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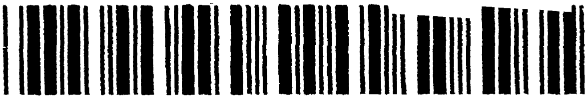

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STUBBORN FOOL

STUBBORN FOOL

A Narrative

by

ESTELLE AUBREY BROWN

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

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To

JOHN COLLIER

and his Hound of Heaven

FOREWORD

ALL THE PEOPLE in this book are real people. Some appear wearing their own names. A few hide behind pseudonyms. Some are nameless. You will recognize many of these people, may know personally one or more of them.

The cat is real and any resemblance it may have to any reader's cat is purely incidental.

The hound of heaven—Voice of Conscience—to the author was so real that she worked for years to build a dog-house to shut it up in. Readers will also know this hound, since they listen, or should listen, to its voice.

The story these people enact is an American story, yet it is known to few Americans. Because it should be known to all, the story is here told by a woman who lived it, who found much of it infamous, and who freely confesses her own shabby part in it.

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STUBBORN FOOL

CHAPTER 1

IN JUNE, 1876, General Custer, not waiting for approaching reinforcements, divided his troops before a superior enemy and led his battalion of the Seventh Cavalry to be killed to a man on the Little Big Horn. Six months later there was born to one of Sitting Bull's warriors a son. At the same time, in a hamlet of the northern Adirondack foothills, a daughter was born to Scotch-Puritan parents. When that boy and girl should have been voting—neither could, of course, he being a no-account Indian, she a no-account female—that girl was resoundingly to slap that Indian boy's face.

When an agnostic Scotsman and a Puritan Presbyterian team up together, their offspring, riding along behind, early learn to watch out for theological bumps in the road. Presbyterians were elected of God and sure to go to heaven. From all I learned in church and Sunday school, my father was as surely elected to go to hell. I knew all about elections. The town house was across the street. On town-meeting day men gathered there to elect the town's officials. Next day I bragged in school that my father had been elected supervisor again. On town-meeting day in heaven I pictured male angels gathering to vote for the elect on earth. I wondered why they voted for women, who were of no importance, but voted to send a supervisor to hell. I decided it was because he was a Democrat. All male Presbyterians were Republicans. And men angels voted for women because they needed women angels to cook their manna for them and Presbyterians made the best cooks.

I didn't think they did. Food at Methodist socials was as good or better than at Presbyterian socials. It was all perplexing and unfair and didn't make sense.

I grew up with a book in one hand, a cat or dog in the other. People in books were more companionable than the people next door. At sixteen I could have identified most of Dickens' multitudinous characters. Sam Weller was much better fun than the sniggering jokes of the hamlet. I knew and liked Mr. Pickwick better than I knew or liked my stern father. Once Becky Sharp was disposed of, Thackeray aroused less enthusiasm. Years afterward I chuckled when somebody called Mr. Cooper's Indian saga the "Dry Twig Tales." Some member of Leatherstocking's company was forever stepping on a bit of crackling brush when vengeful Indians were too close for comfort.

On Wednesday the daily stage brought *The Youth's Companion*, with a story by J. T. Trowbridge. Friday brought my mother's *Christian Herald* and a sermon by Dr. Talmadge, which I read for the surprising bits of humor. Saturday brought my father's *Toledo Blade*—distinctly not for the elect—with pictures of sheeted, hooded Whitecaps whose exploits bore a striking resemblance to the Indian atrocities I had read about in *Indians of the West*.

Novels by E. P. Roe were esteemed, as he was a preacher. Mary Jane Holmes could be read openly, The Duchess only furtively. The first unorthodox novels to reach the hamlet, *Story of an African Farm* and *Trilby*, were received with maternal frowns, as were my father's blood-and-thunder detective stories, which I read secretly in the haymow.

I never quite understood how the hero brought happiness to the heroine when the villain could bring only a fate worse than death. Frequently I liked the villain better than the hero, for he displayed so much more enterprise in trying to get whatever it was he was after. I liked Becky Sharp better than Amelia, certain implications of whose conduct eluded me. Bill Sikes's Nancy was far more of

a person than Dora Copperfield. When Becky and Nancy got into hot water they tried to soothe their own blisters, but Amelia and Dora meekly waited for a rescuer bearing unguents.

I did not know then that there were books of a controversial nature on matters of belief. It was a stray, brown paper copy of the *Philistine* that first told me there were such books, and this discovery lit a little candle to show the way out of an intolerant sectarianism. Afterward, when it was the fashion to decry Elbert Hubbard, I remembered that little magazine and was grateful to him.

I was a tomboy and the schoolboys called me Topsy. I did not mind, since I liked Topsy better than the saintly Eva. I was fortunate, for many of the nicknames given girls by the village boys were less flattering, and some were unprintable. I early came to resent the hamlet's smug assumption that women were not really members of the human race but merely appendages to it, to be wagged by men. I wanted to do my own wagging. There was no opportunity to wag within the marital knot that tied up biology to the gold standard, as represented by masculine purses. I wanted a purse of my own.

Do proverbs have an inner compulsion that forces them to fulfill the functions arbitrarily assigned them? If opportunity, seeking a door in the hamlet on which to knock once before departing for more promising scenes, found such a door, its knock summoned a boy. No one ever asked a young girl, "What are you going to be when you grow up? What will you strive for? What do you want of life?" Why ask questions to which the answers were already known? The sum of the answers was one word—"husband."

If a girl failed to get a husband, she could teach a rural school—if she could spell. She could be a country dressmaker—if she could sew. Failing these, she could be a burden, for which no qualifications were necessary. But she could not be employed in the office of a businessman or

professional man. The façade of a bank would have lifted up its pillars in horror at the idea of a woman passing through it for the purpose of making a living. For a girl, life in the hamlet was a dreary business that made even the threat of Indian atrocities in distant lands seem preferable.

A virile Scot believes it merely his due that his progeny shall be sons. Condemned to beget only females, his head is bowed and he walks softly before men and intransigently before women. For his lack of sons, my father blamed the God in whom he did not believe and my mother for her collaboration with Him—and forgave neither.

I suspected the American eagle of Scotch ancestry, some Caledonian bar sinister. His voice was raucous since he must caw with a burr. His the high road in the highlands, his pre-eminence a matter of altitude and stronger talons. Spread-winged on a silver dollar, he looked as handsome, but not a whit handsomer, than might a crow. And once he got his talons on it, only time and dissolution could pry him loose.

Eagles early stir up their aerie, pushing their fledglings over the edge to fly or perish. Pushing them out of the nest, the father eagle watches them with not too great anxiety. When a female fledgling plunges to earth, he croaks impatiently to the sorrowful mother: "Dinna weep, woman. It was only a lass. See our bonnie braw laddies flying."

At that time, and long afterward, the Empire State looked down its sovereign nose at its rural schools and sewed up its trousers pockets, leaving an aperture through which only a few dollars could trickle. These rural schools were taught by girls too young—or too old—to marry. At the age of fifteen I took the examination for teacher. At sixteen and one month I was teaching an ungraded district school of forty pupils, some of them older, and probably wiser, than I. My skirts were down, my hair up, and no nonsense. Trends in fashion and decorum must have as a secondary objective the giving of pleasure to the

people who will come along afterward and reverse them.

