardent and clean, and as full of impulsive ideas of chivalry of a sort, as a widowed Southern mama and several nice sisters could make their only boy before he got away from them.”

“In other words,” laughed mama, “you are warning *me*, ‘hands off’ of Dickie. *I* think you are wrong. If a Dickie is allowed to cut his second teeth on flirtations with safely married women, it is merely educative for him and teaches him things he should know and turns him loose wiser, but still *free*. Prevent this, and ten to one with *your* type of a Dickie, some girl meaning matrimony gets hold of him and we know what that type of girl is like to be, and the thing is done.”

Mrs. Ronald shook her head. “Perhaps sophistication gained from loss of something else is its own good armor,” she admitted, “but myself, I have lived to doubt it.”

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“Oh, I’ll hands off of your Dickie, I owe you that,” retorted mama amiably, for it was pleasantly evident that she liked Mrs. Ronald; “for that matter, you will find something of the same thing you like in your Dickie, in the eyes of my Letty, if you are looking for that sort of thing and for which some remote degree of credit is mine. Merely a hypermetropic condition, Letitia, so don’t get conceited, which doesn’t see certain things when they are right under the nose. I’ll let Dickie alone if you say so.”

This was heroic in mama as she and papa and Letty proceeded to see him exactly three times a day if no more; for since cooks in the shape of Chinamen came so high, provided they could be obtained at all, mama decided they would do without one and take their meals with a lady at edge of post who, since her officer husband had died unfortunately leaving her scantily provided for, was being privileged in this way temporarily to provide for herself. There being no regular officers’ mess, Dickie took his meals here too.

Mama stuck to her promise. She did not begin with those pretty bandyings and verbal

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nothings with Dickie, or with that singling of him out, nor yet with the teasings and laughter in her eyes, which are the start at the winning of a Dickie. She chatted with him nicely and pleasantly and let him go.

That is until afterward.

The garrison children went daily in the escort wagon over to Schrader's Ranch to school, Mr. Schrader providing the school-room while the combination of ranch and garrison children paid the teacher. It is not without difficulties educations are achieved for your children in the army. Papa saw that Letitia was started at once. The wagon came for the post children at eight and went for them at about four.

There was a visitor at the ranch, Miss Laura Lee Henty, the niece of Mrs. Schrader. Letitia met her the first day she went to school.

"Without a single young lady resident, nor yet visiting on post," said big, handsome, florid Mrs. Schrader, black-eyed, black-haired, highly colored, the mother of seven, and who spoke her mind thus before the garrison children with good-humored frankness, "I tell Laura Lee it is her chance if ever. I owe it to her mother

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being my sister, to give her that before she has to go to work."

Miss Laura Lee was handsome too, like her aunt, with the difference that she was young and fresh-colored and supple as a boy. She was friendly as well and came out and romped with the larger school-boys at recess with exuberant high spirits and high laughter. At other times, sitting on the porch, she embroidered what her aunt called longry waists. In a garden which Letty knew back East, belonging to her Aunt Emma, a splendid and showy magenta-pink peony flowered near a bower-like trellis of Baltimore Belle roses. Miss Laura Lee might be this peony as compared with the Baltimore Belle type of young ladies Letitia hitherto had known. Not that she put this into words but that, when Miss Laura caught at a boy and pulled him down on the bench beside her and kissed him because it teased him to be kissed, it embarrassed Letitia and made her think of the pretty nurse-girls and the enlisted men on Sunday afternoons.

It was about this time that mama approached Mrs. Ronald accusingly.

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“I told you your yellow-crowned, pretty-boy-moth would be finding some feminine flame to flutter about? Can you blame him that the only candle he can find is not of the superfine wax of his home-people’s quality, since it is showy and is all which the desert waste offers of any sort? ‘Young blood must have its course,’ madame, ‘when all the world is green, and every goose a swan,’ madame, ‘and every lass a queen,’ or words to that effect. Do you know where your Dickie is genially galloping, day after day now, all his leisure?”

Mama must have meant to the Schraders’ Ranch since Mr. Hornsby was there most days, as the children all knew, lolling in the hammock or sitting on the big porch.

Mrs. Ronald showed she did know, acknowledging it almost unwillingly.

“Propinquity,” said mama, “and isolation, and no young person of his own refinements for sharp contrast, are dangerous combinations. I’ve seen it happen before in garrison life, once with the magnolias and the magic of a Southern springtime to hasten it. It turned out disastrously and ruined the boy. You can’t blame



Mr. Hornsby was there most days

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Dickie as things are either. He's young and he is lonesome. Want my help ?”

But Mrs. Ronald did not want it, her manner showed that.

Mama laughed good-humoredly. “Well, if you *won't* bridge it, why play your own hand your own way. I'll keep out a while longer.”

