

1965

# Frontier Army Life Revealed by Charles King, 1844-1933

Hazel M. Flock  
*Fort Hays State University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholars.fhsu.edu/fort\\_hays\\_studies\\_series](https://scholars.fhsu.edu/fort_hays_studies_series)



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Flock, Hazel M., "Frontier Army Life Revealed by Charles King, 1844-1933" (1965). *Fort Hays Studies Series*. 24.  
[https://scholars.fhsu.edu/fort\\_hays\\_studies\\_series/24](https://scholars.fhsu.edu/fort_hays_studies_series/24)

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by FHSU Scholars Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Fort Hays Studies Series by an authorized administrator of FHSU Scholars Repository.

1965

# fort hays studies

literature series no. 3  
march 1965

**NOTE:** Fort Hays Studies—New Series, Science Series No. 3 was published, as defined by The International Code of Zoological Nomenclature, on March 25, 1965.

(Please attach to title page.)

*Flock, Hazel M.*

**Frontier Army Life  
Revealed by Charles King, 1844-1933**

---

*fort hays studies—new series  
literature series no. 3  
march 1965*



***Fort Hays Kansas State College***  
***Hays, Kansas***

***Fort Hays Studies Committee***

**THORNS, JOHN C., JR.**

**STOUT, ROBERTA C.**

**SPANGLER, ROBERT J.**

**WALKER, M. V.**

**MULLEN, EUGENE**

**MARC T. CAMPBELL, *chairman***

**Copyright 1964 by Fort Hays  
Kansas State College  
Library of Congress Card Catalog No. 64-63575**



**Hazel Manning Flock**

### ***Biographical Sketch of the Author***

Hazel Manning Flock received her A. B. degree in English from Fort Hays Kansas State College in 1960, and her M. A. in English in 1962. While studying at Fort Hays she participated in the Honors Seminars, was a member of Alpha Lambda Delta, Women's Leadership Organization, and Lambda Iota Tau. She was selected as a Phi Kappa Phi Scholar in 1959-60 and was given recognition in *Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges* in 1960.

Mrs. Flock is a member of the Kansas Association of Teachers of English and the National Council of Teachers of English. She is presently teaching at Geneseo, Kansas.

**Frontier Army Life**  
**Revealed by Charles King, 1844-1933**

## *Preface*

The purport of this study is to picture army life of the old West as revealed by the works of Charles King, author and military man of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I have emphasized the period of frontier policing by the army during the settling of the West, more commonly referred to as the Indian Wars of the 1870's.

One of the most popular writers of his day, King is rarely read today. He produced more than fifty books, more than sixty short stories and many magazine articles—all about army life. Surely, I felt, such a prolific writer must have had something significant to contribute to American literature. To test my belief, I have reviewed the author's heritage, background, and accomplishments to examine his qualifications and to establish his authority to write in his field. I have read in other contemporary works, carefully chosen from the vast number available, to gain a better perspective for judging King in his own historical setting. Moreover, I have read all of King's books contained in the collection in Forsyth Library, and as many others as were available through inter-library loans. Critiques of King's works are non-existent, with the exception of a recent article by Professor S. J. Sackett of Fort Hays Kansas State College. Therefore, the views presented here are strictly my own.

The aim has been to fuse King's recurring themes, dominant attitudes, chief characteristics, and prevailing philosophies into a unified essay, supported by representative and appropriately selected excerpts.

Before naming specific debts, I should acknowledge my gratitude to those in other educational institutions who have supplied bibliographical information, to Egon Weiss, assistant librarian at West Point, and to Marc Campbell, reference librarian at Fort Hays Kansas State College.

For patience, guidance and other aid of various kinds I am indebted to my supervisory committee at Fort Hays: to the Chairman, Verna M. Parish, and to Samuel J. Sackett, Roberta C. Stout, and Paul K. Friesner. To each of these, I offer humble thanks. Especially am I grateful to Paul Friesner, former librarian, for calling Charles King to my attention and, later, for turning over to me a complete working set of bibliography cards on King.



## *Table of Contents*

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. LIFE OF CHARLES KING . . . . .	1
Ancestry . . . . .	1
Education and Experience . . . . .	2
Adventure into Writing . . . . .	5
Types of Work . . . . .	6
II. LIFE ON THE FRONTIER POST . . . . .	9
Home Life . . . . .	9
Women on the Post . . . . .	10
Daily Activities . . . . .	12
Uniforms . . . . .	15
Army Terms . . . . .	16
Social Affairs and Recreation . . . . .	17
Respect for Army Propriety . . . . .	17
Cavalry Horses . . . . .	18
III. LIFE ON THE TRAIL . . . . .	21
Appropriate Campaign Attire . . . . .	21
Men in the Ranks . . . . .	21
Rations and Equipment . . . . .	23
Recognition for Service . . . . .	24
IV. SPIRIT OF THE ARMY . . . . .	25
Ideal vs. the Real Soldier . . . . .	25
Soldiers' Side of Indian Warfare . . . . .	28
Highest Aim of the Army . . . . .	38
CONCLUSION . . . . .	40
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	44

## Chapter I

# The Life of Charles King

CHARLES King, author and military man, was a descendant of the famous King family which has Revolutionary statesman and political leader Rufus King for its head. If there be merit in heredity, it must be conceded that he had an unusually good start in life, for we find his father, grandfather, great grandfather, and two great uncles separately discussed in the *Dictionary of American Biography*.<sup>1</sup> His great-grandfather, Hon. Rufus King (1755-1827), served in the Revolutionary War; sat in the Continental Congress; introduced the proposal to call the Philadelphia Constitutional Convention; assisted in the final draft of the Constitution of the United States; was twice selected as Minister of the United States to England, the first appointment being made by Washington; and served as U. S. senator from New York for twenty years. He was a recognized leader of the Federalist party and was twice, in 1804 and 1808, a candidate of that party for the vice presidency. In 1816 he was candidate for President against Monroe.<sup>2</sup> He seems to have been a leading advocate of unpopular causes: He was a leader in the fight for adoption of the Jay Treaty and an early advocate of the abolition of slavery, and is credited (1787) with authorship of the now familiar constitutional phrase "neither slavery nor involuntary servitude." He opposed the Missouri Compromise. The names of three of his sons are listed in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.<sup>3</sup> the second son, Charles King, being the grandfather of the subject of this paper.<sup>4</sup> Grandfather Charles King (1789-1867) served in the War of 1812, though opposed to it, was

1. W. C. Brown, "Charles King," *Annual Report of the Association of Graduates of the U. S. M. S.*, June 12, 1933, p. 57.

2. "Rufus King," *Encyclopedia Britannica* (11th ed.), Vol. 15, 803-804. A similar account is also given in the 14th ed., Vol. 13, 391-392.

3. This is probably a printing error. The sons are listed in the *Dictionary of American Biography*.

4. Brown, *loc. cit.*

editor of the New York *American*, and was one of the earliest presidents of Columbia College (1849-1864). He was recognized for his intellectual gifts and attainments.<sup>5</sup> Also an intellectual leader as well as military man was his son Rufus (1814-1876), father of the author, Charles King. Among the first of President Lincoln's appointments as brigadier-general, Rufus King also served as proprietor and editor of the Milwaukee *Sentinel* and wielded a strong influence in the politics of Wisconsin. In recognition of his qualifications as an intellectual leader, Rufus was appointed Minister to the Pontifical States at Rome,

a position demanding peculiar endowments of personal tact, poise and grace, together with ripe culture and a broad knowledge of affairs. On the occasion of his departure for this important post the Civil War broke out. Mr. King immediately resigned his appointment and retraced his steps to Wisconsin, where he assisted in the organization of Wisconsin's Brigade.<sup>6</sup>

Charles King, the subject of this paper, lived a full and busy life. He was born October 12, 1844, in Albany, New York, and died March 17, 1933, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, his home for many years.

The military career of Charles King had an early beginning, for in official orders the Adjutant General of Wisconsin credits him as being marker in his father's regiment (1st Wisconsin State militia) in 1856; drummer for the Milwaukee Light Guard in 1859-'60; and mounted orderly in King's (Iron) Brigade, Army of the Potomac, in 1861. For this latter service he was subsequently awarded the Civil War Medal.<sup>7</sup>

Parental disapproval of King's boisterous boyhood companions, characterized as a "Godless and graceless gang," prompted them to "pack him off" to his grandfather's home in New York City in 1858 where he entered the grammar school connected with Columbia College, under the celebrated Dr. Charles Anthon. Of the "very excellent young gentlemen matriculated with him at Columbia College not one ever won distinction." On the other hand,

His boyhood comrades in his Milwaukee home, although a somewhat turbulent crowd, eventually furnished the country with four generals, two rear admirals, a U. S. Senator, and a famous scientist, while three fell leading their commands in the Civil War.

Though he missed the company of his old companions, he made lasting and notable friends at his grandfather's, among whom were the brevet lieutenant general commanding the army and General Winfield Scott "who paid weekly evening visits to the grandfather's home; and at the conclusion of these visits it was Charles' duty to escort the old General home. West Point and the Army was

5. Evert A. Duyckinck and George L. Duyckinck, *Cyclopaedia of American Literature* (New York: T. Ellwood Zell, 1875), I, 397-398.

6. News item "Brig.-Gen. and Charles King, the Soldier-Novelist," in "General Gossip of Authors and Writers," *Current Literature*. XXVII (January, 1900), pp. 20-21.

7. Brown, *loc. cit.*, all information on King's career from this point derives from the *Annual Report of the Association of Graduates of the U. S. M. S.*, pp. 59-67.

King's ardent ambition, . . . though his relatives were insistent on a legal career." The Civil War tipped the scales in his favor, and with President Lincoln's help, he entered West Point in June, 1862. When Lincoln visited the Military Academy a few days later, he put "his great hand on King's boyish head, (and) said: 'Well, son, you have got your wish at least.'"

As a cadet, King's military bearing won for him the chevrons of corporal in 1863, first sergeant in 1864, and cadet adjutant in 1865. He was retained at West Point as instructor in artillery tactics during the summer of 1866 immediately following his graduation, and served there again as assistant instructor of infantry, artillery, and cavalry tactics in 1869-'71. He was promoted to first lieutenant in 1869.

In November, 1872, he married a famous old sea captain's only daughter, Adelaide L. Yorke, by whom he had four children, Adelaide Patton (deceased); Mrs. Carolyn Merritt MacIntyre, wife of Dr. Donald R. MacIntyre; Mrs. Elinor Yorke Simeon, wife of Charles J. Simeon, and Comdr. Rufus King, U. S. Navy, now [1933] executive officer, U. S. S. WYOMING. Gen. King's wife died October 22, 1928.

His next move was a transfer from artillery to cavalry and from the deep South to the Arizona frontier and Indian warfare. He was given command of Troop K of the Fifth Cavalry which performed heroic service against the Apaches, a tribe noted for cruelty, cunning, and courage. In the fight at Diamond Butte, May 21, 1874, he displayed such bravery that he was promoted to the rank of brevet captain by the commanding general, but he declined. His last fight in Arizona was at Sunset Pass on November 1, 1874, for an arrow nearly ripped out the left eye, and a bullet smashed the saber arm close to the shoulder and sent him to recuperate on sick leave. An open suppurating wound for eight long years was one of the results of his Arizona service.

In this particular fight he was carried from the field by Sergeant Bernard Taylor, Company "A" 5th Cavalry, whose "gallantry brought the award of Medal of Honor." King had ordered Taylor to leave him and save himself.

Taylor refused and stuck to his job though under heavy fire, while Lieutenant Eaton sprinted up the mountainside with a small detachment, drove the Apaches back and completed the rescue.

King never forgot this service and in describing it in his stories immortalized the sterling qualities of his two gallant friends.

Forced to retire from active military duty in June, 1879, King, in reality, merely exchanged duties;

for he was Professor of Military Sciences and Tactics, University of Wisconsin, 1880-'82; Colonel and Aide de Camp to the Governor of Wisconsin, 1882-

'91; Assistant Inspector General, Wisconsin National Guard, 1883-'89. He was a member of the Board of Visitors to the U. S. Military Academy in 1889, Commanding Fourth Infantry Wisconsin National Guard, 1895-'97.

When he was first assigned to his duties in 1880, the military efficiency at the university as well as that of the Wisconsin National Guard was at a low ebb.

It was not only that of indifference on the part of nearly all but absolute antagonism and opposition on the part of many. There was no discipline, the standard of instruction was very low, and what was far worse, the attitude of the faculty was more indifferent and antagonistic than it was cooperative and helpful.

In two years' time in spite of all opposition, indifference, handicaps, and discouragements of every name and nature, Captain King, every inch a soldier, by his force of character, by example, by the wise use of precept and principle, by patriotic and military industry, and through a genius for organization and for establishing and maintaining leadership completely changed conditions. He moulded the raw students into soldierly, disciplined cadets; and placed them where high and critical army authority after severe tests gave them praise.

When the Spanish-American War of 1898 broke out, Major General Wesley Merritt asked for the service of his former adjutant, King, and he was then appointed brigadier general of volunteers. For his "conspicuous gallantry and efficiency" and his suggestion of a movement which was later authorized "resulting in the overwhelming defeat of the insurgents with loss to them of many men, all their artillery and quantities of war supplies," General King was recommended as major general of volunteers.

An indefatigable worker, King was actively engaged in military work until the August before he died in March, when he was relieved from duty because the "army appropriation act failed to provide for any retired officers engaged in such duties."

His military activities therefore cover the period from 1856 to 1932—76 years! Even deducting from this short periods when on inactive duty status it is believed that he had a record of years of active service never equalled.

In 1924 he learned from The Inspector General of the Army (Helmick) that The Adjutant General (Wahl) reported that King was the only officer in the Army who had been authorized and issued badges for: 1, Civil War; 2, Indian Wars; 3, Spanish War; 4, Philippine Insurrection, and 5, World War.