Teaching for four or five months, I earned enough to pay my expenses at the academy in the county seat for the remainder of the school year. I did this for four years.

And we were at war.

The only backwash from that conflict to reach the hamlet was a new song. Surrounded by the red plush of the new parlor set, I picked out the tune on the Estey organ and sang "Remember the Maine" at the top of my voice and off key.

Chance.

Human dignity requires a directive, an assurance that man in some measure does control his destiny; that he is not merely the plaything of chance, blown hither and yon like a tumbleweed before a prairie wind. There is little comfort afforded by those who maintain that there is no such thing as chance, only the working of natural laws as yet unknown to us. There seems little choice between a life controlled by cosmic irresponsibility or by some unfathomable law which produces the same results. Thanks are due to the person who, taking liberties with punctuation, has Shakespeare say, "There is a divinity that shapes our ends rough, hew them as we may."

Chance, destiny, or unknown law, the hewing we do is as apt to produce a pile of frustrated little chips as a symmetrically rounded achievement.

Chance, or destiny, put into my hands the advertisement of a Washington correspondence school that fitted candidates for civil service positions. Inquiry concerning an examination for a clerkship brought the information that women were permitted to take this test but were rarely appointed. Males were preferred. I was told that the quickest way for a woman to enter government service was, at that time, as a kindergartner in the Indian Service.

Years later a bureaucrat informed me that when clerical positions were first opened to women, many of the early candidates were from the South. Spoon-fed on gallantry,

these women learned that when they entered a government office, gallantry flew out the window. When harassed executives were forced to call attention to their mathematical sins, these women burst into tears. They were eased out. Women could still take the examinations but it was tacitly understood they would not be appointed so long as one eligible male remained on the list.

Tears and discrimination might have been avoided had women applicants been required to have a little Scotch blood. A female thus fortified might take into an office, aside from a canny way of knowing just where that farthing went, a Covenanter's spirit of dissent. But of a certainty she would shed no tears there because of the lack of masculine gallantry. She had probably never heard of it.

Kindergartner in the Indian Service. The word kindergartner had only recently reached the hamlet, where it received the scorn given newfangled ideas. No one had heard of the Indian Service—officially, the Bureau of Indian Affairs. What was it? Some kind of government missionary? I knew there were missionaries to the Indians, for as a child I had watched my mother's missionary society pack barrels of old clothes to send them. To those barrels the young fry always had some dress they wanted to contribute in the hope of having a new one. Such generosity was frowned upon by the packers. A dress had to be pretty much on its beam ends before it was fit to send to the missionaries for the Indians.

On second thought I decided the Indian Service did not include missionaries, since they did not have to pass an intelligence test before entering duty. I wondered why. Was bringing the Word to the Indians of less importance than bringing the multiplication table?

The phrase, "kindergartner in the Indian Service," haunted me when I returned to the rural school I was teaching for twenty-four dollars per month, with eight dollars subtracted for room and board. For a girl, sixteen dollars a month was enough. More than one taxpayer

thought it too much. Has the Empire State preserved one of its one-room, unpainted, frame shacks of the eighties as a symbol of its scholastic dark ages? If it has, visitors to this relic may find themselves blushing. Every boy in my schoolroom owned a jackknife and possessed the urge to relieve the building's barren surfaces with his own conception of phallic symbols. As several generations of schoolboys had felt the urge before him, the walls were quite thoroughly carved.

It is saddening to discover how easily the nebulae of Mr. Wordsworth's trailing clouds of glory alter form at an earthy touch. The small sons of farmers, entering school at the age of five, were to leave trailing little comets of indecent drawings behind them.

Whatever it was that had thrown the word kindergartner into my life, it again interceded to bring it down out of the empyrean to within hailing distance. The kindly farmer with whom I boarded had served a term as county school commissioner. He knew that in the county seat a young woman, having qualified elsewhere, had recently opened a private kindergarten in her parents' home. Answering my hail, this woman consented to give me instruction two evenings a week.

The farmer loaned me his horse and buggy for the return drive of eighteen miles. Coming back long after the family had gone to bed, I unhitched the tired horse by the light of a lantern left burning on its nail. One night it had burned out. Unhitching a horse in the dark offered little difficulty to one used to harnessing animals from the time an upended oats measure was needed to stand on to thrust the bit into a reluctant mouth. A spirited horse resents this juvenile affront to its dignity.

There was time for only seven lessons before the civil service examination for both clerical and kindergarten positions was to be held in Burlington, Vermont. That blessed farmer, as school trustee, gave me a leave of absence, adding the lost days to the end of the term. He also kept

my secret. I had not told my father of my efforts. Telling would have meant forbiddance.

In a large classroom in Burlington I found every seat but mine filled with young men taking the clerical test I wanted to take, and for which I was better fitted than the one to which my skirts limited me. The examination lasted two days. I found I was supposed to know something of a number of subjects, aside from the use of kindergarten material, one of which was natural history—a subject I had not studied. The fact that I passed that examination was ample proof of its leniency.

Four months later when I received my grades I found that my highest mark was in the subject I had not studied. Evidently natural history was something a country-bred person absorbed along with chokecherries and poison ivy. The lowest grade was in writing. My illegible scrawl had brought the average down sharply. I got through with a margin of nine.

Two weeks later I received a telegram from the Indian Bureau asking if I would accept appointment as kindergartner at the Crow Creek Indian School in South Dakota at six hundred dollars per annum. Would I! My affirmative wire was sent secretly, just as my efforts to obtain the offer had been carried out in secret. By return mail came my probationary appointment for a period of six months.

Perhaps to each of us is assigned some lowly peak in Darien, some insignificant Moab, from which to view our own long-sought sea or promised land. Only later do we learn that to both distance lends its deceptive charm. Only later do we discover that it is far easier to drown in our azure sea than to circumnavigate it; that the promised land may have a disproportionate number of snakes compared to its supply of milk and honey.

I took a few preliminary steps as to ways and means of reaching my promised land before putting the passport to it in my father's hands. Any possible pride a Scotsman may

feel in any female's minor achievement—for her there are no major ones—was something carefully to be concealed and only obliquely expressed in disapproval of some less admirable effort. My father scowled over his glasses.

"South Dakota! Where are you going to get the money?"

"Borrowed it. Of Uncle Jim."

"That skinflint. He'll charge you interest."

"Six per cent."

"See that you pay it back. How much?"

"Seventy-five dollars."

"That won't take you to South Dakota and back again."

"I'm not getting a return ticket."

"South Dakota! A green country girl traveling alone. How are you going to carry that money? Chatelaine bags! Some man will get his hands on it before you are west of Buffalo."

"In my stocking—what's left of it after I get the ticket." Then—it must have been that six hundred dollars that gave me courage—I asked naïvely, "Do you think any man will get his hands on it there?"