That night there was a concert and tableaux vivants for a fund toward a pool-table for the men's newly completed post exchange. Dickie brought Miss Laura Lee, a crimson-cheeked, handsome young Amazon in the new longry waist. She told Mrs. Ronald with a play at pouting, first that she did not think the garrison ladies had hurt themselves being friendly to her, and next that she did hope there would be a dance after the concert, as she and Lieutenant Hornsby had not had a chance to try their steps except at the frolic for the ranch-hands after her uncle's round-up.

She dwelt on the subject of Dickie. “Isn't Lieutenant Hornsby the whole thing on a horse though ? I don't see how they ever get men to go into the other *services*, didn't he say you call it ? We can hear taps over at our place. Isn't it

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shivery ? It means 'dead,' too, as well as 'lights out,' don't it ? Lieutenant Hornsby says it came to mean that part, after a battle his father was in during the war, in Virginia, I believe he said; they were burying an officer at night, with the two armies lying side by side waiting for day to renew the fighting and they were afraid a volley would be taken for an attack by night and so the bugle played 'taps' over the grave instead. I didn't just catch which side his father was on, he seemed to think I ought to know. He's awfully proud of his people. To be in the army must be just great for a girl, ain't it ?”

Mrs. Ronald came over to see mama the next day. “I have told Captain Ronald and the colonel we have to save that boy. And the worst of it is she is not a bad sort, only she is not his sort nor he, hers. Both would find it out too late. She is a little older than he is too. I have made the colonel promise to have him sent home if he can. Once he gets back to civilization and the girls he is accustomed to, he will realize and be grateful. If he does not, why he will have had time to examine his mind and his wants, and still will know where to find his Laura Lee. But

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once he is committed before he goes, Dickie is an honorable boy and — and she's a good girl, though imagine him taking her to his mother and sisters! Or how could such as she, poor child, better him or yet the service were she in it?" To all of which mama nodded her head and agreed.

Now another odd thing which Letitia had gathered about the pudding and pattern type of army lady, is that colonels seem always to cordially hearken to the Mrs. Ronalds of a post when they do express themselves in high places. The end of this was that the colonel did finally so arrange it for the unconscious Dickie. But these things involve red tape and take time, during which he continued to spend his leisure with Miss Laura Lee.

In the meantime mama and a seamstress from the town, evolved a riding-skirt out of cotton khaki. Then mama begged a service hat from papa, and having borrowed a horse, appeared before Dickie on the mess-porch, as they designated their board-lady's quarters, one evening after the early supper, with a soldier-man in the background holding her mount,

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regulation McClellan saddle and all, in readiness.

Now as pretty a mama as this one, — even with a daughter of fourteen, — sporting a natty khaki riding-skirt, white shirt, string tie, cavalry hat, and gantlets, with her crop under arm, and dimpling like a girl with the knowledge of her charmingness, and laughing in her eyes at the tall, yellow-haired, handsome Dickie springing up to greet her, why such a mama then is every bit as charming as she evidently means to be. And mama's pretty air with Dickie showed she meant it! Yet mama had promised Mrs. Ronald she would not! Though daughters must never, never admit such things even to themselves!

“May I ride a bit of the way with you as you go, for company?” mama asked Mr. Hornsby prettily. “I have been ambling about, short bits, for a day or two until I am saddle-wise. I rode some as a girl. Or maybe you would not mind heartening me up a bit, I have caught the trick of it but I am timid.”

They went off together and more, they came back an hour after together, so that Dickie

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must have arrived rather late at Laura Lee's when he did get there. Mama was in fine spirits and humming as she came up on her own porch.

"I am handicapped by my late entry, Letitia," she said, "but I'm hopeful."

When Letty arrived from school after this, her mother was generally out riding in the cool of the late afternoon. If Dickie was not with her, they had arranged to meet at the cottonwoods where the roads forked, or at Cathedral Rock, this side the fork, and come in together. Such a slight pretty mama as she was on her big mount, with a voice so light and girlish, and with such charming laughter in her eyes for Dickie, it would have been the unexpected thing, had he *not* met her at the cottonwood trees and come riding home with her.

But he went over to Laura Lee's too, and wrote off for boxes of candy for her and drove about with her in the Schraders' buckboard, for Miss Laura Lee and her aunt went out of their way with something of triumphant exultation to tell the post children!

Dickie went with mama to a round-up, some place up the valley, and they started at

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sun-up and did not get back until taps, since there was a dance which they stayed to see. Still he was over with Laura Lee days running after this, and that young lady took pains on paying her party calls after the garrison hop, to make mention to the ladies of his assiduity.

But red tape and all, the colonel accomplished the removal of Second Lieutenant Hornsby to the East. Special duty it was specified in the order. Moreover it was not sprung on young Dickie until the very end of matters when he must leave within a mere two days following his notification.

He so managed however that he went galloping off after dinner of the day he learned it, to break the news to Laura Lee. But fate favored the post friends of Dickie. She was out on the range with her uncle, and Dickie came galloping back to report for duty, and mama finding him on the mess-porch in the dumps at supper-time, sat with him until tattoo, talking of many things. Somehow mama made Dickie seem a man and a protector, and herself and Letty there beside her, types of their sex that depend on the stalwart right arms of his sex to take care of them.