On his death, the Governor of Wisconsin

issued a proclamation ordering that all flags in state and public buildings in Wisconsin be flown at half mast until after the funeral, the ceremonies of which were attended by the Army Corps Area Commander, the Governor of Wisconsin, and their respective staffs.<sup>8</sup>

Much more could be told of his service as well as testimony of his renown as a teacher, lecturer, friend, and counselor to the hundreds

---

8. Brown, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-67; and John F. Finerty, *War-Path and Bivouac*, edited by Milo Milton Quaife (Chicago: R. R. Donnelley and Sons Company, 1955). Finerty says there was a statewide celebration of King's eighty-fourth birthday in 1928. p. 302.

who knew him or came under his influence. General Harbord in 1921 said, "General King has ceased to be an officer, he is an institution."<sup>9</sup>

King's first love was military life, and he himself said that he was never so happy as when in the saddle.<sup>10</sup> Financially, military duties could not pay as the pen did. Professionally, personally, and in every other way, they paid infinitely more.<sup>11</sup> Always fond of athletics, he was "erect, active and alert," even in his later years, and even strangers recognized his military bearing.

One of the most popular writers of his day, King disclaimed any literary traditions and wrote only that he might make "one woman happy" and to give his son and daughters a better education than he could possibly give them otherwise. In his own words, Captain King, when asked what guided him to literature, replied frankly: "Circumstances, chiefly. I wasn't long in finding out that keeping a family on retired captain's pay is a beggar's business. I had to go to work, so I took to writing."<sup>12</sup>

King's faithful presentation of frontier army life, filled as it is with many details of everyday life as well as accounts of battles which had taken place years before, was no accident. While in active service he had formed the valuable habit of keeping a diary. This faithful jotting down of each day's events, the recording of the unvarnished, sometimes rough, but always busy and strenuous life of the serviceman became a priceless asset as well as the secret to his accuracy in writing. These small notebooks, filled with the concise and honest impressions of the moment, were stored in the pigeon-holes of his worn and battered field desk. Whenever he needed material or authentic data, he simply consulted these records.

Work and trials were never over for the frontier soldier; he knew few moments of idleness. Yet a month of recuperation in a western city revealed to King that even old friends and schoolmates knew nothing of the real life in a frontier army post. They asked him how he killed time out there. One night he "broke loose and told them," and was astonished when a journalist present asked him to put it in writing for his paper. From the old notebooks of the Sioux campaign came the material and each Sunday for several months the story was published. In the summer of 1880, the

---

9. Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 64. Adjutant General Holway wrote the Chief of the Militia Bureau in 1921 saying, "There are today (1921) in the State far more than fifty thousand members of the Guard, both former and present, who have during their service come under Major King's teaching and influence. They have come and still come to him for advice and assistance and feel free to come on account of long and tried association." King served eleven years after this was written.

10. *Current Literature, op. cit.*, p. 20.

11. Charles King, "Thirty Years of Pen-craft," *Lippincott's*, 86:469-75, October, 1910; pp. 576-82, November, 1910.

12. Biographical Notes, "Human Documents," *McClure's Magazine* 18:128, July, 1894.

Sentinel Company of Milwaukee published in pamphlet form five hundred copies of this work. Thus, *Campaigning With Crook* became the first of more than fifty books, and many more than fifty shorter stories, written by Charles King. He also collaborated on plays and served as editor for others through the years.

So it was that in 1879 the door was opened for Charles King to acquaint the public with life in the army. He ultimately became the best known, and, indeed, in his day almost the only writer of novels dealing with American army life.<sup>13</sup> It was a new and almost untrodden field. While his subject matter ranges from the Civil War to the war in the Philippines, the majority of King's books are about life on the frontier in the Indian days of the 1870's, and they deal primarily with the activities of the Fifth Cavalry.

But it was not all glory and easy sailing for Charles King. Writing at first as many as 10,000 words per day in longhand, and supplying two publishers at once with material, his shrivelled and shortened arm gave out. Several chapters were lost in the mails and had to be re-written. Soon, however, he found a way to surmount these problems. That new invention, the phonograph, was just becoming known. "Why not try it?" said a friend, and try it they did, with comical results at first.<sup>14</sup> But it was encouraging, and after he had devised a shorthand of his own, King carefully read his material into the machine. The cylinders were then turned over to experienced persons who transcribed, typed, and sent the material back to him for revision or correction. Other publishers were soon clamoring for material. Some were not reliable. Books were published without being proof-read by the author himself. These books often were riddled with "typographical flaws of the most flagrant character"<sup>15</sup> and in this wretched shape were unloaded on the market—sometimes at cheap prices.

Copyright laws were not as inclusive in those days, either; consequently, books were often pirated by unethical parties and made into plays. This happened to his book *Two Soldiers*, but the very successful military play was recognized even by the papers as being the work of one Charles King and at least three lawyers voluntarily wrote him urging him to sue.<sup>16</sup> Later he collaborated with Evelyn Greenleaf Sutherland and Emma V. Sheridan Fry on a play called

---

13. *Ibid.*

14. King referred to the heroine's fingernails, after the Tennysonian method, as "vermeil tinted," and it came out "vermin tainted." He does not tell who typed these first trials, but remarks that the cylinders presently passed to the care of a wiser head and surer hand, reappearing accurately typed and with a carbon copy to be held in reserve. It also served the advantage of according some measure of criticism, something he had never had before.

15. "Thirty Years of Pencraft," p. 577.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 576

*The Story of Fort Frayne*. The script was sent to New York, and after months of delay King was notified that it, too, had been “adapted with but slight alteration of names by certain buccaneers of the stage.”<sup>17</sup> The only thing to be done was to re-write it immediately as a novel before the play could be produced. *Fort Frayne* then became the novelization of the play rather than the usual dramatization of a novel.

One publisher, whose methods of advertising were objectionable to King, obtained pictures of him under false pretenses. These were printed in newspapers with the most mendacious stories of deeds of physical prowess in the Civil War which he, as a boy of sixteen, could not possibly have performed—all to publicize a forthcoming book, and all, it might be added, completely against King’s wishes or knowledge at the time.

Another book, *Famous and Decisive Battles*, was reprinted years after the first edition and also without the consent of the author. This new version contained additional chapters on battles which were, in King’s opinion, “neither famous nor decisive” and with a “total alteration of the last page and the insertion of a paragraph I never would have written or authorized.” In addition, the face of King had been superimposed on a stranger’s torso—to grace the pages as a photograph of the author. This hybrid had been secretly pushed and sold to confiding dealers. King later confronted one of the dealers who refused to give any information, saying it was a secret of the trade, and who soon, also, went out of business. Though the bogus book was still on the market when King wrote of it, his comment was that “life is too short to spend running it down.”<sup>18</sup>

Of his books in general, *Campaigning With Crook* (1880) is a compilation of events during the long march into the Black Hills and the Yellowstone on the trail of the Sioux Indians who had massacred General Custer and his men. The previously-mentioned *Famous and Decisive Battles* (1884) is also non-fictional. *Between the Lines* (1889) and *The Iron Brigade* (1902) are fiction with considerable historical background. *Trials of Staff Officers* (1891) was largely autobiographical. *Comrades in Arms* (1904) is set in the Philippines during the insurrections in that country.

*Between the Lines* is a story of the Civil War using actual battles as much of the setting and containing numerous references to prominent names of the period. The significance of the title is two-fold: those who were “between the lines” geographically, and those

---

17. *Ibid.*

18. *Ibid.*, p. 579.



who were often "between the lines" of attitudes and loyalties. Particularly graphic and historically pertinent is King's description of the great cavalry fight on the right flank the third day of Gettysburg. The story evolves around a young officer of the North who captured an officer from the South. When he realized the prisoner had been a classmate and friend before the War, the northern officer arranged for secret care and nursing of the "enemy," which involved considerable risk in many ways. It is interesting to note that King's own father, Rufus King, had captured Lee's son, W. H. F. Lee, near Yorktown, and had got in touch with Lee telling him that his son was in safe hands. Messages were exchanged between the two fathers.<sup>19</sup>

All Charles King's other works are romantic fiction placed in a framework of frontier army life with a strong atmosphere of dust, alkali, outposts, and barrenness, but not without a sensitivity to and an appreciation of nature. They are filled with the charm and romance of another age and another time. In *The Colonel's Daughter* (1883) and its sequel, *Marion's Faith* (1885) the hero, Jack Truscott, "was in flesh and blood Lieutenant George O. Eaton,"<sup>20</sup> who had saved Captain King's life at Sunset Pass, Arizona.

Others have written of the Big Horn and Yellowstone expedition of 1876, but King's account given in his "Campaigning with Crook," which passed through several editions, will doubtless always be the accepted history.<sup>21</sup> This was supplemented (1930) by King, who traced on an out-of-print Reynolds map of that area the route followed by Crook. An abstract from his 1876 diary was also incorporated making a unique and very fair history of the operations of General Crook's Column in 1876. . . .<sup>22</sup>

19. Charles King, "Rufus King: Soldier, Editor, and Statesman," *The Wisconsin Magazine of History*, IV (September, 1920-June, 1921), 37-382. Rufus was associated with and a friend of General Lee. During the war Rufus was stationed across from Lee's plantation home. Mrs. King took it upon herself to go in and pack and label all personal belongings she deemed valuable for keepsakes. She directed that these be sent to the Lees after the war, but never knew whether it was done or not.

20. Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

21. A footnote in Finerty, *op. cit.*, p. 254, corroborates this statement. Finerty is describing a march along Pumpkin Creek when the editor (Milo M. Quaife) notes: "There is obviously some confusion in the Author's account of the march from the Tongue to the Powder. General King's narrative at this point suffices to resolve it. . . ."

22. Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 62; and Finerty, *op. cit.*, pp. 301-302, closely parallels King's account. A correspondent from the *Chicago Times* and not a regular soldier, Finerty says, "one of the most cheerful men I marched with amid the pelting rain was Captain Charles King, now celebrated as a military novelist, who was . . . full of anecdote, but complained occasionally of the effect of serious wounds which he had received while fighting the Apaches in Arizona and which subsequently, compelled his retirement from active service."

Evidently the respect was mutual for King remarked, in speaking of the correspondents accompanying them, ". . . Mr. Finerty, of the *Chicago Times*, . . . was the gem of the lot." Finerty later became one of Chicago's leading citizens. That others thought well of him also is verified in J. W. Vaughn's *With Crook At the Rosebud* (Harrisburg, Penn.: The Telegraph Press, 1956), where he says the soldiers referred to Finerty as the "Fighting Irish Pencil Pusher." p. 18.

## *Chapter II*

# Life on the Frontier Post

LIFE of the fighting man, whether in the field or on the post, was King's realm, for that was where he was most at home. For those who were "married" to the army there was no room for boredom. They made the most of life wherever they were stationed and seemingly had fun doing it. Though never easy, life was somewhat better and living quarters cozier when the wives and families joined their men.

Except in peaceful times, it was unusual for anyone but the family to live on the post. In more settled times and when stationed closer to civilization it was not unusual for friends and relatives to make either short or extended visits.

Posts were usually arranged in a quadrangle with housing for officers and the more permanent families allotted by rank, while tents housed the less permanent companies. Married officers chose their quarters according to their rank. As a rule, they were those quarters farthest from the entrance-gate and nearest those of the colonel commanding. Whenever a new officer arrived, he could, if he desired, request a dwelling already occupied. The displaced officer could, in turn, displace another as long as rank was not exceeded. Although it never happened in King's books, it is conceivable that a newly transferred officer could be the cause of everyone in the garrison moving in a "fruit basket upset" manner. Bachelor officers had a choice also. All other bachelors lived in barracks or tents.

One section of the garrison was reserved for the homes of the laundresses and in army parley was known as "Sudsville" or "Sudstown." Tailors also lived on the post to care for the uniforms properly.

Officers of that day enjoyed an amenity that the average person of today does without. All officers' homes had cooks or house-

maids or both. Nursemaids for the children are often mentioned also. It was the custom in the Far West, presumably for economic reasons, for a Chinese to be houseboy and cook in a married or single lieutenant's quarters. When traveling, officers always sent cards by the porter the moment they found army ladies were on the same train. At the garrison, officers' front door "knockers" were muffled with a knot of white ribbon when they were on field duty. No soldier who valued his honor or his good name could afford to hang back from sharp and active duty, and it was considered as a matter of course that army men behave well in battle and do their duty.

Demonstrated throughout King's works is the precept stated explicitly in *The Deserter*. The affairs of the Fifth Cavalry's officers were held as regimental property in which outsiders had no concern, and one of the strictest rules of the regiment forbade talking of one another to outsiders.

The Fifth was somewhat remarkable for being emphatically an "outspoken crowd," and for some years, thanks to a leaven of strong and truthful men in whom this trait was pronounced and sustained, it had grown to be the custom of all but a few of the officers to discuss openly and fully all matters of regimental policy and utterly to discountenance covert action of any kind.<sup>1</sup>

King recognized that women played an important part in the life of the army post and he presented many types. The rigors of frontier life were a sure test, and artificiality could not stand the test. The heroines of the novels were faithful, trustworthy, generous, and kind, yet full of spirit and quick to defend when occasion warranted. As with his heroes, beauty was not as important as graceful movements and gracious manners. There were compensations for marrying into the army, said King. Unlike society girls of the East who once married were not sought as dancing partners, the army lady never became a wallflower. Though her children may have been as tall as she, she never lacked attention. If she had any vivacity, with any pretensions at all to beauty or grace, she lived and moved a queen.

Senior ranking officer was the colonel and since the colonel's wife had an especially important position on the post, she more or less determined the morale of the entire camp.

Mrs. Pelham of *The Colonel's Daughter* was unpopular because of her dominating "queen bee" attitude. She was always complaining, and she wanted complete control of the garrison. Her selfish and domineering personality succeeded in destroying both hers and

---

1. Charles King, *The Deserter and From the Ranks*, Two Novels. (Philadelphia: J. P. Lippincott Company, 1877), p. 41.

Colonel Pelham's happiness as well as shattering all hope of confidence and a successful relationship with the men of the regiment.