"Humph. Kindergartner! What do you know about teaching one of the damn things?"

"Nothing." He studied the official letter from the Indian Bureau as if doubting its authenticity.

"South Dakota. That will be the Sioux Indians. Sioux. They're the ones that butchered Custer and his men."

I was startled. The Bureau's letter had not given the tribe I was to work with. I knew there was a tribe of Crow Indians. I had thought that Crow Indians would be found at Crow Creek. I remembered a line from "Custer's Last Charge": "Begging those torturing fiends for his life?" and its indignant denial. So it was to the torturing fiends I was to go as kindergartner! I couldn't help but wonder why.

"Sioux Indians. It's only about ten years ago they were finally licked at Wounded Knee. Now the government is

sending you there to teach 'em their letters. Of all the Goddam nonsense! That's all the sense Washington has now that Cleveland's out. This letter doesn't tell you how you are to live there. It doesn't even say that you will have a roof over your fool head."

"Well, it calls it a school and schools have roofs."

"This letter only tells you how to get there, at your own expense. It doesn't tell you a damn thing about what kind of a place you are going to."

"The Indian Bureau wouldn't send people there if there was no place for them."

"A lot you know about it. You are bound to go?"

"Yes."

"Go, then. Be a stubborn fool. You won't have the guts to stick it, even if they let you stay after they find out you are no more a kindergartner than a cat. But if you go, don't ask me for money to come back, for you won't get it."

"I didn't ask you for money to get there. I shall not ask you for money to come back. And if the Indians scalp me, perhaps the Indian Bureau will pay you damages. What would a stubborn fool without her scalp be worth to you?"

That question was never answered. Two weeks later the stubborn fool arrived in South Dakota, her precious letter of appointment and few remaining dollars safely hidden in her stout cotton stockings. Stockings of that day were strictly utilitarian and served no aesthetic purpose. Neither color nor fabric mattered. Nobody but the wearer ever saw them.

Aside from my stiff whaleboned corset, high black laced shoes, and a large black hat insecurely skewered to my pompadoured hair with a lethal weapon fourteen inches long, I had made every garment I wore. If an Indian had scalped me, he would have been puzzled at the "rat" inside my pompadour. I was proud of my new bell skirt of soft gray wool that swirled a hair's breadth above the ground,

of the red wool jacket made from a waist pattern to which I had added belt and peplum. When I removed the jacket in the train I had been careful to fold it out to show the red silk lining. It was the first garment I had owned which was lined with silk instead of sateen and I was vain and wanted to display it. It had leg-of-mutton sleeves as did my white linen shirtwaist, the high collar of which was held in place with strips of whalebone up the sides; these made red spots under each ear.

In my new suitcase as aids to beauty were my curling tongs and a can of talcum powder.

CHAPTER 2

I SAT IN SLOW day coaches from the Adirondacks to Chamberlain, on the Missouri River. I did not arrive looking my best.

Chamberlain was then the terminus of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway. It was comforting to find it a shabby little frontier town whose visible inhabitants looked as bedraggled as myself. At the hotel there was only cold water to remove the grime of several states. I took the letter from the Indian Bureau and the few remaining dollar bills from my stocking. I put the bills in my *portmonnaie,* it and the letter into the chatelaine bag, and the bag under the pillow.

And so to bed.

In the morning I hunted out the stage that would carry me twenty-five miles to the Crow Creek Indian School. It was a long, open wagon, its one seat a backless board set high on springs. The driver, a boy in overalls of about my own age, had the largest and reddest pimples I had ever seen. He had loaded my trunk, the mail sack, and several freight boxes into the wagon and was waiting, not with indifference, to watch me climb over that high wheel to the still higher seat. So were several other youths who shared his vigil.

That front wheel was four and a half feet high. Above it the seat was two feet higher. The hub furnished a step for my left foot but the right must somehow be swung up over the rim of the wheel, up and over and into the wagon. Against such a feat being accomplished with ease

and dignity were aligned my stiff corset and long skirts. As the interested watchers knew, no female could climb over that wheel without exposing at least one shank, and that was a time when ankles were a carnal indiscretion and only prurient minds credited a woman with having legs to attach them to.

I climbed up and up and over, rather hoping the watchers were being duly rewarded for their trouble. On the high seat my feet could reach neither the wagon floor nor dashboard. For twenty-five slow miles they dangled. Looking smug, the driver had swung easily onto the seat beside me. What right had he to look smug? In his pants I could have displayed the same agility—and a more shapely leg.

As we left the shabby town behind I was, as usual, more interested in the horses than in the man who drove them. They were thin and disspirited. The driver used his whip freely on their bony flanks.

"Why do you keep whipping them? They're going as fast as they can. Why don't you feed them more and whip them less?"

"What do you know about horses?"

"A good bit. Enough to know they have to be fed."

"Eastern people don't know nothin' about horses."

"How do you know I'm from the East?"

"Conductor on the train said so. Way back East. What you goin' to do at the agency?"

"Teach." But as I said it, I knew I was not. I had neither aptitude, liking, nor adequate training to teach anybody anything. Teaching, like my long skirts, had been forced upon me. I hated them both.

"Teach Injun brats. Throwin' away good money. All them old Injuns is too lazy to work. They'd ruther starve or let the gov'ment feed 'em. Brats grow up same way. Teachin' Injuns."

"You make your living out of it, don't you? I have as good a right to make mine teaching."

"Girls ain't got no right to make their own livin'. They oughter git married."

"Somebody has to teach brats, white or Indian. I bet your teachers were girls—if you ever had any teachers."

"Yah. Young ones. Taught a few terms afore they got married. That's all right. Girls oughter buy their own duds when they marry."

"Too bad your teacher did not teach longer."

"Why?"

"You might know more."

The thin horses were traversing one of several parallel roads, each in turn having been abandoned when the ruts became too deep. On every side stretched the illimitable prairie, unbroken, treeless, and apparently uninhabited. It was early in November and the sun was pleasantly warm. We were due to reach the agency at noon but, ten miles from our destination, the off horse went lame. We slowed to a walk, a walk that soon became a pitiful, painful hobble.

"What's the matter with it? Did it calk itself?"

"Nah. Gits lame ever' so often. Gittin' old."

"Why don't you have something done for it?"

"Cost money. Them's old nags. Bought 'em cheap. Gittin' what I can out of 'em drivin' stage."

"Cost money to feed them enough, too?"

"Ask a lot of questions, don't you?"

"Yes, of people who abuse horses. Such people should be stood up before a stone wall."

"Ain't no stone walls out here. They say you Eastern folks can dig enough stones out of your farms to build a fence 'round 'em. What for would you stand 'em up afore a stone wall?"

"To shoot them, of course. What did you think?"

"You mean you'd shoot a man just for some old nag?"

"Perhaps not. But I would like to make him think for a while that I was going to."

He pondered this for a slow mile, then delivered his

ultimatum. "You ain't goin' to last long at the agency. You ain't got no sense. You're pernickety."

"You sound familiar. Are you Scotch?"

"I dunno. Born here. Folks come from Kansas."