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She even had him walk with herself and Letitia the several intervening doors between the mess-porch and home.

Mrs. Ronald who had been a little stiff of late with mama, stopped by however the next day. "He is not committed to anything yet with the girl," was her report, "but she has been on the telephone all morning since she had his message of yesterday, and he is to spend this evening with her, he tells me; which is to say his last, or psychological moments. The colonel ought to have prevented it. It will be death to the boy's whole future, we are all agreed on that. She will make the most of this last opportunity — "

"Last moments are dangerous," admitted mama; "moreover believing as I do that the end here justifies the means and all stage expedients are allowable when it is as nice a boy as Dickie, why — " but mama never said "why" what.

When Letty reached home at five o'clock this day, no one was there, only stillness and echoes. Her mother's crop and the service hat were gone from the rack. She also remem-

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bered that papa and Captain Ronald with a detachment of troopers were off for the day on some manœuvering hike afield, entailing a late return. As mama had not come by supper-time, Letty went up to her meal alone. Dickie was there and he told her that he would be gone before she was up in the morning and so good-by. And Letty told him that she was worried because it was so late for mama to be out. Dickie rejoined that he would doubtless meet her some place this side of the forks in the road, as he went over to the Schraders', and if she did not have an orderly with her, he would see her safely in.

Letty, on her way back, went by Mrs. Ronald's, but that lady was out with the babies, paying porch calls, so Letitia went home.

Though the stars were blinking out, no one was there, only the stillness and the echoes, so after a bit she walked down toward the garrison road by which mama must return. Papa having gone afield would return the other way.

As she neared the end of the walk where the road swept into the reservation, a strange thing

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happened. Out of the dusk a horse came galloping, thundering in, and swerving beneath a reservation light, made off toward stables, a horse with the saddle turned and dangling beneath its belly. It was old Leicester whom Captain Reid had loaned mama for her use, and Letitia saw that it was.

This time when she got home, for the short way lengthened, as in dreams when the more desperately one strives to reach an end, the farther it appears to be, papa had come, and was just starting forth to see what he could find this late at mess for supper. Almost before she could have hoped to make him understand, he had turned and was leading her by the hand rapidly along beneath the stars somewhere, as if she were a little thing again, and the grip of his hand hurt.

When she spoke, it was in a voice she herself never seemed to have heard before.

“Mr. Hornsby started for the Schraders’ Ranch right after supper,” the daughter stated, “he -- he must have met old Leicester and -- and have seen, papa ——”

They hurried along together. Afterward the

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daughter found that the minutest matters impress themselves on one oddly at such a time, the far note of a trooper down corral way, whistling stable-call, for instance, or the smell of cool moisture on dusty foliage from the colonel's recently watered flower-beds.

Papa turned in at the Ronalds'. The pudding and pattern type of households Letty had noted, are the ones people generally turn to when in worry and in trouble. Later, after everything to be done was done, and one heard the clatter of the horses bearing a detail of troopers going out with papa and Captain Ronald by the road old Leicester had come in, Mrs. Ronald being the natural human that she was, sat down and had a good bit of a cry.

"If you only could, Letitia —" she said.

But Letty could not; she had been the one to see old Leicester thundering in with the saddle turned and the stirrups dragging, and she could only sit, a white and mute Letty, and look at Mrs. Ronald imploringly. For it was mama, Letty's *mama* — don't you see? And here Mrs. Ronald got up and came and chafed the small hands of Letty in both her own. A great

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part of Letitia's comfortings along the way moreover, had come from the pudding and pattern type of ladies.

It was taps and after, by an hour, when the cavalcade came clattering back, and mama's laugh, insouciant and high, sounded above the heavier masculine voices of the group that brought up at Mrs. Ronald's door.

"I was frightened to death out there in the desert among cottonwoods and cacti," declared mama to Mrs. Ronald after she and papa and Captain Ronald were well in, "and alone and on foot, I lost my bearings *this side* that gruesome fork of the road, and Dickie fortunately met my horse racing back to camp, and after *hours* of search, it seemed like, finally found me way off the road, limping, with my ankle simply refusing to longer bear me, and a handkerchief to my eyes, just succumbing beside a clump of cacti and — and I couldn't make the start for a time, the reaction coming with the relief of seeing him; and then with only his mount and me on it and he walking, — why, poor Dickie lost his whole evening in my behalf and it was near taps when the others met us

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coming in and — and here he is now — Dickie go right to the telephone and make your amend, late as it is; put it all on me. Leaving at the unearthly hour you do, you will have no time in the morning to 'phone."

The next day mama explained further when Mrs. Ronald stopped by.