There were women who had neither education nor polish. Such a person was Mrs. Wilkins, also of *The Colonel's Daughter*. She had a faculty of saying just what she thought and more, too, and, to use her husband's rueful admission, "She wasn't afraid of the devil." But there was also Mrs. Tanner of the same book, *Marion's Faith*, and others. Mrs. Tanner was cultivated, had refined tastes, and was far better informed, far "deeper" than the average army woman. Mrs. Freeman of *Captain Blake* was the motherly type, well-loved by all.

Most were peaceful, friendly, understanding women, but every camp had its gossip mongers who loved to spread sensational yarns. King called them a "pestilence in petticoats," but he admitted that though the men railed at the women for gossiping, they in turn growled at them when the women could not or would not tell anything. Another type of talebearers were those engaged in that

mental athletics known as jumping at conclusions. . . . She was a born jumper and like the Allen revolver immortalized by Mark Twain, if she didn't always get what she went for, she fetched something.<sup>2</sup>

*Comrades in Arms* has a garrulous busybody in Mrs. Mack, wife of the colonel. She was the kind of woman who "had listened with her ears, which were large, and pondered with all her soul, which was small."<sup>3</sup> She was prone to misunderstand and consequently to twist things completely from their original meaning. A story was related to her concerning an officer who had been admonished for bestowing gratuities on servants and strikers. The officer gestured toward the distant mountains as he replied, "Yon heights . . . are tipped with gold." Mrs. Mack, in repeating it later, quoted "the eastern horizon is trimmed with gilt." There seemed something funny about it when Mr. Briggs told it, she reported. When chided for this carelessness, she opined that it must have been a "dooble ontong" and since she despised anything of that nature she promptly dismissed it from her mind.<sup>4</sup>

Women curled their hair, especially their "front" hair, with the aid of an alcohol lamp, and talked of the need to "touch up" their lashes and brows. When it was necessary to do extra shopping, the ladies were conveyed by ambulance (the army taxi) to the nearest town or post, but most everyday needs were supplied by the commissary, or the army store.

2. Charles King, *Marion's Faith* (Philadelphia: J. E. Lippincott Company, 1877), p. 258.

3. Charles King, *Comrades in Arms* (New York: The Hobart Company, 1904), p. 86.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.

There is never a time on the frontier when the dames of the garrison . . . are not besieging the post quartermaster with some plea or other,—a partition to be put here, a chimney repaired, glass put in, a new coat of paint in the parlor. . . . There is never enough of any one item to go around. It isn't always that they really need the article demanded, they simply want something that some other woman hasn't, so that she may want and cannot get it. . . . This applies to the entire roster of women on the post.<sup>5</sup>

Americans have ever been noted for ingenuity in time of crises. In "The Colonel's Christmas Dinner" King gives an example of some clever devising in his minute details of the Christmas Dinner. Although it is not typical of daily living, it does give a general picture of the variety of foods then enjoyed, and shows specifically what King so often intimates:

It is a characteristic of frontier life that the very men and women who entertain and express at times most unflattering opinions of their neighbors from the "C. O." down to the "Sub," will turn to, when the honor of the garrison is at stake.<sup>6</sup>

Three officials who had been lost in a bad storm were found by a scouting band of troopers. Notified that they were being brought to Fort Blank, the colonel moaned that he had nothing to feed them. The storm that brought unexpected guests had blocked the coming of extra food even for the camp itself. But every man and woman forgot his own personal grievances and personal opinions and pitched in because the "honor of the garrison was at stake."

Freely the bachelor's mess contributed two dozen plump quail and enough celery to make "salad for sixty." Almost everyone on the post dug out preciously hoarded wines, brandies, and even champagne "held against a wedding day." Mrs. Waring assumed charge of the cake and pastry department, and Captain Wayne's accomplished wife was up to her lovely elbows in flour. The adjutant's wife was out in the snow superintending the manufacture of orange ice and chocolate cream. The jovial post trader appeared with a brace of bottles of liquids of suitable quality and, in his rich Irish brogue, every "limon, fig, nut, raisin or dhrop there is in the house."

In the same spirit the quartermaster's department "knocked up" a temporary kitchen in the back yard where a big range was already firing up, and

haunches of "black tail" and a saddle of venison were hanging in the frosty air ready for their turn. Over at Mrs. Morton's the soup had been simmering ever since tattoo the night before—two troopers from the "Grays" on watch over it lest the fire get too hot or too low.<sup>7</sup>

5. Charles King, *The Colonel's Daughter or Winning His Spurs* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1889), p. 81.

6. Charles King, *The Colonel's Christmas Dinner and Other Stories* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1896), p. 7.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

Nobody could beat the quartermaster's wife in the preparation of coffee—that was to be her province when the time came.

. . . extra tables, chairs, china, glasses of all shapes, styles and colors, decanters, carafes, scones, candelabra, damask, cutlery, silver, etc., had been poured in as fast as needed. No body had to be asked for anything, everybody sent hi—no! her best. At 3 P. M. under a canopy consisting of the great garrison flag, draped from the front of the parlor to the rear of the dining-room, with all manner of smaller flags, guidons, signal outfits, and improvised drapery too intricate for description, the Colonel's Christmas table was laid for twenty-four. . . .

No wax tapers, for there wasn't time to provide them, but in their stead, from scores of brilliant (tin) scones, from candle-sticks, candelabra, clusters by the dozen, there popped out the prim white "best adamantine" of the Commissary Department. . . . They'll make just as soft a light as wax, if there isn't a draft, and just as brilliant if you burn enough at a time. . . . Tiny screens of pink tissue paper on wire frames, (and in shapes of tiny bells) disguised the light so that there was no direct flame in sight.

Small squares of clear ice—six inches square and two inches deep, hollowed out on the upper surface, by ingenious application of hot shot—a couple of stray twelve-pounder howitzer shells that, long since emptied and unfused, had been kicking about the post . . . held select Blue Points—that had really been canned "select." The Colonel, piccolo player, and the bass drummer had sawed the tiny ice squares from huge blocks.

There were turkeys—wild and domestic and a huge plum pudding, "all wealth and blue blazes." Even Pills junior (the doctor), not to be outdone, sent a cherished box of Regalia Perfectos. There were gifts to the children—"home-made, perhaps, but loving."<sup>8</sup>

For entertainment after this sumptuous feast, each told a story, reputed to be true.

The author was fully aware that ". . . in the narrow and restricted life of the far frontier, interest existed in matters that seem too trivial for mention in the broader sphere of the metropolis."<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, he showed daily life packed with activity and events. Since newspapers were both scarce and irregular, the principal method of getting news was through writing letters, which the frontier people did faithfully. Mail was distributed at the adjutant's office or the orderly delivered it to the officers if they could wait that long. This was followed by the busy exchange and sharing of news from the "outside."

Typical incidents in the daily life of the post are scattered throughout the books. *An Army Wife* contains detailed accounts of life in the Southwest, but one of the best individual descriptions is given in *Marion's Faith* and concerns life while in camp at Fort

8. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

9. Charles King, *A Trooper Galahad* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1899), p. 85.

Hays, Kansas. *The Colonel's Daughter* ends at Fort Hays; *Marion's Faith*, its sequel, begins there.

Though never explicitly stated, the impression is that army personnel on the whole looked forward to being stationed in Kansas, and that life there was, on the whole, more social, more joyous. Perhaps one reason for this preference lies in the peaceful description of a rare spring day in Hays, Kansas:

It is one of those exquisite May mornings when the rolling prairies of Western Kansas seem swimming in a soft, hazy light, and the mirage on the horizon looks like a glassy sea. The springy turf is tinted with the hues of myriads of wild flowers, purple, pale blue, and creamy white; the mountain breeze that is already whirling the dust-clouds on the Denver plains has not yet begun to ruffle the cottonwoods or the placid surface of the slow-moving stream, and in many a sheltered pool the waters of the "Smoky Hill" gleam like a silvered mirror, without break or flaw. Far out on the gentle slopes small herds of troop-horses or quartermaster's "stock," each with its attendant guard give life to the somewhat sombre tone of the landscape, while nearer at hand two or three well-filled cavalry "troops" with fluttering guidons are marching silently in towards the little frontier garrison that lies in a shallow dip in the wide, treeless prairie.

Bits of color are rare enough, save the faint hues of the flowerets,—almost as indistinguishable in the general effect as their fairy fragrance on the air. Aloft, the sky is all one blaze of sunshine, that seems to bleach it into palest, most translucent blue. . . . Down in the "swale," the wooden barracks, stables, quarters, and storehouses are all one tint of economical brown, brightened only by the hues of the flag that hangs high over the scene. Beyond the shallow valley and across the stream, looking only long rifle-shot away, but a good two miles when one comes to walk it, a brick school-house with glistening cupola stands sentinel in the centre of the scattering frontier town; there, too, lies the railway station, from which an ugly brown freight-train is just pulling Denverwards, puffing dense clouds of inky smoke to the sky. Space, light, and air there are in lavish profusion. Shade there is little or none, except close along the winding stream; but shade is a thing neither sought nor cared for, as the suntanned faces of the troopers show. Every now and then a trumpet-call floats softly over the prairie, or the ringing, prolonged word of command marks some lazily-executed manoeuvre [sic] on the homeward way.<sup>10</sup>

In *The Colonel's Daughter* King mentions a search of several hours for a small handful of wild flowers to lay on a loved one's casket. Actually, King himself was stationed at Fort Hays but a short time, having been transferred from Fort Riley to Fort Hays on May 17, 1879, then moved by rail to participate in the Sioux campaign.<sup>11</sup> The opening chapter of *Campaigning With Crook* also relates the joyous and mirthful atmosphere of Fort Hays; how it changed in a moment when a "horseman coming at rapid gait along the dusty road from Hays City, as the railway station was hopefully

10. Charles King, *Marion's Faith* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1877), pp. 8, 9.

11. George Frederick Price (comp.), *Across The Continent With The Fifth Cavalry* (New York: Antiquarian Press Ltd., 1959), p. 464.

named,"<sup>12</sup> brought the abrupt news and subsequent announcement that summoned them to the imminent campaign, and how, typically, the force of the blow was betrayed only by the bowed heads and hidden faces of the ladies as they sought their respective homes.<sup>13</sup>

Particularly at Fort Hays, the cavalry band played an important part in life at the post. While they were stationed in Arizona they were not mounted and had no stable duty; apparently their only duty was to play in the evenings after it was cool, and, seemingly, they could play as long as they had an audience.

By the time they were at Fort Hays, however, they were mounted and had morning and evening stable duty. In addition, there were two parades each day. They practiced every morning also, and played on the parade<sup>14</sup> every afternoon. All music for dances was furnished by the band, but they did not go on marches or field duty—at least not as bandsmen, for the complaint was that when the men were ordered off somewhere the band was available all the time, but nobody was left to dance with. Because of its extra duties, the Fort Hays band was ordered to end the dances at midnight, much to the despair of the younger generation.

Dancing was not only the favorite pastime on the frontier posts, but it was also of the best caliber, according to King, and for genuine enjoyment, he says, an army ball "yields the palm to no other." Favorite dances were the waltzes, the lanciers, the quadrilles, the galop, and the german. The german appears to have been akin to the grand march type of dance still common among inhabitants of Western Kansas. The garrison buildings may have been drab; the decorations may have been crude, but the cavalry band offered music second to none at the large garrisons on the frontier. At Fort Russell in Wyoming, King says, the townspeople of nearby Cheyenne often drove out to listen to the music of the band.

In addition to the performances by the band, there was rapid drill by the men in their "brilliant uniforms and dancing plumes." There was also the practice and exhibition of the more stately guard mounting. Target practice, as it is known today, was not emphasized in the cavalry at that time. Full dress included plumed helmets and uniforms of sky-blue trousers with darker blue coats piped and trimmed in bright yellow braid and buttoned with eagle buttons. Officers' trim was gold braid and only generals wore dark blue trousers. The handsome belts were fastened with rectangular

---

12. Charles King, *Campaigning With Crook and Stories of Army Life* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1890), p. 5. Hereafter referred to simply as *Crook*.

13. King, *Crook*, p. 7.

14. Parade was the name given the ground in front of and the center of the garrison homes quadrangle.



eagle plates made of stamped brass; officers' belt plates were cast of bronze and had a silver wreath soldered below the eagle. Other equipment included the saber, held in place by two small bolsters; pistol and holster with cap pouch; and a cartridge box in the back for carbine and revolver cartridges. In the field the trooper wore a three-inch-wide heavy leather carbine-sling across his left shoulder. The sling buckled at the back with a heavy brass two-tongued buckle, and the end of the sling had a brass binding held with rivets. This sling, with a four-piece swivel, assured the trooper of having his carbine handy at all times—afoot or mounted. Mounted on the saddle just behind the stirrup leathers was a small leather socket which provided a place to jam the barrel of the carbine so that the weapon would not bounce when horse and rider went at a pace faster than a walk.<sup>15</sup> The insignia of the cavalry, crossed sabers, were approximately 3½-inches wide and 1½-inches high. Enlisted men wore the regimental number in silver metal above the sabers and the letter designation of the company of troop below the sabers. Officers usually had the insignia of their corps, regiment, and company embroidered in gold on black velvet.

"Boots and Saddle," the official song of the cavalry, was in general the call to orders. Literally, it means "put on the saddle" and has nothing to do with boots. In the field it is the cavalry command to mount. All calls given in the cavalry used the trumpet, indicating this was the official instrument, while in the infantry the bugle was used.

Retreat, usually at sunset, meant a retirement from the day's administrative activities, and was therefore a call to the evening meal.

"Tattoo," the only word used for this particular call, was sounded at 9 p. m. in most instances. It was the signal to quiet down and to turn the lights out within fifteen minutes. The word has an interesting origin. Derived from two Dutch words *tap* (*tap* or faucet) and *toe* (*to* or off), it meant literally to turn the faucet off. In other words, in the beginning it was the signal for the sellers to stop serving beer or other drinks.<sup>16</sup>

Of all the "sounds" of army life, none was more nostalgic—and comforting—than the watch-call of the sentries. "Ten o'clock and all's well," went ringing from post to post in strict regularity all through the dark hours of watch. To those raised in such an atmo-

---

15. Randy Steffen, "The Civil War Soldier; Part I, Federal Cavalryman," *Western Horseman*, XXVII (January, 1962), pp. 38ff; and Calvin D. Cowles (comp.), *Atlas to Accompany the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington: Government Printing Offices, 1895).