There was a question I ached to ask, but I did not want to give this superior young male the satisfaction of telling the greenhorn something she didn't know. I said obliquely:

"Somebody told me the Indians scalp one person a week at the agency, just to keep in practice." He gave me a sidelong glance.

" 'Bout that, I guess. But it's women's hair they lift mostly. They sure like scalps with long hair and light colored like yours."

"I didn't know Indians had such good taste."

"Taste. I didn't say nothin' 'bout taste. They don't eat you after they scalp you."

"Not ever? I thought it was just people with pimples they didn't eat."

Soon afterward a turn in the road brought us in sight of the Missouri River. I had heard it was muddy, but here it seemed to have more sand bars than water. Oddly enough, the Missouri made me homesick for the first time. It brought memories of the beautiful St. Lawrence River where I had fished and rowed boats since childhood. A steep hill came into view, crowned with a large red water tank, then a small group of mean, frame houses.

"Here's the agency. That's the school over yonder. We ain't goin' to git any dinner either. It's two o'clock."

It was also the end of one trail, the beginning of another. There was nothing to indicate the presence of torturing fiends. The view was peaceful, a bit dreary, and more than a bit sandy. The tired horses stopped before a small office building. The driver dropped my trunk to the ground, put the mail sack atop of it, and drove his miserable horses to—I hoped—the barn and dinner.

I entered the office to see and smell my first Indians. There were several in the outer room, blanketed, with long

braids of hair—their own, I noted—hanging down their chests. In an inner room a burly, middle-aged man sat at a desk and waited for me to identify myself. I did so.

"Oh, yes, we've been expecting you." His eyes were busily going over my person. "Sit down. Too bad you're late for dinner. Hungry?"

"No, sir." I had begun my new life with a lie. I was famished.

"Got your letter of appointment?" He glanced at it, returned it. "I'll have to ask you a lot of questions." He did, recording my answers in a ledger. Name, age, race, birthplace, parents, scholastic attainments—there were far too few but he did not seem surprised. To my great relief he did not ask what kind of a kindergartner I might be.

"Hold up your right hand."

A bit startled, I did so. When I lowered it I had sworn to support and defend the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic, so help me God. In after years, as notary public at more than one agency, I was to administer that oath to other young entrants into the Indian Service, never without remembering my secret elation in that Crow Creek office. There I came of age in awareness, in the realization that I was an entity in my own right, no longer merely an appendage to someone else's life.

"Well, that's all, I guess. You will be quartered over at the school."

Now, ridiculous as it may seem, I never had heard the word "quartered" applied to people except in the sense in which it was used in the English historical works I had read; and there it always had been preceded by two highly unpleasant ones—hanged, drawn, and quartered.

I waited.

"I'm afraid you won't like it over at the school. We're having a lot of trouble. New employees don't stay, old ones wanting to leave. But you'll be all right. If you have any trouble, come and tell me about it. I'll fix it."

"What kind of trouble?"

The agent pursed his lips. He shouldn't have, for it disclosed the tobacco juice in the corners of his mouth. "They don't like the superintendent—Hillyard his name is. Now, Mrs. Hillyard seems a nice little woman, but I can't work with him. He wants to run things, agency and school both. I'm boss of this reservation—his boss, too. Makes trouble. School and agency people ain't friendly. Well, there's going to be a change at the school pretty soon. Don't worry. I'll fix things if you have any trouble."

"Thank you. Please tell me the name of the trees outside."

"Eh? Oh, them's cottonwoods. Dirty trees. No other kind grow here."

I was to learn that cottonwoods are indeed dirty trees, learn to be grateful for them. They follow faithfully the streams of the Western plains, outline the percolating sand-barred watercourses of the desert.

"Well, I'll send you over. My orderly will carry your suitcase. Joe!"

Joe, an Indian boy of about fourteen, entered from a back room. "Take this lady over to the school. You know that empty room in mess hall?" Joe nodded. "Take her there. Don't stop at the office. Understand?" Again Joe nodded. "Have one of the big boys come back with you to carry her trunk over."

I thanked the agent, wondering what a mess hall was. The pernickety lady followed Joe past the mean frame houses, a church with its cross, and a neat vine-covered cottage with a big black cat asleep on the porch. At sight of that cat my feeling of depression lightened noticeably. Here was at least one of the cherished objects of the life I had put behind me. Crossing the expanse of sand between the agency and school, I tried to talk to Joe but was forced to decide that he had been born without the customary number of vocal organs.

A walk of five minutes brought us to the school, another and larger group of small frame buildings, and two long,

rambling structures of two stories. I followed Joe into the mess hall, a sparsely furnished room with four closed doors, two on either side, and at the far end double doors opening into a dining room where two long tables were set for twenty-four people. It was comforting to know that there was a dining room and people to use it. So far, I had seen one white man and half a dozen Indians.

Joe stopped before one of the closed doors and waited for me to open it. When I stepped inside, he threw my suitcase after me and slammed the door.

I had arrived in my promised land.

On the way I had indulged in many conjectures concerning it, even to the possibility of a tepee. Looking at that room I decided a tepee would have been more cosy. The discolored, plastered walls had known neither paper nor paint. In a corner stood a single, black iron bed, in the center a potbellied coal stove with lengths of rusted pipe supported by a tangle of wires nailed to the ceiling. Against one wall was a scabrous bureau, its mirror blotched where the quicksilver had flaked off. An upended packing case served as a table to hold an oil lamp; beside it was a wooden rocking chair. Looking at that hard chair, I mentally resolved to give it a cushion. The soft wood boards of the floor, with wide cracks between them, had, I thought, been painted yellow about the time the Sioux Indians ceased painting themselves for the warpath. In another corner stood a washstand with a chipped white enamel bowl and pitcher and a cake of yellow laundry soap. Familiar with washstands, I knew that somewhere in its recesses there would be a chamber pot. Beside it stood an old galvanized slop bucket.

A door standing open revealed a small closet with long nails driven into the walls. From the middle sections of the two windows hung white crossbar muslin curtains. Testing it, I found the black iron bed had no springs, that the hard mattress was concave, that the red wool blankets disappeared in the hollow and reappeared on the

farther side. Unknown to me, that bed spoke a decisive language of its own. It told me that if I actually learned to sleep on it I would forever after be known as a peculiarly insensitive person who could sleep anywhere, on anything.

Across the room the slop bucket reflected the sunlight. In spite of its battered appearance, it looked innocent enough. It gave no warning of the unpleasant and hilariously helpful part the members of its large family were to play in this new, strange life. In the North Woods slop jars were an essential bedroom utility that carefully masked their purpose in life. They were of cream earthenware with gay flowers painted on them. They not only had covers but the covers had covers crocheted to fit them tightly—to deaden embarrassing sounds. Beside the commode, these slop jars could set modestly on the ingrain carpet that stretched from wall to wall, knowing their flowered design matched that of the washbowl and pitcher. Notwithstanding their unmentionable purpose, they took no invidious comment from the starched, embroidered pillow shams that never quite concealed the hand-knit lace on the pillowcases. Were their crocheted covers not starched as stiffly? Were they not as intricately fashioned as the antimacassars on the chairs that boasted their own designs of flowers? Those ladylike slop jars masked their purpose with true Victorian disdain of reality. They would have indignantly denied a common purpose with that shameless reservation cousin so starkly honest in its aims.