"We all have to seek virtue and pursue it in the direction of our own gifts and talents. I saved your Dickie for you. When he gets home and the sharp contrast of his own womenkind and the girls he is used to, strikes in to him, he will eventually thank us all. And in time the buxom Lorelei will more happily mate herself, according to the law of natural selection. But I won't say that I did not break my fingers loosening the buckle on that horsehair girth, or that I did not have to *beat* that respectable and well-disposed old war-horse to make him start homeward without me, or that I was not frightened to death wandering straight off the plain road this side that gruesome forking, endeavoring to lose my way, and heroine-like, dropping my crop and a gantlet to mark the way for Dickie, and scared as a child at the dark meanwhile,

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myself. I'm living up to you and Buckner and Letitia, you see, not to mention the service, and this I would suggest is my amende honorable. There is the call for guard-mounting, let's go down."

"Your ankle?" from Mrs. Ronald, laughing.

"Oh, my ankle! No invidious suggestions. Each one according to his talents. Letitia, there, however, who is hampered as yet by her literalness, would be happier in her mind if I made puddings; would you not, Letty?"

But Letitia would not say.

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THE PART OF ONE
COLONEL'S LADY

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THE PART OF ONE COLONEL'S LADY

AN instinct to mother shavetails seems generally to animate the feminine portion of the army. The feeling had developed in Letty about the time her interests below the line with the Legarés, the Haines, the Sergeant Masons, and the Garrs had to be discouraged by mama, though sporadic impulses to mother various things at hand were observable in her earlier. At three she rocked violently in her little chair, holding a battered doll and singing the "Army Blue." Later she cheered the isolation of a wind-beaten little bush in her front yard with confidential strains of "Columbia," sung to it softly under a conviction that the little bush was lonesome since it looked so.

Her interest in shavetails succeeded the "below the line" interval, and was one with a dawning realization that papas along with cub-lieu-

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tenants, were beings to look after and make comfy and to mother a bit too. Indeed her sense of duty in the matter toward the sex at large grew out of a fear that papa had missed his share of these things.

The first intimation of this on the part of the daughter came at that post which had rejoiced in one Colonel and Mrs. Ganeau for K. O's. Papa at that time was asking for the transfer which came later. He and Letty and mama were on their porch, one late afternoon, the two on the step, and mama in a chair above them, her elbow on the arm, and her chin supported by her palm while she listened.

“Being what I am, Nina,” papa said, “tolerably weak stuff you will say, perhaps I have been curiously unfortunate in my assignments since I left the Academy. Perhaps if I could have begun with a Colonel Ganeau, or have been with him earlier ——”

He stopped speaking and sat looking off toward the mountainous distance; and it was here that his little daughter first began to suspect the needs of papas. If she had quite dared she would have touched his hand resting

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there on the upper step with her small fingers. But he had more to say to mama.

“Can you follow my lame apology to you and to life in what I am trying to say? Perhaps it has the sound of hunting excuse outside of myself for the past, which it is not. It is as my chance to make my apology good, on the contrary, that I am asking for a transfer and its opportunity.”

And here he turned and as Letty had thought to do with him, laid his hand on mama's.

“Heavens, Buckner,” that person told him, “you sound like the chaplain talking to the men the morning after; of course it will be right. I only hope we will get a decent assignment when the time comes.”

The feeling impelling Letitia to mother cub-lieutenants developed after this. Indeed her acquaintance with that embryo shavetail, Henry Mann, dates from this period and to this garrison presided over by Mrs. Ganeau and her husband. Letitia then was something past twelve. Immediately following her discovery that males as a class need mothering, she met Henry under conditions that moved her to ultimately bestow on him, as representative of the unmothered

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class of the sex at large, all that she had wished to give to papa. It came about in this way:

Mrs. Colonel Ganeau and Letty, after their respective Brobdingnagian and Lilliputian fashions were friends. On occasions this official lady even was known to pat some vacant chair-seat near herself as invitation for the little Holliday girl, as she called her, to come and take it. Letitia also had been observed to go in and sit with this lady on her porch on summer evenings, which she could not have done, you understand, except by invitation. It was inferred therefore, about post, that the august Mrs. K. O. (like Aunt Emma in the past) thought the little Holliday girl a lonely and unconsidered child. At any rate this official lady amid her manifold duties as a colonel's wife, found time to include this obscure entity as an item.

It was honor indeed, therefore, to one small person to have her commanding lady proffer to care for her a day or two when mama desired to accompany papa to festivities in the city whereof the troops were to be a part. Various of the ladies went with their husbands.

They left, soldier-men and all, on the train

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at dusk, and Letitia with her bundle of necessaries in her arms went to Mrs. Ganeau's. There were lights over the house and some small bustle when she got there, a boy with a white face was standing in the middle of the living-room floor against a background of Indian blankets and Indian trophies. Mrs. Ganeau, large and majestic, with a handsome frontage of pompadoured gray hair and a countenance of authority, seemed just to have returned from somewhere, and her hand was on his shoulder.