Steffen is a Fellow of the Company of Military Collectors and Historians, and a serious student of Civil War uniforms and equipment. With the exception of the plumes, the basic uniforms and equipment seem to have been much the same during the Indian campaign.

16. Mark M. Boatner, *Military Customs and Traditions* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1956), p. 40.

sphere, it was as reassuring as the rumble of wheels to the city-bred person, or the various native noises to the country-bred. It was not so much listened to as it was missed when it was not heard on schedule.

Life was often short enough in itself, and time spent with loved ones was precious beyond measure. But those who shared this kind of living were able to snatch at any moment of happiness and to live life to the fullest. There was dancing at the drop of a hat. Riding, of course, was a favorite pastime. There were tennis, croquette, driving, and hunting. The ladies enjoyed luncheons and relaxed in hammocks when time permitted. Girls were usually chaperoned on riding jaunts, and cantering along a country trail was a wonderful way to court a girl. "Wearing the willow" was the current expression for today's "carrying the torch."

"Neighboring" was practiced much more than it is today. The colonel's quarters was a favorite gathering place, as were the broad verandas or piazzas in fair weather. When there were no dances, evenings were spent visiting or listening to and joining in musical gatherings. And they had fun doing it, too! Brother officers gathered in their quarters. Many officers read in their spare time.

For those who preferred, pin-pool, whist, poker, and auction pitch were favorites at the sutler's or army store as it came to be called. The inner room—the *sanctum sanctorum*—was reserved only for "the knot of old officers who liked to have their quiet game aloof from the crash of pool-pins and the babel of voices in the main room." <sup>17</sup>

Of course, there was drinking. Many a man swallowed "grief and toddy in consecutive gulps," or "sought solace in the flowing bowl," King relates.

They may have lived far from "civilization," but probably in no other walk of life outside of royalty were rules of etiquette and propriety laid down and followed with such assiduous observance. Whenever a garrison changed commanding officers, the entire staff tendered their resignations, thereby giving the new C. O. a chance to appoint his own. The first duty of a new officer was to call on his new commanding officer and his staff within forty-eight hours. Others at the post were expected to call on new inhabitants within seven days, but stayed only fifteen minutes. The newcomer quickly returned the calls of officers who had called on him and did "all proper homage to the wives of those who were possessed of such blessings." <sup>18</sup>

---

17. Charles King, "Plodder's Promotion," from *Campaigning with Crook and Stories of Army Life* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1890), p. 289.

18. King, *Trooper Galahad*, p. 64.

No officer could visit another officer who had not extended visitations to him. In *Trooper Galahad*, Captain Barclay could not call on Lieutenant Winn, because that lieutenant was ill and had not been able to extend his greetings to Barclay. This propriety was scrupulously observed in spite of the fact that they lived side by side in different quarters but under the same roof, and more specifically in spite of the fact that Barclay had been engaged to Mrs. Winn before she married Lieutenant Winn.

At dances, receptions, and the like, when there was "no one especially selected to receive, it was a sort of garrison custom for everybody to present himself or herself to the wife of the commanding officer, in case that official was so provided."<sup>19</sup>

Even in the field it was a breach of etiquette to go out in front with the scouts without saying a word to the commander.

Widows—and there were many—observed the strictest rules of mourning. They dressed in "weeds" and could not think of joining in social activities until they had ended their time of mourning.

Friends, companions, transportation, even food on occasion, though it seemed like cannibalism, horses were always the men's first consideration. Each officer was allowed to use one horse to be considered as his own for campaign purposes. Officers had strikers or orderlies; the rank and file cared for their own. Though the soldier could own his own stable of horses, he was expected to purchase forage and grain for them. Many, especially officers, did own mounts for recreation and for family uses.

On the post, the men wore white stable frocks and marched to their quarters in ranks when care of the horses was completed. Ordinarily, feeding of the horses came first, even in the morning. One exception to this was found in stable duty under Colonel Pelham, "Old Catnip," of *The Colonel's Daughter*. Pelham's theory was that if the men were fed first they would take better care of the horses. He was right. "Men had to be restrained from whistling or singing at their work—a thing which could not be permitted, because it was unprofessional from a military point of view."<sup>20</sup>

Companies in the cavalry were really called troops, and horses were distributed to each by color. Aside from the striking appearance of having all bays or sorrels or grays, there conceivably would be an advantage in being recognized more readily at a distance. Every cavalry mount in the service, however, wore the U. S. brand, with the number of the regiment and letter of the troop included. At inspection, "Blanket, poncho, overcoat, side-line, lariat, and

---

19. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

20. Charles King, *The Colonel's Daughter; or, Winning His Spurs* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott and Company, 1889), p. 311.

picket-pin, canteen and haversack each had its appropriate place and must be in no other.”<sup>21</sup>

When in the field men could ride “at ease.” That is, they could talk, laugh, or sing if they wanted and the situation did not require them to be quiet. The only requirements were not to lounge in the saddle, to keep their distance accurately, and to ride at a steady walk. This, of course, applied to long marches.

One of the longest and most disastrous marches from the standpoint of hardships and losses was the march into the Black Hills and the Yellowstone following the Custer massacre. Losses of horses and equipment were appalling. When a horse dropped exhausted on the trail, the saddle, bridle, and other equipment also had to be left behind. Cavalrymen often led their mounts along the flanks of the column or in the rear of the regiment, striving hard to nurse the horse’s failing strength, hunting eagerly for any little bunch of grass to elp eke out his meager subsistence. Noting that Captain Montgomery, with Company “B,” the Grays, returned with every horse, saddle, bridle, or other equipment from this long, hazardous journey, King closely observed that officer’s attention to his steeds. His observation brought forth the statement that, “While the best riders in the cavalry service come from West Point, the best horsemen are from the ranks.”<sup>22</sup> By “horsemen” he meant men who showed “that unerring judgment and ceaseless vigilance with which he noted every symptom of weakness in any and every animal in his troop, and cared for it accordingly.”<sup>23</sup>

That King felt not enough attention was given by commanding officers to basic horsemanship is also shown in *Trooper Galahad*. Lieutenant Barclay, when transferred to the post, took up quarters with Lieutenant Brayton, whom he interested in the proper biting and saddling of cavalry horses. One day Barclay took Brayton from horse to horse in the troop as they stood at rest during drill, and (showed) him at least twenty bits out of the forty-five in line that were no fit at all . . . that some were too broad from bar to bar and . . . slid to and fro in the tortured creature’s mouth; others that hung too low, almost “fell through”; others whose curbing or strap, instead of fitting in the groove, bore savagely on the delicate bones above it and tormented the luckless charger every time his rider drew rein.<sup>24</sup>

Barclay also pointed out that the system of saddling then in use by the cavalry had been devised for a foreign dragoon saddle and that the McClellan saddle which they were then using, when set forward on the horse as prescribed, threw the weight in front of the

---

21. King, *Crook*, p. 62.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 156.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 157.

24. King, *Trooper Galahad*, p. 126.

center of gravity or the center of motion of the horse. This position "used up" the shoulders and knees of the horse in no time.<sup>25</sup>

This particular incident also points out a philosophy which King obviously had: Never vegetate, but try constantly to improve intellectually. His men often reached for a book in their spare time, and he commented that men who never read or never study waste hours of valuable time. He speaks of men who had grown old in the service and in their own ignorance were fiercely intolerant of young lieutenants who strove to improve in professional reading and study. For the average soldier, however, the study of new ideas was the waste; the old ways were good enough for them. When Barclay's books arrived at the post, maps, pamphlets, histories and other books soon interested other young officers until one veteran Irishman, Mullane, who was opposed to the whole affair, commented: "'Bedad, the thing is revolutionary!' And that was enough to damn it, for revolution is a thing no Irishman will tolerate, when he doesn't happen to be in it himself."<sup>26</sup>

---

25. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 128.

### Chapter III

## Life on the Trail

THE full-dress uniform with its dancing plumes and the brilliant colors was a symbol of happy, easier days. When the men took to the field the regulation uniform was dark-blue flannel shirts, "reinforced" riding breeches, substantial boots, field blouses and broad-brimmed hats. "Every man is girt with belt of stout make, and wears his revolver and hunting-knife,—the sabre is discarded by tacit consent. . . ." <sup>1</sup> Some took the order to prepare for campaign as permission to doff the uniform entirely. No vestige of rank could be seen in some cases. In place of the regulation uniform, the men ". . . supplied themselves with an outfit utterly ununiform, unpicturesque, undeniably slouchy, but not less undeniably appropriate and serviceable." <sup>2</sup> The result was a motley bunch of men dressed in deerskin, buckskin, canvas, corduroy or flannels; leggings, moccasins and the like; old soft, felt hats, and "thimble belts." If spurs were worn, they were the Mexican variety—easy to kick off, but sure to stay on when wanted.

But the dress of the men was no less variegated than the men themselves. Only four regiments were racially segregated by law at this time, and only Negroes were allowed to join these ranks.

Otherwise, there is a promiscuous arrangement which, oddly enough, has many a recommendation. They balance one another, as it were—the phlegmatic Teuton and the fiery Celt, mercurial Gaul and stolid Anglo-Saxon. Dashed and strongly tintured with the clear-headed individuality of the American, they make up a company which for 'personnel' is admirably adapted to the wants of our democratic service. The company of the Fifth Cavalry most strongly flavored with Irish element in the ranks was commanded by Captain Emil Adam, an old German soldier, whose broken English on drill was the delight of his men. . . . Wherever you meet them, the first to hurray at the chance of a fight is the Pat [Irishman], and no matter how gloomy or dis-

1. Charles King, *Marion's Faith* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1877), p. 91.

2. Charles King, *Starlight Ranch and Other Stories of Army Life on the Frontier* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1896), p. 205.

mal the campaign, if there be any fun to be extracted from its incidents, he is the man to find it.<sup>3</sup>

On one occasion, after days of hard marching through the worst kind of weather, the men had reached the winding, twisting Tongue River. They had already crossed it eleven times before noon,<sup>4</sup> and each time the infantry had to strip all clothing below the waist. When they came to the twelfth crossing a "tall red-headed Irishman started a laugh with his quizzical 'Fellers, did e'er a one of yez iver cross on a bridge?'"<sup>5</sup>

Multiformity of more than uniforms and nationalities existed, however. Especially in the campaign of the Yellowstone there were men who, "wanted" in the East for various law-breaking escapades, enlisted solely with the intent to "skip" when they got to the mining country and camps. Many of them accomplished their aim. Forced, under the circumstances, to use aliases, they turned up with such unlikely names as "Jackson Bewregard" and "Jooles Vern."

It did not take long on the trail for the men to become covered with dust and alkali, for wherever the cavalry went in numbers, there was the ubiquitous cloud of dust until even a cold, drizzling rain was a welcome relief. When out for prolonged periods, the men sometimes braided their untrimmed beards and tied them with tape. On forced marches, long hours in the saddle were followed by alert watchfulness through the night hours, until sometimes they went for days and nights with practically no sleep.

King tells of an incident on the march to join Crook: Someone thought he heard faint sounds of a cavalry trumpet in the blackness of the night. General Merritt wondered if two more companies who were to join the march could have lost the trail in the darkness. Rousing King, they listened intently for some time. Then, through the silence that seemed as dense as the darkness itself, suddenly there floated on the night air the clear but faint notes of the cavalry trumpet sounding "Officer's Call." Answered by their own chief trumpeter and guided by the calls, the companies were joined in half an hour. From that time, "Officer's Call" was the conventional signal for "heralding the coming of the Fifth to comrades who might be waiting, whether it be darkness or distance."

The biggest problem, perhaps, was food for the great number of horses when on the march. There was no grain when supplies were cut off, and army horses were used to grain. Since Indian warfare

3. Charles King, *Crook* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1890), p. 8.

4. John F. Finerty in *War-Path and Bivouac*, edited by Milo Milton Quaife (Chicago: R. R. Donnelley and Sons Company, 1955), pp. 237-238.

Finerty when referring to the same Tongue River says they crossed "that sinuous stream—perhaps the crookedest in the world—no less than seventeen times" before they camped that day.

5. King, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

was usually waged in rough mountainous country or terrain marked by deep ravines and sharp, rocky slopes, or thickly wooded areas, or even country abounding in sagebrush or land liberally sprinkled with alkali, grass was often scanty, and more often the fleeing Indians burned off what there was as they retreated. Another major problem was the scarcity and poor quality of water. That section of the country where the Sioux war was fought was especially noted for rains of cloudburst proportions, thus washing shale and alkali soil down the streams in torrents and generally polluting the water. After a day's march under a hot, scorching sun, through miles of sagebrush, they might finally reach a stream only to find it the "color of dirty chalk," sometimes within sight of a mountain peak tantalizingly covered with snow.

Rations were sparse; the men existed on coffee, boiled over a small fire built in a deep hole, and bread and bacon. On very long marches they had salt meat and hard-tack. Each company roasted and ground its own coffee. Beans and molasses were a treat when on the trail.