As I sat on the hard bed, with that dented old slop bucket staring me in the face, that grandiose phrase, "Kindergartner in the Indian Service," began to get dents of its own. One of them was the suspicion that my father might have been right. Then and there I determined never to concede I had been wrong. At least I had been right on one point: I did have a roof over my fool head and at the end of a month I would receive a check for fifty dollars—or so I fondly believed.

Abruptly the door burst open and Joe and another young Indian gave my new trunk a swing and threw it into the middle of the room beside the stove. The door slammed behind them. The trunk had landed upside down yet it, too, managed to speak of the high hopes with which I had packed it, and of its disillusionment with its destination.

Inside that trunk was the only book of my own that I had brought with me, a cherished, limp red leather copy of the reflections of Marcus Aurelius. I was fond of the old Stoic. What would he have thought of this room? I somehow felt if he could speak he would say the room was designed for a stubborn fool and that if she had any sense, which he doubted, she would make the best of it.

The room was clean. The sun shone through the cross-bar curtains, making ladderlike shadows on the floor. That room was the first rung of the ladder leading to independence. I was to climb that ladder for sixteen long, dreary years. It was no Jacob's ladder with angels shinnying up and down. The feet climbing that ladder, including my own, were of common clay. I began using mine to upend my trunk to unpack it. I had packed no sackcloth and ashes in that trunk. Lest I acquire them, I hummed a tune, off key but purposeful.

Presently there was a tap at the door. I admitted a smiling sweet-faced little woman of about thirty. For the first time my Yankee ears heard the soft slurred speech of the South.

"I am Mrs. Hillyard. I saw you come over from the agency. I ran in to tell you we are very glad to have you here." She looked at the opened trunk. "You are going to stay?"

"Of course, Mrs. Hillyard."

She laughed. "I have a selfish interest in your staying. School opened in September and I have been filling your place. I am no kindergartner. I shall be glad to stop trying to act as one."

I did not tell her that I was no kindergartner either, or that I never had seen a kindergarten in operation. "I came as soon as I could after getting my appointment."

"I know. Another kindergartner was sent in September. From Boston. She came in on the stage, took one look at this room, and caught the afternoon stage for home. I was afraid you might do the same. This room—"

We looked at the room, at each other—and laughed. It was that kind of a room, a room to laugh in or cry in, depending upon the emotional habits of its occupant. Mrs. Hillyard asked, "Is there anything I can do for you before I run along? I have a small son waiting for me."

"Is there hot water?"

"I'll get you some from the mess kitchen." When she returned with the pitcher of water she said, "The supper bell rings at five-thirty. Mr. Hillyard and I will stop in for you, introduce you to your associates here. By the way, have you soap? The commissary soap is too harsh. Shall I fetch you a cake of mine?"

"Thank you. The Indian Bureau did not tell me what I might need here, but Indians somehow suggested the need for soap."

She laughed. "Remember, you are welcome here. Mr. Hillyard should have been the first to greet you. Joe should have taken you to his office."

"The agent told Joe to bring me directly here."

"I see." She frowned. "Well, it doesn't matter. Mr. Hillyard will see you at supper." For the first time the door closed gently.

Kindness, a smile, and hot water. If these await the wayfarer at the end of her journey, she will be lacking in fortitude if she cannot make shift with them.

CHAPTER 3

AT THE TIME General Custer and his heroic battalion of the Seventh Cavalry were dying on the Little Big Horn, another battalion under Major Reno was being severely mauled three miles away. Night and a more favorable terrain gave temporary relief, and thirty-six hours brought reinforcements and deliverance. The survivors, with their wounded, found their long way back to Fort Lincoln. There, I felt rather certain, a grievously wounded cavalryman had been given the duty of drawing up the blueprints for the Crow Creek Indian School.

Ruskin said that in any age architecture will reflect the mind of its time. Certainly my barren room reflected accurately the mind of a wounded, defeated, disgusted cavalryman. The idea of a boarding school for descendants of Sitting Bull's warriors failed to win his full approval. It was a bureaucratic gesture for which he saw not the slightest need. As he nursed his wounds he used what native skill he possessed to design as uninhabitable and desolate buildings as his mind could devise. He was highly successful. Perhaps his success comforted him somewhat when he was told he had to include a steam laundry in his plans. No Sioux warrior he had met in battle, and hoped to meet again, had placed any particular emphasis on washing himself or his clothing. Had his gallant comrades of the Seventh died to bring a steam laundry to the victors?

In a book by Thomas Bailey Aldrich the author told of the two ghosts in the basement laundry of his home who, on cold nights, ran each other through the mangle to keep

themselves warm. Did the ghosts of the gallant, outnumbered men of the Seventh Cavalry haunt our steam laundry in search of warmth? I felt they had first claim to that mangle, felt they must indeed be unhappy, disillusioned spirits. But at least they knew that the buildings of this school provided no comfort for the children of the enemy or for the misguided civilians who came, not to fight, but to teach.

At supper in the mess hall Superintendent Hillyard said: "You arrived on Friday, so you have no classroom duty until Monday. Please report to my office in the morning to be instructed in your other duties."

Wondering what other duties I might have, I reported to him in his bleak little office in boys' quarters. He rose as I entered, the first man ever to show me that courtesy. Men of the North Woods did not rise when a woman entered the room. They sat down a little harder. Mr. Hillyard was a pleasant, reddish-haired man, with a Vandyke beard that seemed to agitate itself wondering where it was going to get itself trimmed. I promptly forgot the agent's warning in the warmth of his friendly smile.

"Employees in the Service are given duties in addition to their regular work. For instance, you will supervise and maintain order in the pupils' dining room during the breakfast hour. Beginning in the morning. Please be in the dining room by six-thirty. Breakfast is at six forty-five. You are one of three teachers here, each of whom is given this duty at mealtime. We have two hundred pupils, about equally divided between the sexes, ranging in age from an estimated six to twenty-five years."

Rudely I interrupted. "Only three teachers for two hundred pupils?"

"Yes. These children go to school only half of each school day. They work the other half. Now, about your breakfast duty. You will find that the boys gobble their food. The girls—perhaps at the end of a week you will be able to tell me why it takes so long for the girls to eat. And

we are obliged to follow a certain routine. It will be your duty to say grace before breakfast."

"Say grace! For two hundred Sioux Indians!"

Mr. Hillyard's eyes twinkled. "Is it harder to say grace for two hundred than for two?"

"But what if they are not grateful for the same things?"

"As a matter of fact, I do not think they are grateful for anything. Of that you will form your own opinion."

"Is the form of grace routine, too? Or do I say whatever I please?"

"Whatever you please—within limits. The older pupils understand English fairly well. And I suggest brevity."