The boy was named Henry, as Letitia found presently, Henry Mann Lounsberry being the whole of it, and then she remembered; he was the boy who had lived all summer in the tent near the railroad surveyor's camp with his big brother who was roughing it because he was ailing. Later, after Henry had been directed to his room, Mrs. Ganeau's younger guest was told more about him. The big brother, suddenly taken worse, was dead, and Mrs. Ganeau had gone in her carriage on hearing of it and brought Henry back until some one should come to get him.

At bedtime Letitia was given the small room

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next Mrs. Ganeau's own, while Henry Mann had a spare chamber down the hall. He was a big boy, true, but still, since the spare room was thus off, Letitia felt sorry for Henry.

In the morning a maid came to fasten buttons for the one guest, and to tie her hair-ribbons, after which she went down-stairs and out on the porch. The air was full of the scent of pines and the sun was rising over the table-land of the reservation above the mists. It was Indian summer. A line of soldier-men, prisoners from the guard-house, were already at work, and the smoke from the raked piles of burning leaves along the roadway mingled pungently with the pine odors.

Henry was on the porch and arose awkwardly and brought a chair for her. He was not such a big boy, after all, seen again, and his hair was rough as if it had not had a feminine hand to superintend its brushing overmuch. He had blue eyes in a sun-tanned, aquiline face and one gathered that under other circumstances, Henry might be what is called blunt.

The two guests sat down, both awkwardly.

"They are coming to get me," the boy said,

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a little hurriedly as if in extenuation and explanation of his being here.

"Who will come?" returned the other politely to show her interest.

"My Uncle Peter; but he is away from home, and we haven't found him yet. But he'll come."

"To take you to your mother?" suggested Letitia. "My Aunt Emma brought me back to post and mama once, after I visited her."

But the boy shook his head, as if since he had to differ with her, he did it doggedly. "Do, — do you know what *dead* means?" he asked bluntly.

"Why, yes," said Letitia, embarrassed, yet concerned, "we, — we — have it on post, too, you know, with escort, and the band ——"

"Well," said Henry, still doggedly, "that's why it is my uncle who is coming. There is nobody now *to come*, but him."

It was here that Mrs. Ganeau came out upon the porch, and here that she again laid her hand, after her majestic fashion, on the shoulder of Henry. Perhaps it was the outward expression of this august lady's maternal instinct to mother Henry.

But she was supremely a commanding lady.

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Sympathy, with her, was a matter to be expressed in deeds, not words. When it came to speech, her words were to the material things at hand, and final.

“Breakfast,” Mrs. Ganeau told Henry.

When the hour arrived for band-practice and Letitia, from the dictate of Mrs. Ganeau, learned that she was going for a walk, she found Henry awkwardly waiting to accompany her, as evidently desirous of evading the sound of the band in its stand facing parade, and therefore the colonel’s front porch, as his big-hearted friend Mrs. K. O. divined he would be.

The way taken by Letitia led to the edge of the table-land near the line of the reservation. The valley below, with its looping river and its mountainous background lay like a cyclorama Letitia remembered once to have seen; only that here there was no smoke of battle, nor charging battalions, no fallen horses, nor crumpled-up soldier-men, oddly limp, dotting plowed fields or rail-fence corners. Yet this valley with its river looping back on itself, and this big mountain overtopping it, had been the scene of such things too.

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That cyclorama had filled Letitia with a horror. She then first grasped in reality that for which her army and her soldier-men, might be destined.

But Henry belonged to the soldier's sex. He leaned forward with a bit of intent eagerness to scan the panorama of the valley.

"They crossed the river here," he explained, his brows gathered between his shrewd and scrutinizing eyes as he pointed, "and dislodged the enemy from the heights above, there. But the rout of our right wing, before crossing, was altogether discreditable. Looking at it from here, you can see somebody was to blame. My brother and I have been manœuvering the whole thing on his tent-floor this summer ——"

Henry stopped. It was the first mention of the brother.

Presently, desisting from his apparent scrutiny of the battle-field below them, he spoke again.

"Did Mrs. Ganeau know that I had the appointment to West Point, when she came over yesterday and got me?"

It was news to Letitia. "Why, no; I don't think she knew of you at all until she heard of —

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of — of what had — had happened. And you will be in the army, then too?"

Henry's shrewd eyes were a bit droll. "My Uncle Peter, he is my great-uncle, — meant me to be a vinegar merchant like he is. But he is fair. I said I would enlist and come up from the ranks if I could not do it any other way and so he got me in. There's the bugle now. It's mess-call. What is it that it is supposed to say?"

This blunt Henry was a person one found herself responding to. Letitia told him obediently,

"It says, —

*Soupy, soupy, soupy,
Without a single bean,
Coffee, coffee, coffee,
Without a drop o' cream;
Hashy, hashy, hashy,
The dam'dest ever seen —*

and Mrs. Ganeau will expect us to be there on time, her luncheon will be ready, you know."