Inspection of the troops before the Yellowstone march reveals just how scanty were their supplies, although it must be stated that they little knew how far they would go or how hard the going before they returned. All were confident that supplies would be within distance at least, and most thought they would be back within the week. General Crook's orders as recorded by King are quoted here:

All tents, camp equipage, bedding, and baggage, except articles hereinafter specified, to be stored in the wagons, and wagons turned over to care of chief quartermaster by sunrise to-morrow. Each company to have their coffee roasted and ground and turned over to the chief commissary at sunset to-night. Wagons will be left here at camp. A pack-train of mules will accompany each battalion on the march, for the protection of which the battalion will be held responsible. The regiment will march at seven A. M. to-morrow, 'prepared for action,' and company commanders will see to it that each man carries with him on his person one hundred rounds carbine ammunition and four days' rations, overcoat and one blanket on the saddle. Fifty rounds additional per man will be packed on mules. Four extra horses, not to be packed, will be led with each company. Curry-combs and brushes will be left in wagons. *Special instructions for action:* All officers and non-commissioned officers to take constant pains to prevent wastage of ammunition.<sup>6</sup>

It was ten weeks before they saw those wagons again. The horses "devoured their grain in blissful ignorance of the suffering in store for them." From the general down the line the men started with the clothing they had on and the overcoat and blanket indicated. Many even left the overcoat behind since it was August and they

---

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 57-58.



figured to be back. Weeks later the loneliness and scanty dress in the cold march were succinctly described by King: "Riding along . . . every man wrapped in his thoughts and wishing himself wrapped in something warmer."<sup>7</sup>

The hardships at times were almost unbelievable, yet King in his narrative seeks no sympathy for any who were involved.<sup>8</sup> They were simply rough sketches of a rough campaign told in cold facts and taken in the line of duty.

Brigadier-General Crook's final message to his troops after the Big Horn and Yellowstone expedition is a fitting summary and an eloquent tribute to the men who took part in that episode of our history. In part, he said to them,

Indian warfare is, of all warfare, the most dangerous, the most thankless. Not recognized by the high authority of the United States Senate as war, it still possesses for you the disadvantages of civilized warfare, with all the horrible accompaniments that barbarians can invent and savages execute. In it you are required to serve without the incentive to promotion or recognition; in truth, without favor or hope of reward.

The people of our sparsely settled frontier, in whose defense this war is waged, have but little influence with the powerful communities in the East; their representatives have little voice in our national councils, while your savage foes are not only the wards of the nation, supported in idleness, but objects of sympathy with large numbers of people otherwise well-informed and discerning.

You may, therefore, congratulate yourselves that, in the performance of your military duty, you have been on the side of the weak against the strong, and that the few people there are on the frontier will remember your efforts with gratitude.<sup>9</sup>

A bill providing for recognition of officers who gave gallant service was signed by the President just one week before General Crook died. The list of officers who would have been recommended for brevet ranks in this campaign died with him.<sup>10</sup>

---

7. *Ibid.*, p. 136.

8. Finerty, *op. cit.*, p. 51. "Of all earthly experiences, none so tests the strength and weakness of human nature as an Indian campaign, especially when attended by hardship and hunger."

9. King, *Crook*, p. 167.

10. King, *Ibid.*, p. 167.

## Chapter IV

# Spirit of the Army

THROUGH all his works, certain characteristics and types emerge which are King's expression of what the army really was both at its best and at its worst. His characters are fictional, but set as they were in the framework of actual incidents, they are probably patterned after flesh and blood men whom King knew. That this was true in *The Colonel's Daughter* and *Marion's Faith* has already been pointed out. King favored the lithe, sinewy, physically fit person who practiced moderation in all things. A healthy look seemed more important than good looks. Though drinking was common, drunkenness on the job was, by Presidential order, grounds for dismissal and disgrace. His heroes all had weaknesses, but they were still a credit to the service physically, morally, ethically. They faced danger with cool daring and bravery and never bragged about former feats. His most despicable characters were morally weak, suavely overbearing, haughty, and quick to take advantage of any authority invested in them.<sup>1</sup> But there were all types and the latter type caused all the trouble for the former. In between were a few conscientious officers who followed so rigidly the letter of the law

---

1. How closely these fictional characters follow real-life men is verified by Finerty in *War-Path and Bivouac*, edited by Milo Milton Quaife (Chicago: R. R. Donnelley and Sons Company, 1955), pp. 273-274. "A word about officers. Most of them are high-bred, manly, learned, good humored hospitable gentlemen, while a very few are narrow-minded, jealous, panticulous, [sic] swell-headed, irritable, excitable, and generally unfit for anything but retirement into private life. I am glad to say that the percentage of the latter grade is insignificant, and the sooner the army is rid of them the better. The high-toned, chivalric class of officers almost extinguish the others, but one disagreeable 'shoulderstrap' is enough to disgust an entire regiment. As for bravery, the quality is so universal in the American army that no officer gets credit for fearlessness, which is regarded as a matter of course. Judgment, skill and dignified firmness are far more necessary. A hectoring, bullying officer never gains the respect and confidence of his men were he as bold as Ajax, while the quiet, determined, yet courteous commander wins the hearts of his subordinates, and because of his moral influence is obeyed with all the more alacrity. . . . Nothing appears as unmanly and uncalled for in any soldier as an insulting, snappish tone toward his inferiors, knowing as he must know, how utterly helpless, according to the humiliating military code, they are. . . . How a man of spirit . . . must burn and long to tear the windpipe out of some official bully who talks to him as though he were a dog. I admit some of the soldiers are rough, just fit to be kicked around, but the greater number are good men enough. . . ."

that in their eyes "the . . . regulations of the United States Army and the Holy Scriptures took rank in that order."<sup>2</sup>

If King had a message for his readers, it was: Meet adversities with patience, courage, and strength. Over and over his books are woven around this theme. In *The Colonel's Daughter* Captain Truscott is a social outcast because of his loyalty to the wife of his deceased friend, Captain Tanner. Truscott remains faithful to his trust, and his loyalty finally wins him the colonel's daughter.<sup>3</sup>

*The Deserter* portrays a young lieutenant who experienced a long and hazardous journey to deliver a large payroll only to find the sealed package contained small bits of paper instead of money. He could not prove his innocence nor did he have any idea what had really happened to the money. He went into virtual exile by asking for duty at an isolated post. In due time he was again under his old superior officer, who, still believing him guilty, made life almost unbearable for him and alienated him from his fellowmen. On the same post was the real culprit who could not stand the opprobrious treatment of the lieutenant that he witnessed day by day, and finally the guilty one confessed.

In *Marion's Faith* Lieutenant Ray lived through months of despair because a jealous officer had spread false and malicious accusations about him.

Officers who ultimately gain the most respect and confidence from their men are those who display a quiet air of courtesy, assurance, and firm dignity. Honor and respect will be given those worthy of receiving them, while nothing so ill becomes an officer as deliberately overlooking the individual's need for personal enhancement. Hostilities and jealousies among the officers because of transfers and the like were common, and the small in soul took every advantage of the many ways in which officers could inflict humiliation on their juniors. King left no doubt that he deplored the misuse and even abuse of authority. This lack of a standard of personal honor was detrimental to the morale of the men, for this was the time, as Professor Sackett has said, when it "was fashionable to admire a superior officer, even if you hated him. . . ."<sup>4</sup>

One instance of ill-treatment, purely for petty reasons, occurs in

---

2. Charles King, *Comrades in Arms* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1896), p. 82.

3. King's favorite expression of admiration for such worthy men was "Bayard." According to the *Dictionary of Last Words*, Bayard means a gentleman of high courage and honor in allusion to Bayard, Pierre Terrail, a knight of the fifteenth century who was "without fear and without reproach." p. 18.

The name "Bayard" also alludes to a horse of incredible swiftness given by Charlemagne to the four sons of Aymon and which figures in many legends, folk-tales and poems of the period. The name is used for any valuable or wonderful horse and means a "high bay-colored horse." William Rose Benet (ed.), *The Reader's Encyclopedia*, p. 84.

4. Samuel J. Sackett, "Captain Charles King, U. S. A.," *The Midwest Quarterly*, Autumn, 1961, p. 64.

“Plodder’s Promotion,” from *Stories of Army Life*. Mr. Riggs, the victim, had two counts against him. The first was his transfer from an old regiment to the top of a new one when consolidation took place in 1871. This was hardly his fault. The second, which was unforgiveable, was that Mr. Riggs was so well-informed that he eclipsed all the other officers in conversation. Although it came naturally to him, Mr. Riggs’ show of intelligence was the kernel of jealousy and the object of hatred among the other officers. As a result he lost many friends and suffered abuse ranging from little snubs to deliberate cuts. The prefix “Mr.” in army circles was the symbol of a very different feeling from respect. When someone was “mistered” by his comrades, it simply meant that he was not one of them.

A more serious or at least more vicious example of pernicious use of authority appears in *Starlight Ranch*. The troop had been on a four-day march after the usual foe, the Apaches. A clash of personalities prompted Captain Buxton to have O’Grady, an Irish soldier, walk all the distance home as punishment for an act of which he was innocent. Buxton’s extreme dislike of O’Grady was carried further when he had the Irishman thrown into the dark cell, “a place of hell.” Without food but supplied with the whisky which Buxton hoped would send the man into complete hysteria and breakdown, the prisoner was left to his doom in this abominable place until rescued by a more merciful and humane officer. Taken under this sympathizing officer’s wing, the soldier was gradually nursed back to health, and since he had the instincts of a gentleman, he was himself when he had a gentleman over him. He later became a credit to the army. The first officer in the case, Captain Buxton, was utterly wrong in his judgment, but it was a far graver offense that he exceeded and flagrantly abused the authority invested in him.

Other officers made mistakes—costly mistakes—but were men enough to admit their errors. Lieutenant Ray of *Marion’s Faith* was off serving on a horse-buying board when the general orders were sounded to follow Custer’s trail to the Little Big Horn. As soon as he could, Ray was on the trail himself trying to catch his own company. An outspoken man with a devil-may-care attitude much of the time, Lieutenant Ray had had more experience with Indians than his commanding officer on this trip, and when Ray suggested a procedure to Colonel Wayne, that officer was “nettled” and disregarded the advice. Before nightfall the small company found themselves engaged in a skirmish, cut off, with several wounded men who could not be moved, and surrounded by Indians. Lieutenant Ray, cool, keen, daring, and the regiment’s best rider,

voluntarily set about preparing himself and his horse Dandy to sneak through the ring of Indian guards and bring help to the desperate men. He used no saddle and even had Dandy's shoes taken off, the nail holes plugged with clay and mud and smoothed over to resemble the hoof prints of Indian ponies. His own clothing was reduced to bare essentials. His only weapons were a revolver and a hunting knife. The plan was to lead his horse as far as he could until he was discovered, then mount and make a wild dash for freedom and help while the men in camp followed their orders to help distract, for a brief time at least, the Indians' attention. Ray was severely wounded and his horse less so, but he managed to reach another company which stopped him in the dark only because his horse neighed. The soldiers knew the rider of that horse could not be an Indian. Colonel Wayne was sincerely grateful and properly humble.

From the officers down, frontier soldiers recognized and used to the fullest their freedom to gripe, grumble, and complain. Though they often marched and growled together, most of them would not have changed jobs. Sometimes the grumbling was done to relieve pent-up feelings; sometimes in good-natured fun. Devoted to their profession on the whole, the soldiers had three apparently legitimate complaints. First, there was little or no hope for promotion. Second, the army was expected to keep the peace, yet had virtually no authority to act. Third was the attitude of their superiors in Washington and the position they took on the Indian problem.

The Civil War developed the fact that there were "thousands of battalion commanders for whom the nation had no place in peace times." Ultimately many of these accepted the offer of lieutenantcies in the regular army of 1866. This, along with reorganization and the telescoping of forty-five regiments into half that number, "blasted all hopes of promotion,—about the only thing a soldier has to live for."<sup>5</sup> When Crook received his promotion to brigadier-general as a result of the campaign with the Apaches in Arizona, the soldiers of the Fifth Cavalry boasted that they had won his star for him. But even though Crook was promoted and they were not, the soldiers liked and admired him.

Lack of promotion and the loss of any hope for promotion were discouraging, but even more disheartening was the lack of recognition for their life and work. For example,

. . . a man might be brevetted up to the stars for shipping pork and hard-tack to combatants in Dixie, but could not get so much as a single bar for

---

<sup>5</sup>. Charles King, *Trooper Galahad* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1899), p. 85.

fighting desperately his weight in savage Indians—and ten times over at that.<sup>6</sup> Subjugating the Indians of the Far West was “not recognized by the high authority of the United States Senate as war . . .”<sup>7</sup> and every soldier realized that a “reputation as an Indian fighter is but an ephemeral and unsatisfactory asset.”<sup>8</sup> Indian warfare was a thankless task, carrying no honors, no other notice for sacrifice except a yearly register of casualties, and “Killed in affair with Indians,” was every bit as complimentary . . . as though it read “In a pothouse brawl.”<sup>9</sup>

To intensify the problem, the soldier had little on his side in the way of authority to act. “. . . even a horse-thief had more civil rights on the broad frontier than the trooper.”<sup>10</sup> *An Army Wife*, set in Western New Mexico and Arizona, furnishes an example indicative of this state of affairs. Shots rang out just outside Old Fort Sedgwick in the very early hours of the morning. Rushing to investigate the sounds, the officer in charge found one of his soldiers shot to death, and the unmistakable clues of fleeing Mexican bandits. Whether the incident was caused by gambling grudges, which they had come to settle, or whether the Mexicans were surprised in the act of stealing horses from private stables was never to be known for certain. The officer had been watching these private stocks of horses closely, because they were short of guards on that particular night. Although the soldiers were duty-bound to pursue the murderers, they knew full well that “lawbreakers must be caught in the act of spoliation—otherwise the army lacked authority to act.”<sup>11</sup> In this case they were “the pursuing and therefore the attacking party . . . and there could be no question what a civil jury would say if any of their dingy hides [Mexican] were punctured by the balls of brutal soldiery.”<sup>12</sup> It was paradoxical that soldiers on “pass” were not permitted to go armed, whereas every tough and gambler and night prowler had a knife or pistol in every boot or sleeve or pocket.

Soldiers were often called upon to keep the peace even though they were not directly involved in whatever matters brought about the unpeaceful conditions. Trouble-makers always were those precursors of the great tide of emigration, the inevitable “slop-shop” establishments: the bar-and-gambling-hell-keepers who planted

---

6. Charles King, *The Medal of Honor* (New York: The H. B. Clafin Company, 1905), p. 126.

7. Charles King, *Crook*, p. 167.

8. Charles King, “*Laramie*”; or *The Queen of Bedlam. A Story of the Sioux War of 1876*. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1889), p. 93.