He didn't need to! I already knew just how brief that grace was going to be. "Do they understand what it means, Mr. Hillyard? It seems so silly."

"Other features of this work may impress you similarly at first. All this is strange to you. Our life here is harsh. Crude. It requires confidence in what we are trying to do—arbitrarily to educate these young Indians in the hope that in time they will want their own children educated. We are expected to engage in discouraging work without becoming discouraged. Those who come after us will reap the reward of our labor." Somehow I felt he wanted to add "if any."

"An Indian school sounds like the St. Paul's definition of faith."

Mr. Hillyard laughed. "So it does. This school is the substance of things hoped for."

"But not the evidence of things not seen?"

"If you discover such evidence, I shall be interested in hearing of it." The twinkle vanished. "I must tell you that you are expected to work in harmony with your associates. It is not easy to do so."

The agent had accused this man of being antagonistic. I did not believe it. I heard him say: "You are expected to perform cheerfully any detail to duty that emergency may require. Can you sew?"

"Yes, sir."

"Can you cook?"

"Yes, sir." I waited anxiously. He did not ask if I could teach a kindergarten.

"You may find use for your skill. I hope you like this work, hope you decide to remain in it. There are no young people here. You may be lonely at first. I'll try to keep you too busy to leave you time for loneliness. That's all. You will learn your way around. Oh, by the way, there is one other point. Mr. Burt, the missionary at the agency, hopes you will be willing to teach a class in Sunday school. Neither of the other teachers feel inclined to do so. He needs teachers. The Burts are fine people. I think you will like and admire them. Ever teach a Sunday-school class?"

"No, sir. But I spent a good part of my childhood in one."

"Indians for pupils may offer a few problems. Shall I tell Mr. Burt you will help him out—beginning tomorrow?"

I remembered that neat, vine-covered cottage at the agency. "Is it the Burts who own that big black cat?"

"Tom? Yes. They have no children. Much of their affection, and most of my son's as well, is lavished on Tom."

I told him I would teach a class in the Sunday school. I wanted to do a little lavishing of my own.

"Thank you. That will be all, then." He rose. "Sunday service is at eleven. I'll ask Mrs. Hillyard to call for you."

When I opened the door into my barren room the red cover of Aurelius on the packing box was the only bit of color to greet me. I decided I liked Mr. Hillyard far better than the agent. He didn't chew tobacco; he had not tried to prejudice me against anybody; he did not commit mayhem on his English before putting it into circulation. I wrote several ways of saying grace. From the shortest one I deleted all unnecessary words. Even then I felt it was too long for any possible gratitude Indians had cause for feeling.

On Sunday Mrs. Hillyard stopped for me. As we crossed the expanse of deep sand to the agency the long lines of boys and girls marched by, scuffing up the dust. The boys wore neat wool uniforms, the girls gingham dresses of identical material and design. A woman who marched with them—boys' matron, I learned—dropped out of line as we neared the church to say:

"Will you look at them! Kicking up all that dust and their shoes just blacked. And there is Roland with his shirttail out. I've told him and told him—he's pulled it out on purpose the minute my back was turned."

Poor Roland. That pulled-out shirttail going to church was as near to the warpath as he was likely ever to get.

The pupils and a few adult Indians from the reservation filled the church to capacity. This was the first Episcopal service I had attended—and it was in the Sioux tongue. The Prayer Books gave both Sioux and English in parallel columns. The adult Indians opened their books but in neither language did they open their mouths. Mr. Burt's sermon was in Sioux. I obtained nothing helpful from that sermon but I liked the tall, earnest man who preached it. In time I came to like him more and to respect him highly. I noticed the pupils sat quietly, with none of the fidgeting to which white children are prone at sermon time.

Following the sermon, I met Mr. and Mrs. Burt. My conscience troubled me a little. I knew their cordial, friendly welcome was due to their belief that I was zealous in piety and good works. They did not know that I was there because I had selfish designs on their tomcat. Mr. Burt assigned me a class of some twenty-five boys about fourteen years of age who had taken their places in a corner of the room.

I opened the quarterly without qualms. North Woods people knew their Bible. I found the lesson had to do with King David and his warrior, Uriah, and Uriah's wife, Bath-sheba, who was fair to look upon. I faced my twenty-five little graven images. They stared at me from black

unfathomable eyes, the lids of which seemed never to wink. Their stolid, brown faces were lacquered with inexpressiveness. How much English did they know? What would this lesson mean to them?

Should I extol Bath-sheba's beauty as the prime cause of all the trouble? I felt these Indians, young as they were, would understand a man stealing a woman if he needed a woman. They would understand an old Indian taking a new, young wife. But would they understand that old Indian, with an out-sized tepee already crowded with young women, going on the warpath just to get himself another wife because she was beautiful? I rather thought not. To them no woman was beautiful.

I decided to slur Bath-sheba's fatal beauty. Reluctantly I put Uriah in the front of the battle against the children of Ammon, reluctantly I killed him off. Should I tell these boys that King David acted like a sneak and a skunk? Better not—the missionary might hear me. I reached the part of the lesson that I thought those boys really could understand. For it told how King David, after his victory, caused his helpless prisoners of war to be put under axes of iron, and under saws, and under harrows of iron, and run through the brickkiln.

Saws. I expounded saws. I was pleased to see tiny cracks appear in the lacquer. They understood saws and their uses. I expounded axes. More little cracks. They understood axes and their uses. Harrows. I expounded harrows as farm implements. No cracks. Those boys had never seen a plow turn a furrow in their soil. I slurred harrows as farm implements and presented them as instruments of torture, with sharp, pointed teeth. I was rewarded with more cracks. I slurred the brickkiln, never having seen one.

Having assembled all of King David's instruments of torture, except the brickkiln, reluctantly but graphically I put the poor children of Ammon under his saws and axes and harrows. Wide cracks ran in all directions on faces no longer lacking expression. My efforts had not been in vain.

At the end of the half hour I wondered if I had not disposed of Uriah and the unhappy warriors nearly as well as the missionary had in his adult class, using the Indian tongue.

A few days later I was given cause to ponder the hard road good intentions have to travel. I had been given a Sunday-school lesson to teach. I had taught it as well as I could. Knowledge of the unexpected results of that teaching reached the mess hall, brought by an irate carpenter who came deploring the spoilage of his one good saw.

"Them pesky imps stole it out of my shop. I found a bunch of 'em with it out behind the warehouse. Sawing rabbits in two. Spoiled the last good saw there is."

My voice was not among the many raised in disapproval. I looked at my plate, feeling guilty and heartsick. Those poor little rabbits.

"I don't care anything about them rabbits," said the carpenter. "There's too many of the pests around. The boys just pull 'em apart, play tug of war with 'em. What I want to know is where in Tophet they got hold of this new idear. My last good saw. Maybe I'll get a new one, maybe I won't."

That evening I found myself hoping that not again would the Sioux rise up against us hated white people. I thoroughly disliked the thought of being put to torture by the novel methods I had suggested to them in Sunday school.