These things took place the year Letty was twelve. Now, she has achieved eighteen in years, though she hardly looks it. One day this sum-

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mer when she stepped off the trolley bringing her from the train out to a certain midland post, she wore a well-brushed and natty walking-skirt which escaped very nice small ankles (but then she herself was in no sense large), and which showed nice feet clad in broad-soled Oxfords; also she wore a linen shirt-waist, and wore it trimly, being a trim soul, the waist being finished with a linen collar, and punctuated by a vertical line of black string tie. Her hair was turned up at her neck, and her young face looked ahead beneath a straw hat. In her hand she carried a traveling satchel and by some instinct one knew that whatever that bag held, the same would be shipshape and in order. Some persons are born orderly, some come to be so from familiarity with the miseries of the reverse tendency about them. Letitia was orderly.

She went along the concrete walk between the shaven and impeccable grass-plots, to that more imposing edifice among its neighbors, the colonel's house. The occupant of this domicile, and his lady, were named Ganeau and they had been removed to this particular department in affairs since Letty and her parents left it over a year ago.

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It was from here in fact that papa had been ordered to the Department of The Viscayas, Philippine Islands. There was some talk at the time of mama accompanying him. Mrs. Colonel Ganeau once said that wives ought to be required by the regulations to accompany their husbands to foreign posts, even if the Government has to supply a loan to get them there. Then if ever she is needed by him, Mrs. Ganeau claimed, even if he fails to think so.

Papa was still optimistic about what he called making good. "With all there is to be done over there," he told mama, "I ought to find my chance now, if ever."

"I often have felt your chance might be bigger without me," she responded; "at any rate I am going to give you an opportunity to ascertain. I'm not going with you, at least now. If it had been Manila, I might have considered it. There is no money, if you pause to consider, to get me and Letty over and settled anyhow. You go and get your bearings and we can follow."

So she and Letty went to her native city where she put her daughter for a year at what she called

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a *finishing* day-school. Not, she said, that she cared especially for her native city from which she had been away years enough to be quite weaned; but that the school was good and it was cheap. She established herself and Letty at a pleasant enough boarding-house near by, and really expected to stay there; but since she was paying board anyhow, presently when the native city's resources to amuse were exhausted, it suggested itself to her that it would cost very little more to join friends South for a bit of time in the winter, and again, to repeat the plan in the late spring, which brought it to be a matter of course by the summer. Letty had made so many acquaintances in the boarding-house it was perfectly possible to leave her, and she was certainly old enough to be able to look after herself by now, anyway, mama declared.

As far as the summer went, she had thought to have Letty go to Aunt Emma, but unfortunately that relative proved to be due across the Atlantic as a delegate to a convention of internationally earnest ladies gathered in London.

"And *my* friends really did not ask you," said mama perturbedly referring to her friends

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at Roslyn who had asked her North; "and anyhow you will have a better time right here, with Henry's Uncle Peter to be nice to you."

For the acquaintance in mama's native city upon whom they had come most to count, was round little Uncle Peter Lounsberry who had his vinegar establishment here and who now and then came around to see his young friend, Miss Letitia. Mama laughed and joked with him when he came, and twitted him with not asking for her, and the old gentleman responded gallantly, but went on asking for Letitia as before; though according to himself, one wondered that he did. He said he owed it to the army that Henry was not in the vinegar trade, whereas instead, his address for four years had been United States Military Academy. Moreover in these four years wherever this young Letty had chanced to be, according to the little old gentleman, surprisingly regular communications from Henry had pursued her.

"Which they don't, — me," grumbled Uncle Peter after he had taken to coming to see her; "a standing army is an analogy in a democratic form of government! Rank and precedent are

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founded on tommy-rot in this country! Show me sanction for 'em in the Constitution! What's he up to, since the young rascal writes to you? If they make a snob out of him, I'll leave all the vinegar assets and liabilities to the Court of Perpetual Arbitration."

"Just exactly what is a snob, the way you mean it?" questioned Letitia.

"Humph," said Uncle Peter.

This personage, except for the times when Henry was home, lived in a tall, shabby brick house alone with servants to look after him. When the ladies at the boarding-house heard of this, they shuddered at thought of what the house must be. But the Sunday Uncle Peter asked Letty to dine with him, shortly before Henry Mann was turned loose a graduate and a shavetail, it proved to be old-fashioned and comfortable and shabbily homely, and altogether just as one would have supposed Uncle Peter's domicile *would* be. He told her that what he poured into her little old-fashioned wine-glass, after he had put duck and fried hominy on her plate, was Madeira, "London particular" '43. He also said, grumblingly, he did not suppose

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she would know what he meant by *that*, and that he did not mean to open more of it until Henry's wedding-day.

"That is *if* he marries to please me," said Uncle Peter Lounsberry, blinking hard across the round table which separated his young friend and himself. "It is solemn occasions, pacts, ratifications, and that sort of thing when I open *my* Madeira. What is he saying about his movements, since he writes them to you, the rascal?"