9. Charles King, *The Colonel's Daughter or Winning His Spurs* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1889), p. 36.

10. Charles King, *An Army Wife* (New York: The Hobart Company, 1901), p. 183.

11. King, *Trooper Galahad*, p. 139.

12. King, *Army Wife*, p. 184.

their vile booths in every settlement. Frontier soldiers were ever to meet this scum and froth that preyed upon the people. In *Fort Frayne*, for instance, a drunken Indian killed, in self-defense, a drunken cowboy who had accosted him. Friends of the cowboy retaliated by taking the fight to the entire tribe of Indians. The army intervened to protect the Indians.

The cowboy leader, however, maneuvered events to create a rift between the Indians and the army and, at the same time, he accused the colonel of malfeasance so that he was withdrawn to stand trial just when his presence was needed to keep the peace. Although these particular events may not have been common, it must have been fairly usual for the settlers to be the aggressors and to get into situations in which they needed the army to protect them.<sup>13</sup>

More settlers were arriving daily, and with the tide of civilization came "lawyers in abundance, and with their coming the question at issue became no longer that of abstract right or wrong, but how a jury would decide it; and a frontier jury always decides in favor of the squatter and against the soldier."<sup>14</sup> But regardless of the provocation or regardless of who the aggressor might have been

the nation expects of its officers that, no matter what the temptation, provocation, or exasperation, they keep cool heads and tempers, only shoot when the law permits, but then shoot to kill. No claim of self-defense could be allowed.<sup>14a</sup>

To be so side-lined <sup>14b</sup> where horse-thieves, outlaws, rum-sellers, gambling sharks and other perpetual law-breakers were concerned was bad enough and perhaps even justifiable, but the Indian was a different problem.<sup>15</sup>

Right is right, and King conceded that the Indian was often wronged.<sup>16</sup> The white men were not above stealing from them, and

---

13. Sackett, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

14. Charles King, *The Story of Fort Frayne* adapted from the drama of the same name of which, in collaboration with Evelyn Greenleaf Sutherland and Emma V. Sheridan Fry, he is the author. (Chicago: F. T. Neeley, 1895), pp. 65-66.

14a. King, *Army Wife*, p. 183.

14b. A cavalry term referring to hobbling or tying a horse so as to curtail greatly its movement in grazing while in enemy territory.

15. King's *Comrades In Arms* also shows the anomaly of administrative rules and regulations; how the army was defeated in the war of the Philippines before it ever began and how some indomitable men were courageous enough to do what was necessary to curb the intractable, and then submit to the inevitable punishment from the court. The situation here was that the insurgents went forth to do their damage; then, after the medieval custom, ran back under the protection of the church. Once there, the soldiers were forbidden to touch them. Under these conditions the war could have dragged on indefinitely, but some soldiers chose to end it sooner. They caught one of the influential members, and gave him the "water-torture cure." The cure was more uncomfortable than anything else, but it worked. After tying the victim spread-eagle fashion, the soldier placed a funnel in the mouth in such a position that the person had to swallow; then water, a drop at a time, was poured into the funnel. After several hours the saturated victim was willing to come to terms. The thing that rankled the men the most, for they knew they were deliberately disobeying orders, was that they were judged in court by men who had done next to nothing in the field. pp. 312-322.

16. Thomas D. Clark, *Frontier America. The Story of the Western Movement* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), pp. 700-703.

The Bozeman trail that the white man laid across the headwaters of the Platte, across the Tongue and Rosebud rivers and on beyond the Big Horn and Yellowstone and Virginia City into Montana, pierced the heart of the Sioux hunting preserve and therefore was a serious invasion. The Indians were being hemmed in.

even the settlers sometimes “helped themselves” to skins and dried meat while the Indians were away hunting or at ceremonials. King did not excuse the Indian for his actions, but merely implied that, with the Indians, though they were wily and unpredictable on the whole, the application of the Golden Rule might have been more effective than coercion and subjugation in many cases.<sup>17</sup>

Shortened rations and supplies often left the Indians hungry and cold. Dishonest Indian agents at the local level were to blame for this. To placate the restlessness that resulted, the United States furnished them with guns and ammunition to hunt. Thus, the Indians were at once a ward and an enemy of the United States.

Whenever the Indians showed signs of going on the warpath, the army was assigned to placate them. In *Marion's Faith* an advance guard was sent to cut off supplies that the army knew were going to Sitting Bull. It intercepted an unescorted train of wagons. The wagon-master said the group had been hired to take their cargo, which consisted entirely of metallic cartridges for guns, to the Indians at Red Cloud, “and if it happened to be powder and lead, ‘tweren’t none of his business, he reckoned.’” He had papers straight from the Interior Department, and King wrote:

the vanguard of the \_\_\_th has reached and tapped the broad highway of Indian commerce. The laws of the nation they are sworn to defend prohibit their interfering with the distribution of ammunition by that same nation to the foes they are ordered to meet. The nation is impartial; it provides friend and foe alike. The War office sends its cartridges to the \_\_\_th through the ordnance officer, Lieutenant X. The Indian Bureau looks after its wards through Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ at Red Cloud. And now the \_\_\_th is ordered to stop these cartridges from getting to Sitting Bull up on the Rosebud.<sup>18</sup>

Inconsistency and ineptness in the Indian Bureau would have been understandable up to a point, but this absurd and anomalous situation of rules and regulations was laid squarely at the bureau’s doorstep. The army was assigned the task of forcing the Indians to give up the roaming, carefree way of life they knew and loved, but the rules were drawn up by personnel who did not understand the nature of Indians, nor their laws, morals, religion, or characteristics, and who did not have an intelligent concept of the problems resulting from these differences. Thus, the old refrain, sung over and over again, was “The Indians are safe on the reservation. Do nothing to coerce them or upset them—but don’t let them leave!” When they “jumped” the reservation in spite of everything, went on marauding parties, murdered, and caused alarm in general, troops

---

17. Oliver LaFarge, *A Pictorial History of the American Indian* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1956), says “Whether we had treaties with them or only made agreements and promises, it is the unhappy truth that there is no tribe with which we have not at some time broken our word.” p. 230.

18. Charles King, *Marion's Faith* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1877), p. 258.



were sent out after them. As soon as they were caught and turned back, they scampered for the reservations where no one could lay a hand on them. In this way they were allowed to "bully, temporize, and hoodwink" the bureau year after year.<sup>19</sup>

It rrankled the soldiers not a little that the actions of the soldiers in the field were judged by armchair generals a continent away to whom Indian warfare on the frontier was a matter quite beneath their notice. That those directly involved were better qualified to deal with the Indians than government agents in faraway Washington is shown in *Warrior Gap*.

Scouts, soldiers, and other couriers had been sending dispatches from isolated posts that the Sioux were swarming in every valley. Washington and the head of the Indian Bureau scoffed at these reports as sensational. John Folsom, frontiersman and long-time friend of the Indians, knew the signs and heard the talk. He knew something was happening. "The Indians knew they could move about and gather forces unmolested because troops had been forbidden to take any action against them unless they themselves were attacked."<sup>20</sup> Folsom warned the bureau that this was a big uprising, not to send the usual small number of men to quell it. But John Folsom was unheard of in the East and hence his valuable advice was ignored. "What was worse, John Folsom's urgent advice that they discontinue at once all work at Warrior Gap and send the troops and laborers back to Reno was pooh-poohed."<sup>21</sup> Congress had substituted a system of agreements for treaties; consequently, they sent for Red Cloud to "talk." Presents were promised him, including breech-loaders and copper cartridges—to shoot buffalo with, of course. It was

the old, old story again, and just as it had been time and time before. Absurdity in the Indian policy; mismanagement in the Indian Bureau; starvation in the Indian villages; murmurings of discontent among the old warriors, emissaries from disaffected bands; midnight councils, harangues, dances, threats, an arrest or two; escape; and then a general rush to join the hostiles in the field.<sup>22</sup>

Indian tactics were to send a small war party whose job was to draw a large group of soldiers from the main party or post in pursuit of the attacking Indians, then, suddenly, from everywhere and nowhere seemingly, concealed warriors surrounded the entire group of soldiers, cutting them off from the main body. As John Folsom had warned, Red Cloud with all his band cleverly enticed three-fifths of

---

19. King, *Crook*, p. 143.

20. Charles King, *Warrior Gap: A Story of the Sioux Outbreak of '68* (New York: F. Tennyson Neeley, 1898), p. 33.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

22. King, *Fort Frayne*, p. 21.

the garrison at Warrior Gap into ambush. Entire troops were wiped out, one hundred seventy men in all. Yet the commander of the post had

foiled old Red Cloud's villainous plan to lure the whole garrison into the open country and there surround and slowly annihilate it, while then, or at their leisure later, his chosen ones should set fire to the unprotected stockade and bear off those of the women or children whose years did not commend them to the mercy of the hatchet.<sup>23</sup>

Citizens farthest removed from the scene were loudest in denunciation of the men at the spot. The story that came out in the newspaper was biased and unfair, blaming, for lack of action, the commander of the post, who, "with other troops at his disposal, had looked on and lifted no hand to aid them." When later the newsmen realized the mistake, they never publicly acknowledged their error nor printed the true verdict, except long after and in some obscure corner as unimportant news.<sup>24</sup>

Though the public was often aroused they seldom were intelligently or completely informed about the true situation.<sup>25</sup>

Early in the Sioux uprising, General Merritt relieved General Carr who fell back second in command. At noon on the second day's march to join Crook, a dispatcher reached the regiment with news that promptly changed the general's plans. The message was that eight hundred Cheyenne warriors, would-be allies of Sitting Bull, would leave the reservation early on Sunday morning fully armed and equipped, to join the Sioux and their great leader. A decision had to be made immediately, and if Merritt hesitated ten minutes, says King, his most intimate associates, his staff, did not know it.

To continue on his [Merritt's] march to Fort Laramie and let them go would have been gross, if not criminal, neglect. To follow by the direct road to the reservation, sixty-five miles away, would have been simply to drive them out and hasten their movement. Manifestly there was but one thing to be done; to throw himself across their path and capture or drive them back, and to do this he must, relatively speaking, march over three sides of a square while they were traversing the fourth, and *must do it undiscovered*.<sup>26</sup>

Merritt did it undiscovered, and thus his first "lightning march" surprised and routed the Cheyennes in their attempt to joint Sitting

---

23. King, *Warrior Gap*, pp. 243-244.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 244.

25. King, "Thirty Years of Penecraft," p. 474.

That the true situation was often not known is shown in the following story, though it relates to the Civil War and not to Indian warfare. *Between the Lines* contains a description of the great cavalry fight on the right flank the third day of Gettysburg. Letters from North and South commended it, wrote King, but the most satisfying to him were words from across the sea through a former staff officer of Cavalier Stuart (of the Confederate Army) of outspoken praise concerning the description. Part of the credit for the booming sales of *Between the Lines* King gave to Harper's "deft use" of the description and the "concomitant fun we had with the Brooklyn Eagle, whose critic had called it all a purely 'mythical combat.'"

26. King, *Crook*, pp. 25-26; Finerty, *War-Path and Biouac*, in relating the tale above quotes directly from King, pp. 223-224.

Bull. In the skirmish the Cheyennes had lost three of their best braves, and as they streaked for the reservation and safety their rapid retreat cost them all of their provisions and supplies. But once the Indians reached the reservation, no one could lay hands on them.

The move was both bold and brilliant, King reports, and it won Merritt the commendation of the lieutenant-general, but it delayed the regiment a week in finally reaching Crook, and there was some implied criticism in remarks made afterwards. King's position on the matter is plain enough. Merritt, with the information he had received, made the only conceivable decision, and he did so without hesitation.<sup>27</sup>

No wider gap in Indian and white culture could exist than that of the reason for going to war. For the Indians, war was a way of life as well as life itself. Their idea of warfare, unlike ours, was to dash out on forays, take what "loot" they could without getting too deeply involved or too badly beaten, then retire to fight again another day. For this reason, the slightest excuse was cause enough for them to go on the warpath. The Cheyennes had no cause to join in the battle of the Sioux, but when they jumped the reservation to join Sitting Bull, King says,

Here you are, beggarly, treacherous rascals; for years you have eaten of our bread, lived on our bounty. You are well fed, well cared for; you, your papooses and ponies are fat and independent; but you have heard of the grand revel in blood, scalps, and trophies of your brethern, the Sioux. It is no fight of yours. You have no grievance, but the love of rapine and warfare is the ruling passion, and you must take a hand against the Great Father, whom your treaty binds you to obey and honor. And now you have stuffed your wallets with his rations, your pouches with his best metallic cartridges, all too confidingly supplied you by peace-loving agents, who (for a consideration) wouldn't suspect you of war-like designs for any consideration.<sup>28</sup>

For the most part, the Indians had no intentions of a fight to the finish unless odds were greatly on their side, and year after year the same thing happened. A small force of soldiers was sent to punish a large band of Indian marauders; when the small force was well-nigh annihilated, large forces were concentrated at great expense, and just when they had the foe where they could quell them, the bureau stepped in. It happened many times, wrote King.

No end of silk-hatted functionaries have hurried out from Washington, shaken hands and smoked a pipe with a score of big Indians; there has been a vast amount of cheap oratory and buncombe talk about the Great Father

---

27. Finerty, *op. cit.*, p. 225. "Merritt's action on the War Bonnet was worthy of his well-won fame as a general, but it prevented him from joining Crook's command until the beginning of August and by that time the Sioux, having exhausted nearly all the game at the base of the mountains, made a general break for the north, scattering themselves over many trails so as to confuse pursuit."