I was to learn that Sioux children showed to all animals the same quality of mercy that Torquemada and Cromwell showed to people who differed with them on points of theology. Yet it ever had seemed to me that a man who could kick a sleeping dog could measure with one length of a yardstick his spiritual distance from Neanderthal man.

CHAPTER 4

EXPERIENCE with the mute, graven images in Sunday school prepared me for the twenty younger ones who trooped into the classroom on Monday and took their places before the small chairs which the Indian janitor had arranged in a circle. I did not know those chairs belonged in a circle, so it was well that the janitor knew more about kindergarten procedure than I did.

To my surprise the images promptly began to sing a song of greeting to the new day. So Indian children could speak! I soon learned that they sang readily the songs they knew, learned easily the new songs I taught them. But they would go nowhere with words unless a tune went with them.

I expected Indian children to be shining with health. The faces in that circle shone, but with mercuric ointment generously spread over their scrofula sores. Mrs. Hillyard had given me a list of their names. But how attach the correct name to its owner when he refused to acknowledge ownership? The sores helped. I separated the children with visible sores and so came to identify Sophia Ghost Bear by the running sore on the right side of her neck. Elaine Medicine Blanket had her sore on the left. Genevieve Big Buck's finger joints were badly inflamed, as were Roland Little Elk's.

Tribal names had been too literally translated. As these children entered school with no Christian names, these were arbitrarily assigned them. Someone's fancy roamed not fitly but too far. There was a Rose, a Violet, and an Eloise. An Eloise with a dirty nose was somehow irritating. I re-

sented the perversity of nature that made the noses of those pitiful children run freely but denied their tongues the same facility. If an Indian child ever has a handkerchief, only omniscience knows where it blows to.

Their hands were adept at copying new words on their sour slates, which they washed in the manner of North Woods children by spitting on them. These children could draw far better than I could. They drew horses in all possible postures to throw their riders. Sophia Ghost Bear put together the first English sentence I heard spoken. She held up her slate with a picture of a horse and rider abruptly parting company and asked:

"You lak it, Roland?" Roland's reply was a scowl.

Mr. Froebel's gifts were sadly broken, his kindergarten scissors chipped and dulled, the supply of weaving paper limited. My predecessor had been a real kindergartner and the children, then in their third year, knew more about the uses of these things than I did. At the end of a month I knew that as a teacher of Indian children I was a failure.

It was not so much an inability to understand their mentality as it was my being unable to cope with their refusal to respond to my efforts. The work called for unlimited patience and I was naturally impatient. It called for a belief in the necessity for recreating primitive children in my own image. In sixteen years I did not acquire that belief. I had a vague sense of incongruity in the routine and purposes of the school but was too ignorant to trace it to a reliable source. Yet I instinctively felt that, in teaching Indian children to like and want the things we liked and wanted, we were headed in the wrong direction. Had nature fitted these children to like and want these things? Could they make use of these things on the reservation? Were we doing anything to make it possible for them to live there as we were teaching them to want to live? I did not know. During my time at Crow Creek the subject of improving reservation conditions was not mentioned in my hearing.

I felt that somewhere in this educational woodpile there was concealed a woolly pate. I saw nothing to do about it except leave it there. At least I was not responsible for it.

Meanwhile I slowly sorted out my associates by name and duty. In this Miss Swinton, the seamstress, was most helpful. She was a thin, waspish spinster of forty with a sting in her tongue. Her room was across the hall from mine. I welcomed her occasional evening calls in my desolate room where I had nothing to read—except Aurelius, and even a Stoic palls from too much familiarity.

I also enjoyed Miss Swinton's caustic conversation. She poured tribulations and vexation of spirit like dark brew from some Jovian cask of cosmic bitters endlessly on tap. She seasoned the brew with gossip and shrewd, unkind comments on the people at the school, including doubts of the sanity of a kindergartner who stayed at such a place. She sat on the hard bed, refusing to deprive me of the equally hard chair. She plopped each employee into his or her niche, tucking in the salary and qualifications for duty.

"There ain't nobody here who could earn a living anywhere else. They're the only kind of people who ever come into this dirty Indian Service. If any other kind gits in, they don't stay long, not unless they're plumb crazy. Except Miss Blanchard maybe. She's here to save souls. Injun souls. They ain't worth saving. She's been here ever since this school opened eighteen years ago or so."

"Eighteen years! And my father thought it wasn't safe to come here now!"

"Safe enough even then, I guess. The fighting was way over the other side of the river. Anyway, after eighteen years Miss Blanchard only gits fifty a month. Take Miss Rugby. She's been teaching them big boys years now. She's sixty if she's a day. They pay her fifty-five a month—five dollars more than when she started. Take Mrs. Holmes—if you want her. I don't. Something wrong with her head. She's mopey. She can go on teaching till she dies of

old age 'bout thirty years from now and she'll still be gitting fifty a month."

Miss Swinton moved into a more comfortable position. "Look at me, working all them years in that sewing room for forty-five. I can't make stylish clothes. Maybe I could earn a living outside, maybe not. Here I'm sure of my check each month. Take Miss Higgins, working in that laundry for just enough to keep alive on and some new duds to wear to Mass on vacation once a year. I tell you ever' last one of us would maybe starve to death if we had to earn a living outside."

"What about the men employees?"

Miss Swinton snorted. There is no other word to express the contempt and disapproval the sound conveyed. "Men! Wouldn't you know they'd be paid better than we are? That Mr. Lamb. Calls himself a disciplinarian. All he has to do is box them big boys' ears for 'em when they don't behave. I could do it better even without my thimble on. And they pay him sixty a month just for that and making them imps step in line. They pay that farmer sixty, too. Farmer! What does he farm? Never been a plow turned here that I know of. Puts in his time dry-nursing the horses and stock up at the corral. And they pay that engineer seventy-five—seventy-five, mind you—just for running Miss Higgins' laundry machinery and he don't even do that himself. Learns them big boys to do it for him. What good is that going to do them boys when they go back to their tepees? I never heard of a tepee with a washing machine in it. And he lets the pipes freeze ever' winter and bust. And for running the whole shebang Mr. Hillyard gits a hundred a month."

Miss Swinton tried again to find a comfortable position. "Been in the school kitchen yet?" she asked.

"No."

"That cook is worked to death. Cooking three meals a day for two hundred imps, and not much of meals either. For forty-five a month. Ever' day she has to bake bread

enough to fill 'em up. Takes a lot. Some schools have a baker besides, to make dried apple pies and such. But no Sioux school gits a baker. They're savages just off the war-path. Probably got some scalps off of Custer's men in their tepees right this minute. All them Sioux git the short end of the stick. You'll git it too, if you stay here. You're young. What do you want to stay in this toad hole for?"

Why, indeed? Where else could I earn fifty dollars a month? Earnestly I hoped Miss Swinton would not find out that I was not a real kindergartner.

As time passed and I learned how that school was conducted, I was indignant for the first time, but by no means for the last. Crow Creek was an isolated Federal institution that had to maintain itself. There were only a few white people. Who did the work? The children.