And it was the late summer following these things that found Letty at the door of Mrs. Colonel Ganeau.

When that somewhat stouter and consequently even more august personage got down-stairs she was considerably astonished to find who was her caller. She kissed her however with quite the old kindness and even a Brobdingnagian show of pleasure, as the young girl arose from the couch beneath the collection of Indian trophies. After which the guest proceeded to considerably astonish her.

There was worry and perturbation in Letitia's face, which was tired and even white, but her

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reliance on her Brobdingnagian friend seemed absolute. "I came to you," she said at once, and to the point, even if with a break in her young voice; "to be married. To-day, if you don't mind."

The colonel's lady with something of that inanity of countenance which comes from shock and inability to take a thing in its entirety, sat down in a high-backed chair, heavily.

"We have tried for two days to find mama," said Letty again perturbedly and agitatedly; "she hates to write letters, you know; she is North visiting some of her old school-friends and, going about, sometimes she forgets I don't know just where — but we did find her at length," concluded the daughter, "and she sends this."

Mrs. Colonel Ganeau read the telegram dazedly.

"No objection. Go over to Fort T— and get some one to see you through. Not time for me to get there. Cable your father and wait for me. You can follow on a later transport."

"And he must leave on the afternoon train or he won't get to San Francisco now in time —" explained Letty.

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“He?” returned the colonel’s lady for once feebly; “who?”

Letty’s eyes opened wide. “Why, Henry, Mrs. Ganeau,” even with reproachful surprise, if one could think of such a thing toward a colonel’s lady, “Henry Mann! He said he and his uncle would find mama somehow, and they did.”

“*Henry, Henry Mann*, oh, I recall.”

“We have always meant to, he always has said we would”; explained Letitia earnestly. “I — I promised him I would a long time ago; and his leave is curtailed suddenly and he’s ordered to Manila. He and his Uncle Peter came around and argued all one evening about it. He said they would find mama somehow, and they did. And his Uncle Peter says,” Letitia smiled faintly through her perturbation, “that since I helped to get him into the army, I owe it to him to marry him and look after him. *Henry’s a shavetail*, you see, Mrs. Ganeau, and he is so — so *grim* to do, he’ll need some one to look after him. Papa is out there too, you know, and I guess he’ll be glad to see me.”

“And — and this Henry,” said Mrs. Ganeau

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as indignantly as if he had been no protégé of hers, and was wholly to blame in this taking of her off guard, "where is *he?*"

"He and his Uncle Peter Lounsberry are coming out from town on the next trolley. We came from L— on the train this morning. His Uncle Peter said he would hunt up a friend or two to help them tend to things and come on out. Because it *was Henry*, Mrs. Ganeau," anxiously, "we thought we could come to *you.*"

The colonel's better half turned cross. Used to authority and decisiveness as she naturally would be, this was heaping on her of responsibility indeed. What would the colonel say? And this Henry for whom she suddenly seemed sponsor, what in the young soul of him was Henry? Undoubtedly Mrs. Ganeau had every right to be cross.

"*You* said *we* ought to go with them to foreign posts, that they needed us —" Letty ventured to remind her here, "and Henry's never had anybody but his Uncle Peter —" Tears seemed imminent.

"You go up-stairs, Letty Holliday, and take off that hat and lie down on the couch until I

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come to you," said Mrs. Ganeau severely; "I'll have a cup of hot coffee brought up to you, you're gray about your lips with all of this. *Where's* your mother? I'll get her on the long distance. And what does she mean not being here with you? And what do you know about marriage and what you're doing, I'd like to know? Yes, *I* know *I* married at eighteen and married a shavetail at that, and once was foolish enough to tell *you* so. And also I know I *cried* every inch of the way in the old carryall conveying me from my mother, to the train taking me to the frontier and the Indians; and I *didn't cry* on his shoulder, either; not at first! They need us, of course, and I suppose I did tell you that too! Go on up and lie on that couch until I come to you."

And bidden thus by her commanding lady, Letitia went.

Moreover, down-stairs, a second or so after, the gray-haired, close-clipped, trimly stout husband of Mrs. K. O., as he came into his front hallway, had the shock of having his august helpmeet lay plump elderly hands on his either shoulder and forthwith give vent to a few tears against his portly person.

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“I am shedding them, Colonel Ganeau, I'd have you know, for those two young things we were, forty years ago, starting forth in that old carryall to face the world. Little Letitia Holliday is up-stairs wanting to be married to a cub-lieutenant and go to Manila!”

Mrs. Ganeau felt better about it when Henry and his uncle showed up a bit later. For one thing Uncle Peter's round comfortableness breathed reliability and backing, and it was reassuringly evident what *he* thought about Henry. His little, round, fat hand patted the boy's shoulder with that confidence which implies knowledge of the subject under hand, as he asked Mrs. Ganeau's ratification of the liberty he had taken in asking his old friend the Judge, and his chief clerk in the vinegar establishment to accompany them for the occasion.