28. King, *Crook*, pp. 33-34.

and guileless red men at the end of which we are told to go back to camp and bury our dead, and our late antagonists, laughing in their sleeves, link arms with their aldermanic friends, are "dead-headed" off to Washington, where they are lionized at the White House, and sent the rounds of the great cities, and finally return to their reservations laden down with new and improved rifles and ammunition, stove-pipe hats, and Saratoga trunks, more than ever convinced that the way to get what they want out of Uncle Sam is to slap his face every spring and shake hands in the fall. The apparent theory of the Bureau is that the soldier is made to be killed, the Indian to be coddled.<sup>29</sup>

Trouble with the Indians started, according to King, when the first Pilgrim landed at Plymouth Rock. From that day forth, the Indian was gradually pushed westward and as soon as he was safely two or three states away, the states that had elbowed him out were quick to criticize the people who were doing exactly as they had done. "The farther removed the citizen finds himself from the Indian the better he likes him," King wrote, and the sympathy of the East was mostly with the Indian.

It is evident throughout his work that King was aware of the difference in culture between the white and the Indian, and that misunderstanding comes about in part, at least, because of this difference. In *A Daughter of the Sioux*, for instance, he points out the difference in interpretation of conduct.

There is no fiercer, more intense devotion than that the Sioux girl gives the warrior who wins her love. She becomes his abject slave. She will labor, lie, steal, sin, suffer, die, *gladly* die for him, if only she believes herself loved in turn. . . . It's the way of the blood, . . . It's the strain of the Sioux, We call her conduct criminal:—they call it sublime.<sup>30</sup>

The Indians well understood the principles that governed civilized warfare, though they did not share the same feeling. They knew the white soldier would respect a flag of truce, but in their own vernacular they referred to it simply as a "fool flag."<sup>31</sup>

King pictures the Apaches in *Apache Princess* as cunning, stealthy, illimitably patient people; afraid of the dark, or at least disliking the dark, and not as daringly brave as the Cheyenne or the Sioux. The Apache princess saved the lives of Lieutenant Blakely and others as a result of Blakely's fair and honorable treatment of the Indians when he was an Indian agent. Thus, though the Apaches were, on the whole, unpredictable and unreliable, King points out that once their friendship and trust were gained they were staunch allies.

The Crows, lifelong enemies of the Sioux, were hired allies of our army in the Big Horn and Yellowstone Expedition. They were eager to learn new ways from the white soldier, but were more

29. *Ibid.*, p. 144.

30. Charles King, *A Daughter of the Sioux, A Tale of the Indian Frontier* (New York: Hobart Company, 1902), p. 296-297.

31. King, *Warrior Gap*, p. 199.

furtive than the soldiers, who watched them with frank curiosity.

One of the most useful lessons the soldiers had taken from the Indians, years before, was the construction of a *travois* from tree branches to carry the wounded behind a horse or mule. Especially fascinating to the Crows was the "talking flag" or signal flag of the cavalry. As soon as they saw the flag in action, they bustled about and each blossomed forth with his own miniature version or facsimile made from any old piece of cloth available.

These Crows are fine-looking warriors, and fine horsemen too; but to see them riding along at ease, their ponies apparently gliding over the ground in their quick, cat-like walk, their position in the saddle seems neither graceful nor secure. . . . Every man's blanket is so disposed that it covers him from the back of his head, folds across his breast, leaving the arms free play in a manner only an Indian can accomplish, and then is tucked in about his thighs and knees so as to give him complete protection. One or two younger bucks have discarded their blankets for the day, and ride about in dingy calico shirts or old cavalry jackets. One or two also appear in cavalry trousers instead of the native breech-clout and legging. But the moment that Indian dismounts you notice two points in which he is diametrically opposed to the customs of his white brother: first, that he mounts and dismounts on the right (off) side of his horse; second, that he carefully cuts out and throws away that portion of a pair of trousers which with us is regarded as indispensable. He rides hunched up in his saddle, with a stirrup so short that his knees are way out to the front and bent in an acute angle. . . . His horse equipments are of the most primitive description. . . . But at full speed the worst horseman among them will dash up hill or down, . . . everywhere that a goat would go, and he looks upon our boldest rider as a poor specimen.<sup>32</sup>

Crow women, according to King, ride astride just as the men do, and are "equally at home on pony-back," even when tiny papooses peep from their cradle boards strapped to mother's shoulders. The women's sole occupation in life seemed to be in attending to the wants of their particular chief, which included doing all the work.

For those who had never had dealings with Indians it was probably impossible to believe the extent of their mutilations, or the drive that sent them after human scalps, or the lack of respect they showed for the dead of all save their own people.

For this reason army dead were buried deep in ravines whenever possible, and the new-made graves trampled over by horses to obliterate all signs. If this were not done, said King,

as soon as we are gone the skulking rascals will come prowling into the camp, hunting high and low for those graves, and, if they find them, will dig up the bodies we would honor, secure the scalps as trophies of their prowess, and then, after indescribable hackings and mutilations, consign the poor remains to their four-footed relatives, the prairie wolves.<sup>33</sup>

32. King, *Crook*, pp. 65-66.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 132.

Another description of the aftermath of battle again points out the differences in culture and point of view. Among the Indian captives, King wrote, was

one grinning, hand-shaking vagabond with one of Custer's corporal's uniforms on his back—doubtless that corporal's scalp is somewhere in the warrior's possessions, but he has the deep sagacity not to boast of it; and no man in his sound senses wants to search the average Indian. They are our prisoners. Were we theirs, by this time we would be nakedly ornamenting a solid stake and broiling to a juicy death to the accompaniment of their exultant howls. But fate ordains otherwise; we are good North American citizens and must conciliate—so we pass them around with smiling, pacific grasp of hand—cheery “How collahs,” and seat them by the fire and bid them puff of our scanty store of tobacco, and eat of our common stock of pony.<sup>34</sup>

In the prelude to the battle of the War Bonnet, as King watched through the glasses he noted the savage beauty of the Cheyennes, the “finest warriors and horsemen of the plains.”<sup>35</sup>

Savage warfare was never more beautiful than in you. On you come, your swift, agile ponies springing down the winding ravine, the rising sun gleaming on your trailing war bonnets, on silver armlets, necklace, gorget; on brilliant painted shield and beaded leggings; on naked body and beardless face, stained most vivid vermilion. On you come, lance and rifle, pennon and feather glistening in the rare morning light, swaying in the wild grace of your peerless horsemanship; nearer, till I mark the very ornament on your leader's shield. . . . On you come, savage, hungry-eyed, merciless.<sup>36</sup>

Probably nowhere was there such a contrast as in the attire worn on the battlefield, for

all that is ornamental in warfare has been left to them. An Indian of the Sioux or Cheyenne tribe, when he goes into battle, is as gorgeous a creature as vermilion, pigment, plumed war-bonnet, glittering necklace, armlets, bracelets, and painted shield can make him.<sup>37</sup>

The unpretentious, almost indescribable garb of the frontier soldier is summed up in King's description of General Crook, noted for his inattention to personal appearance, and his senior aide, John Bourke. Although the account is of the end of a campaign rather than the beginning, the basic clothes remain the same. Few people would believe

This utterly unpretending party—this undeniably shabby-looking man in a private soldier's light-blue overcoat, standing ankle-deep in mud in a far-gone pair of private soldier's boots, crowned with a most shocking bad hat, is Brigadier-General Crook, of the United States Army. . . . The rain is dripping from the ragged edge of his old white felt hat and down over his untrimmed beard. . . . Bourke, the senior aide and adjutant-general of the expedition, is picturesquely gotten up in an old shooting-coat, an indescribable

---

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 122-123.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 118.

pair of trousers, and a straw hat minus ribbon or binding, a brim ragged as the edge of a saw, and a crown without a thatch. It was midsummer, you recollect, when we started on this raid, and while the seasons have changed, our garments, perforce, remain the same, what there is left of them.<sup>38</sup>

Color in the American ranks was not entirely lacking, however. Buffalo Bill wore a Mexican theatrical costume straight from the footlights of the States, and which consisted of "black velvet, slashed with scarlet and trimmed with silver buttons and lace" the day he killed the "bravest" of Cheyenne warriors, Yellow Hand, in the battle of the War Bonnet.<sup>39</sup>

King was particularly sensitive to the beauty of the native Indian tongue, and often laments the "westernizing" of the phonetically beautiful place names. French missionaries and early Spanish explorers as well as the aboriginal owners are a part of the heritage of melodious, sonorous, harmonious, and descriptive names. "War Bonnet," for instance, though not Indian, was named after the gorgeous and highly prized headpiece of beadwork, plume and eagle feathers which the Indian wore in battle. The frontiersman gave it the simple, practical, and homely title of "Hat Creek." Mini Pusa (Dry Water) was the name given "a sandy stream that twists and turns and glares in the hot sunshine," but somewhere along the line it became simply and undescriptively "Muggin's Fork." The more resonant "Heengha Kayga," a lone peak, was simplified on the earliest maps into "Inyan Kara" (1879) and by the time King wrote of it the geography books called it "Indian Carry."

Spanish influence is seen in Monte San Mateo, "the rounded, gloomy crest in the southern Sierras, bald at the crown, fringed with its circling pines,—what better name than Monte San Mateo—Saint Matthew—he of the shaven poll?" For over a century it held; then it was reduced to "Baldhead Butte." Monte San Pablo became simply Bill Williams' Mountain. And who but a Yankee would swap the murky French "Purgatoire" for Picketwire? King's constant lament was "Why can't we keep the beautiful names?" or "Why must they change the names?" As a result of this Americanizing hundreds of simple but indistinguishable names such as Box-Elder Creek, Cottonwood Creek, Dry Water Gulch, and the like have replaced the more pertinent or relevant Prairie Dog, Beaver, Goose, Lodge Pole, Owl, Deer's Ears or Twin Springs Creeks.<sup>40</sup>

For nearly forty years King's books appeared regularly with steady popularity. These historical novels were based on incidents in or suggested by his own life. But they are more than romantic novels.

---

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 119-120.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

40. King, *Marion's Faith*, pp. 149-150.

Within each of his books is incorporated the aim or ideal of the army as King saw it. He and the men he wrote of were deeply devoted to their chosen profession. He has shown how

at a moment's notice a home could be abandoned, a young life left to mourn, a delightful station [home] left to anybody who wanted the place, and all as an every-day incident of army life.<sup>41</sup>

This was not in a time of national emergency, as such, but the frontier soldier and his family did

all this merely as a piece of duty because one's particular regiment happened to be setting forth on probably hazardous service, but of a trivial nature as compared with the interests involved in the Civil or Revolutionary Wars.<sup>42</sup>

The women in his books shared common hardships and sorrows. The men worked together in bonds of common obligations and self-sacrifice. They often slept without shelter and marched without food; endured discomforts and inconveniences; gave up the security of home and the companionship of loved ones to fight a war that was not recognized as a war. Their efforts were thankless from any standpoint. In spite of this lack of recognition King's books are untouched by bitterness toward mankind. By fostering the highest honors and the glorious traditions of West Point, his military alma mater, King has embodied the spirit of the army. In the lawless days of the West the civilians' thoughts were mainly of their rights; though the soldiers complained, their highest aim was duty. Through their devotion to that duty, they made possible the peaceful settlement of a land that once was hostile and unsafe.

---

41. *Ibid.*, p. 83.

42. *Ibid.*



# Conclusion

Placed in their proper historical settings, King's works are invaluable to future generations, for they preserve a faithful, and authentic record of an age which has passed. King made no claims to literary tradition. He wrote simply and did no polishing. He presented his characters and let them live their stories with no attempt at introspection or analysis. There is no development of the characters themselves, though there is a sequence of time, events, and characters in successive books. The life he pictures is of another, more romantic time than life today, yet he wrote as only one could who is familiar with most aspects of army life and who knew from intimate association how people lived when they were thrown closely together and bound by common obligations to self-sacrifice.

He wrote authoritatively of an era important in our history and heritage. Though the period was, in King's own words, "after all, only an episode," it was an episode of *momentous import*. The Indian was fighting to preserve his form of civilization, for his freedom to roam at will, and for everything that he cherished. The army was, in effect, given the task of breaking the spirit of fierce allegiance the Indian had to his way of life (we call it patriotism), and to coerce him to conform to ours. Both had a portion, at least, of right on their side.

Politicians in the Indian Bureau had little concept of allowing the Indian to be free to develop in his own way. Perhaps King and his fellow soldiers of the army of the West, who were in a better position to understand the problem and who knew the disparity between administrative precepts and action, unconsciously felt the value and importance of permitting the Indian to preserve his peculiar culture. They, at least, realized that the Indian "represented centuries of one kind of life, and the Caucasian the slow evolution of centuries under different conditions and in directions diametrically opposite."<sup>1</sup> General Crook, who was probably the one individual most responsible for subjugating the Indians, nevertheless treated them justly and thus remained their friend, largely because he felt that they were

---

1. John G. Bourke, *On the Border With Crook* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891), p. 226.

human beings.<sup>2</sup> In Crook's opinion the establishment of a permanent and honorable peace could be based only upon "an exact and even-handed justice to red men and to white alike."<sup>3</sup> The question Crook asked about the Indian was "How to preserve him?." When the campaigns were over, Crook engaged himself in another kind of campaign—that of speaking in the East in behalf of the Indian and of working tirelessly to free the Apaches from their prisons in Florida and in Alabama. Crook's advice was: Take the Indian question out of politics; don't push too fast; treat the Indian justly, and guarantee equal civil laws.<sup>4</sup> That, in essence, is what King proposes in his writings. In the light of subsequent appraisals of the Indian problem, King not only had a thorough comprehension of the problem, but also presented a fair picture of that problem.

It took the Indian Bureau until 1929 to realize it could not "de-Indianize" the Indians. Its idea, breaking them completely away from their families and their tribes and making them over into white men, failed. The Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania was established solely for this purpose, but time revealed to the Americans that the "Carlisle graduates who were the most valuable were those who returned to their tribes . . . and became leaders among them."<sup>5</sup> LaFarge notes that the Indian is still discriminated against and often exploited, but, on the whole, the Indians "want and need to help themselves, and they are worried and angry because government policy so often seems to deny them the opportunity to do so."<sup>6</sup> The wheels of government turn slowly indeed, but the Indian Bureau has come to realize both the futility and the inadequacy of early Indian policies. Indians today

range from college graduates to people still living as their ancestors did, from prosperous and successful men to men broken by destitution and sickness. By and large, they have to an extraordinary degree continued to be Indians. This does not mean that they dress or live or worship as their ancestors did, but that they have held to the inner quality, to the pride, and to the integrity of their tribes.<sup>7</sup>

---

2. King, *Crook*. In the battle of Slim Buttes, King tells how Crook revealed himself to the Indians, stopping the battle long enough to give them time and opportunity to vacate the women and children from the gulch in which they were trapped. The warriors chose not to surrender, but the women tremblingly held on to Crook's hand with a tenacity close to hysteria. John Bourke, *On the Border With Crook*, says "In the character of General Crook there appeared a very remarkable tenderness for all those for whose care he in any manner became responsible." p. 150.

3. Bourke, *Ibid.*, p. 224.

4. Martin F. Schmitt (ed.), *General George Crook, His Autobiography* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1946), p. 271. An account is related also of Crook's visiting the Apache prisons, and how the Indians crowded eagerly around him to shake his hand. They recognized and remembered his fair treatment of them. . . . he, at least, had never lied to us." p. 301. Crook also mentions Captain King's influence through articles printed in the Milwaukee papers in working to get the Senate bill passed which would return the Apaches to land more suitable to them near Fort Sill, Oklahoma. p. 299.

5. LaFarge, *op. cit.*, p. 240.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 264.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 248.

That King, as well as his commander, was able so clearly to see what Indian policy should have been is a tribute to his farsightedness.

But the Indian problem was only incidental to most of his books. The friend who, in the presence of a publisher, asked King how army men managed to kill time on the frontier little realized the door he had inadvertently opened. Potential stories were at that moment locked in Charles King's battered field desk. The incidents which had already taken place, faithfully recorded as they had been, became the storehouse for the novels that found such ready readers among the general public. Woven around the perennial themes of romance and adventure, the novels give a picture of army life from the regular soldier to the officers, from the life in the barracks to the private life in the homes. The general reader could live vicariously the hazardous and exciting life of the frontier people. For those who had known at least a part of that life, it was a re-living; for those who had never been on the frontier, it was an exciting venture from everyday existence. Wives and mothers could compare the daily activities of their own homes with those in the far West. Geographical descriptions were used liberally in King's stories. Perhaps his many readers were vitally interested in the terrain, flora, and fauna of a section of the country that was still new to the majority of people. King presents many types of personalities. Women engaged in flirtations and other feminine wiles used to capture husbands existed side by side with faithful and staunchly loyal wives and friends. Jealousy and hatred were prevalent, both within the circle of women and among the men at the post. Yet for all the dissension, when the honor of the garrison was at stake or in times of sorrow, a "flag of truce" was immediately in effect, although no one really had to wave it. For the women, life was full and busy and involved constantly facing the possibility, if not the actuality, that a loved one would not return from the field of duty. This ever-present fear was a common experience and required a stamina and fortitude which command our admiration and respect.

Qualities of dash and daring, which have often been described as the "cavalry spirit," permeate his writings; but, imbued as King was with military tradition, he never allowed this to narrow his views. The army was, after all, made up of ordinary people. He presented the noble and the ignoble alike, those who were a credit to the army and those who were not. There were shortages of materials and embezzling of funds, usually by officers crafty enough to pass the blame to someone else, and who then found it expedient to vanish suddenly. But his works are not concerned with individuals as much as they are with general types from whom we are able to

ascertain the individual. A favorite type of character was the "Pat-lander" who was ardently devoted to his superior officer. Hard-drinking, habitual gamblers were regularly embroiling themselves and the post in "extracurricular" problems. Life itself often consisted of long, arduous days on the trail in pursuit of an enemy. When the foe was located, the fight was usually comparatively short and therefore soon over—permanently for some—and then came the long trek home.

The mounted cavalry has long since been abandoned in the interests of mobility in the army and of keeping pace with the modern developments of weapon systems. It is interesting to note that King, with his deep and long-standing interest in the cavalry and his foresight in other matters, never envisioned the day when the cavalry would become obsolete. Though the cavalry as a way of life has passed, the spirit of that life has been preserved in King's novels.

Time has a way of effacing the unpleasant aspects of history, leaving only the roseate or glorified view. Though the harassed settlement of the West has long since been forgotten, the heroism and endurance of the frontier soldier, who faced danger as a part of the day's work, should perforce live on. In the works of Charles King, they do live on, for what was said of King's books in an article appearing in the *Milwaukee Journal* years ago still holds today:

They are more than romances; they are actually historical novels which will be priceless in their picture of the old West as the years move on and the story of Indian warfare is forgotten. . . . The subject of each of his half a hundred novels was suggested by some series of incidents in his own military experience . . . he really introduced the Army, both regular and volunteer to the American public . . . and the heroes who for 25 years led their companies against the Apache, the Cheyenne, and the Sioux, and who later took part in the Spanish American War and the Philippine Insurrection, live on in the books of their brother officer.<sup>8</sup>

---

8. W. C. Brown, "Charles King," *Annual Report of the Association of Graduates of the U. S. M. S.*, June 12, 1933, p. 57.

# Bibliography

## A. PRIMARY SOURCES

- Boatner, Major Mark M. III. *Military Customs and Traditions*. New York: David McKay Co., Inc., 1956.
- Bourke, John G. *On the Border with Crook*. New York: Charles Scribner's, 1891.
- Carleton, Lt. J. Henry. *The Prairie Logbooks*. Subtitle: *Dragoon Campaigns to the Pawnee Villages in 1844, and to the Rocky Mountains in 1845*. Chicago: Caxton Club, 1943.
- Crook, George. *His Autobiography*, ed. Martin F. Schmitt. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1946.
- Custer, Elizabeth. *Boots and Saddles or Life in Dakota with General Custer*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1890.
- . *Following the Guidon*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1890.
- . *Tenting on the Plains or General Custer in Kansas and Texas*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1887.
- Custer, George Armstrong. *My Life on the Plains*. Edited by Milo Milton Quaife. Chicago: Lakeside Press, 1952.
- Finerty, John Frederick. *War-Path and Bivouac*. Edited by Milo Milton Quaife. Chicago: R. R. Donnelley and Sons Company, 1955.
- Forsyth, George A. *Thrilling Days in Army Life*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1900.
- Hunt, Fred A. "A Plain Pursuit," *Overland Monthly*. LIV (September, 1909), 229-237.
- King, Charles. *An Apache Princess*. New York: The Hobart Company, 1903.
- . *An Army Wife*. New York: The Hobart Company, 1901.
- . *Between the Lines*. New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1888.
- . *Campaigning with Crook and Stories of Army Life*. New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1890.
- . *Captain Blake*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1891.
- . *Captain Dreams and Other Stories*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1895.
- . *The Colonel's Christmas Dinner and Other Stories*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1896.
- . *The Colonel's Daughter or Winning His Spurs*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1889.
- . *Comrades in Arms*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1896.
- . *A Daughter of the Sioux, A Tale of the Indian Frontier*. New York: Hobart Company, 1903.
- . *The Deserter, and From the Ranks*. Two Novels. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1877.
- . *An Initial Experience and Other Stories*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1894.
- . "Laramie"; or *The Queen of Bedlam. A Story of the Sioux War of 1876*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1889.
- . "Like Father, Like Son," *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*, LXIX (April, 1902), 493-500.
- . *Marion's Faith*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1877, 1890.
- . *The Medal of Honor*. New York: The H. B. Claffin Company, 1905.

- . *Noble Blood*. New York: The Hobart Company, 1901.
- . "Rufus King: Soldier, Editor, and Statesman," *The Wisconsin Magazine of History*, IV (September, 1920-June, 1921), pp. 371-382.
- . *A Soldier's Trial*. New York: The Hobart Company, 1905.
- . *Starlight Ranch and Other Stories of Army Life on the Frontier*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1896.
- . *The Story of Fort Frayne*. Chicago and New York: F. T. Neely, 1895.
- . "Thirty Years of Pencraft," *Lippincott's*, LXXXVI (October, 1910), 469-75; (November, 1910), 576-82.
- . *Tonio, Son of the Sierras*. New York: G. W. Dillingham Company, 1906.
- . *Trials of a Staff Officer*. Philadelphia: L. R. Hamersly and Company, 1891.
- . *A Trooper Galahad*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1899.
- . *Trumpeter Fred.*, New York and Chicago: F. T. Neely, 1896.
- . *Warrior Gap: A Story of the Sioux Outbreak of '68*. New York: F. Tennyson Neely, 1898.
- . *A War-Time Wooing*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1888.
- Knight, Oliver (ed.). *Following the Indian Wars*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960.
- Official Registers of the Officers and Cadets of the United States Military Academy*. 1863-1866.
- Ware, Eugene Fitch. *The Indian War of 1864*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1960.

#### B. SECONDARY SOURCES

- Brown, W. C. "Charles King," *Annual Report of the Association of Graduates of the U. S. M. S., for June 12, 1933*. West Point: New York, 1933.
- Callahan, James P. "Kansas in the American Novel and Short Story," *Collections of the Kansas State Historical Society*, XVII (1926-1928), 139-188.
- Campbell, Walter S. (Stanley Vestal). *The Book Lover's Southwest*. Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1955.
- Clark, Thomas D. *Frontier America. The Story of the Westward Movement*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959.
- Cowles, Calvin D. (comp.). *Atlas to Accompany the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1895.
- "Editor's Study," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, LXXXII (December, 1890 to May, 1891).
- Fey, Harold E. and D'Arcy McNickle. *Indians and Other Americans—Two Ways of Life Meet*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959.
- Fullerton, Bradford Morton. *Selective Bibliography of American Literature 1775-1900*. New York: Dial Press, 1936.
- "General Gossip of Authors and Writers," *Current Literature*, XXVII (January, 1900), pp. 20-21.
- "General Gossip of Authors and Writers," *Current Literature*, XXIX (August, 1900), 150.
- Heitman, Francis B. *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army*. Vol. I. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903.
- "Human Documents," *McClure's Magazine*, XVIII (July, 1894), 128, 134-136.
- "King, Charles," *Cyclopaedia of American Literature* (1875), I, 397-398.
- "King, Charles (1789-1867)," *Dictionary of American Biography*, X, 382-383.
- "King, James Gore," *Dictionary of American Biography*, X, 392-393.
- "King, John Alsop," *Dictionary of American Biography*, X, 394-395.

- "King, Rufus (1755-1827)," *Dictionary of American Biography*, X, 398-400.
- "King, Rufus (1814-1876)," *Dictionary of American Biography*, X, 400.
- "King, Rufus," *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (11th ed.), XV, 803-804.
- "King, Charles," *The New International Encyclopaedia*, XI, 499-500.
- "King, Charles," *Who Was Who in America*, (1950), I, 677.
- LaFarge, Oliver. *A Pictorial History of the American Indian*. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1956.
- LeComte, Edward S. (compiler). *Dictionary of Last Words*. New York: Philosophical Library, 1955.
- Lunt, James D. *Charge to Glory!* New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1960.
- "Obituaries: General King," *Publisher's Weekly*, CXXIII (25 March 1933), 1963.
- Price, George Frederic (compiler). *Across the Continent with the Fifth Cavalry*. New York: Antiquarian Press Ltd., 1959.
- Sackett, Samuel J. "Captain Charles King, U. S. A.," *The Midwest Quarterly*, III (Autumn, 1961), 69-80.
- Steffen, Randy. "The Civil War Soldier; Part I, Federal Cavalryman," *Western Horseman*, XXVII (January, 1962), 38-ff.
- Vaughn, J. W. *With Crook at the Rosebud*. Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: The Telegraph Press, 1956.
- Wellman, Paul I. *Death in the Desert. The Fifty Year's War for the Great Southwest*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935.

PRINTED BY  
ROBERT R. (BOB) SANDERS, STATE PRINTER  
TOPEKA, KANSAS

1965



30-7398

FORT HAYS STUDIES—NEW SERIES

1960

Science Series

- No. 1. Distribution of Native Mammals Among the Communities of the Mixed Prairie, by Edwin Perry Martin. March 1960.

History Series

- No. 1. San Martin—One Hundred Years of Historiography, by Katharine Ferris Nutt. June 1960.

Economics Series

- No. 1. The Long-Run Supply Curve: Some Factors Affecting Its Shape, by Eugene Darrel Pauley. September 1960.

Art Series

- No. 1. Search and Research: An Approach, by Martha Dellinger. December 1960.

1961

History Series

- No. 2. The United States and the Independence of Buenos Aires, by Eugene R. Craine. March 1961.

Bibliography Series

- No. 1. Henry Miller: An Informal Bibliography, by Esta Lou Riley. June 1961.

In 1961, two issues of the Fort Hays Studies—New Series were not issued but a history of the college was published. Wooster, Lyman Dwight. *A History of Fort Hays Kansas State College—1902-1961*. 200 p.

1962

Economics Series

- No. 2. Women's Contribution to Industrial Development in America, by Hazel M. Price. March 1962.

Literature Series

- No. 1. English Literary Criticism 1726-1750, by Samuel J. Sackett. June 1962.

Bibliography Series

- No. 2. Bibliography of Master's Theses: Fort Hays Kansas State College 1930-1962, by Paul K. Friesner. September 1962.

History Series

- No. 3. Fremont's Expeditions Through Kansas, 1842-1854, by Lilburn H. Horton, Jr. December 1962.

1964

Science Series

- No. 2. A Preliminary Survey of the Cheyenne Bottoms in Kansas, by Henry J. McFarland, Edward A. Brazda, and Ben H. McFarland. October 1964.

Literature Series

- No. 2. A History of the Hays, Kansas, *Daily News*, by Robert J. Spangler. December 1963.

Science Series

- No. 3. Euphthiracaroidea of California Sequoia Litter: With a Reclassification of the Families and Genera of the World, by Neal A. Walker. June 1964.

Science Series

- No. 4. Dry-Plains Conservation: an activity or experimental method of teaching soil and water conservation in Southwestern Dry-Plains natural science classrooms, by David W. Pierson. September 1964.



J. C. ...