And this Henry? Lean, tall, with an aquiline face, and with blue eyes which when they were older and less combative would come to look on the world a bit less bluntly, such was the Henry Mann on whose arm the imperial Mrs. Ganeau laid a hand, while she looked into his eyes to find what lay in the soul of him.

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Evidently she was satisfied, for thereupon she went up-stairs and addressed herself to the young person there with even greater severity.

“Who that you knew when you were here, is still on post? A good dozen of people? We’ll have them over. Oh, my servants are equal to occasions, and I’ve risen to too many affairs in a frontier wilderness not to be equal to most things by now. What is that you say? Do I suppose *you* will know how to do *your* part and rise to occasions? Certainly I do,” severely. “Any woman of average intelligence can who does not shirk, unless she is in some sense or other lazy. But I like it in you that you *are* afraid. The old uncle down-stairs, — and, truly, I must say you all certainly did take me for granted, — says he has taken more liberty, by bringing some old Madeira along. He and the Judge came lugging it! He says he’s been mellowing it for Henry’s wedding, and that it is a kind of conscientious ceremony with him. What’s that, — who else is it you say you know on post?”

Letitia hesitated. One had never known her so near tears as this day.

“What now? It’s your wedding. Out with it.”

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"You, — you'll be shocked. I knew him when I was a little thing. He's company sergeant now, with a wife and children. His name is Legaré. He taught me to read, evenings, with a straw to point and a picture-book."

"H'm," said Mrs. Brobdingnagian K. O.: "I'll ask the colonel. What did they bring in your suit-case which the vinegar clerk came lugging?"

"My white dress," said Letty, "I thought I'd put it on."

"Well you get up and put it on. The colonel is down-stairs with them arranging matters. Do you realize that boy to make his train must leave here inside two hours?"

Letitia was grave but steady.

"Will it be the chaplain, Mrs. Ganeau?"

"It will be the chaplain."

And when the time came Mrs. Ganeau sniffed and the other ladies cried openly, and Uncle Peter blew his nose violently. What that martinet figure of a soldier-man, Company Sergeant Legaré did, from his sentry-like position in the dim background of hallway, was to get out a somewhat damaged tintype of a very small girl

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bearing a likeness to the present bride, with a very wide stretch of beach and ocean back of her, and a big unmounted gun in the foreground, and polish it surreptitiously to freshen it up, for a present, indeed the only one the occasion brought forth, for the groom; and which through the kindly offices of august Mrs. Ganeau, finally reached him.

Afterward the bride explained that Corporal Legaré himself had had that picture taken of her, in the long ago.

Then Henry Mann had to go. It is the way of it in the army.

They behaved beautifully about it. At the last he took her by the hands and looked at her, and oblivious of them all, was heard to say, with a boy's sternness that was visibly meant to hide something else, and which was comically blunt, and combative, "Girl ——"

And she answered with a break in hers, "—, Boy —!"

Mama arrived forty-eight hours later, Letitia's friends keeping her with them on post until that event came to pass.

The daughter's mind was perfectly clear

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about one thing, she was to follow on the next transport. She and Uncle Peter were one as to that, for Henry was expecting her. Moreover Uncle Peter was to take her across the continent. He and Henry had arranged that.

“If your father's time over there were not so nearly out, I would go too,” said mama. “However, as he is in Manila now, he need not lack for diversion if he wants it. Yes, I have had a pretty nice time this summer, though bridge among one's rich friends, is demoralizing to the purse. Oh, there is plenty I can do with myself until your father comes! Letitia, look at me! You are withholding something from me in your eyes. Are you refusing me the benefit of the doubt, you have always given me? Look at me! I believe you are glad to be going from me to your father! Ah, you will kiss me then, and cry a little against my poor collar ——”

As arranged beforehand, Uncle Peter escorted Letitia across the continent when the time came. On the journey West he remembered to ask her one thing.

“Look here, Letishy, see to it, will you, that that boy gets all now that's owing to him from

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womenkind, and has been owing him almost from the start and showdown, will you? He hasn't had anything but the grannying he got from me, since he can remember, no, drat the boy, Henry Mann hasn't. See to it, will you?"

Letitia's hand went into Uncle Peter's. "Like Mrs. Ganeau sees to the colonel?" she said earnestly, having her own model.

His old eyes twinkled. "Just that. Only Henry Mann is not to stop at being a mere colonel, is he?" the uncle inquired, drolly.

She took him literally. "Of course not," she responded in all seriousness, whereat her companion twinkled some more.

After his return he came to report the last news of her to Mrs. Ganeau and the ladies on post.

"*I* stood on the dock, and she stood on the deck, and I waved and she waved, but she was not thinking about *me*, not a bit of it. *Her* mind had jumped that small pond between 'em of a Pacific, and her thoughts were ahead with that boy of mine, Henry."

THE END