In Miss Swinton's sewing room, with its rows of pedaled machines, the older girls made all the clothing worn by two hundred pupils, with the exception of the boys' Sunday uniforms. Cotton work dresses and shirts, gingham and flannel uniforms for the girls, work aprons, petticoats, nightgowns, tablecloths, sheets, and towels in endless number; bolts of material were sent in under contracts that supplied identical fabrics to all schools. These included the crossbar muslin that I was to find disfiguring windows from the Dakotas to the Mexican border.

All of these had frequently to be mended. Weekly, two hundred pairs of stockings cried out to be darned.

I began to understand Miss Swinton and the other overworked industrial employees. Miss Swinton's physical and mental angles had been sharpened by endless tasks. If once she had pleasing curves of flesh, they had been whetted away. Years and work had fretted her spirit to acidity, sharpened her tongue to acrimony.

I was to know many Miss Swintons. They were the salt of the Service—with an Epsom flavor.

In a corner of the sewing room the small girls from the kindergarten darned stockings four hours daily except on

Sunday. We had set their feet on the long, hard road to civilization. On it they wore their first stockings, their first hated shoes. The size of holes in toes, heels, and knees mutely testified to the difficulties of that road. The little pioneers sat patiently darning with their inflamed finger joints, with no outcry for hands pricked at unaccustomed tasks. Poor little pioneers.

But Miss Higgins, the laundress, maintained that Miss Swinton had the best of it. A dress had to be made but once but it must go to the laundry many, many times. There, each week, the detail of older girls ironed by hand all clothing worn the previous week. Only flat linen—which was the coarsest of cotton—was run through the mangle.

Who kept the shabby, desolate buildings in a semblance of cleanliness? The children.

Children were forever scrubbing. Under their matron's watchful eyes, boys scrubbed their own building daily. I wished I might know their thoughts as, on hands and knees, they wielded brush and soap before the white man's goddess of sanitation. I felt certain that for this or any other goddess they felt not the slightest need. Their own tribal deities were male and did not require them to perform tasks fit only for women. I was never able to visualize those boys scrubbing a tepee.

With a few mental reservations, I came to like my associates. But I decided that no woman at the school hopefully wore pink ribbon bows on her corset cover. As a matter of fact, the only person who might be suspected of concealed pink bows was Mr. Lamb. He was fairly young, tall, thin, and suffered from a chronic head cold. He had strayed into the sparse reservation fold where the cold winds were not tempered to him. Mr. Lamb was the pet target of Miss Swinton's acid speech, with its implication of contempt for all males. His innate courtesy to women forbade retaliation in kind. Before her merciless sarcasm he wilted into impotent silence. At such times he looked

that I almost expected him to stand himself in a corner and drip. He told me he had asked for a transfer to another school.

At the foot of my table in the mess hall sat a plainly dressed, smiling woman of sixty, Miss Blanchard. She was a woman whose garment other women would be honored to touch. She was girls' matron and sister of Mrs. Burt, whose evangelism she shared. She had mothered many Indian girls through the years, had labored to give them her own faith in a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God. She had watched them leave the school to go back to the poverty and squalor of the reservation. Did she expect her teaching to serve as a leaven in their own and in their parents' lives? Against that teaching was opposed centuries of a primitive way of life, with its own beliefs adapted to its racial development. Of a certainty, Crow Creek was the substance of things hoped for.

Miss Blanchard's girls loved and respected her. Never behind her back did they put brown, contemptuous thumbs to brown, contemptuous noses, as they did to many of us. Her girls seemed to know that she was there because she wanted to help them, just as they knew all the rest of us were there to make a living.

I learned that Mr. Burt's first name was Hachaliah. Could any boy so tagged possibly grow up to be anything but a missionary to Indians? The Burts came here at a time when their lives might have been in jeopardy. They tried to bring comfort to a comfortless people. They taught and lived a way of life that embraced a Christian faith in love and selflessness and fair dealing. Yet they appeared before the Sioux Indians as members of a race that had broken every early treaty with them in the interests of its own greed. Again I wondered. Could these Indians add the Burts' teaching to their broken treaties that despoiled them of their lands and obtain a sum that, to them, would be a better guide than their own gods and beliefs?

I liked the Burts—and Tom. Mrs. Burt invited me to attend her weekly meeting for adult women from the reservation. The women wore fairly clean calico dresses and, like myself, highly approved of their hostess's fried chicken. But conversation lagged sadly. When I asked about Tom, who was not in attendance, Mrs. Burt laughed.

"Tom always knows when Saturday comes. He hides out all day. He doesn't like so much—company. I'm afraid Tom lacks a true missionary spirit."

I wanted to say that Tom would promptly acquire that spirit if the company brought some cats along. Tom was the only cat at Crow Creek. His social life was sadly inadequate. Mrs. Burt liked me because I liked Tom. Between two people a love of animals is a tie that does not tangle and fray like the zest for saving souls. There is only one way of liking cats and far too many ways of bringing salvation to the Indians.

When Miss Swinton heard of my visit, as she heard of everything, she grinned derisively. "Ever' employee gits invited at least once. Mrs. Burt never loses hope that some school employee will help her save Injun souls. As if we ain't got enough to do just keeping the imps in clothes and fed and halfway clean."

When I went to Burlington to take the civil service examination, I had expected to be questioned about my knowledge of Indians, their tribal history and reservation conditions. I had expected to be tested on my fitness to teach children of a savage race to whom the word education was unknown and who were without knowledge of a written language. No such test was given. Later, when the Indian Bureau sent me to Crow Creek, it did not even tell me the name of the tribe it was sending me to teach. History had taught me—as it was to teach future generations of American school children—a highly one-sided and inaccurate version of the so-called massacre of General Custer and his Seventh Cavalry.

By the Harney-Sanborne treaty of 1865 the Sioux

tribes had been given title to and possession of the land that had been their home from early Colonial times, since the French and enemy tribes had driven them westward. This land, roughly bounded on the east by the Missouri River, extended westward to and included the wooded, watered, and game-filled Black Hills and a narrow, fertile strip running northward to the Canadian boundary. Yet, one year later, in 1866, we were demanding of the Sioux the right for safe passage through their land of emigrant trains going west, such trains to have military escort, and the right to establish military posts along that westward trail. This invasion of their land was opposed by all the tribes except the Brûlé, and Red Cloud went on the warpath. When the first military post was established at Fort Phil Kearny, Red Cloud's warriors wiped out Captain Fetterman's force. Sporadic fighting continued until 1874, when new impetus for despoiling the Indians was given by the discovery of gold in the Black Hills by a military expedition scouted by Custer. Gold seekers and settlers poured onto the reservation. By 1887 we had taken from the Sioux the Black Hills, the fertile strip northward, and had thrown open to white settlement eleven million acres of their best land. We had slaughtered their mobile food and clothing supply in the immense herds of buffalo. We had them corralled in concentration camps—reservations—to be fed government rations. Against this fate the Indians fought long and valiantly. Raiding parties of Sioux and Cheyennes long terrorized the western frontiers as far south as Kansas and Nebraska. And between 1866 and 1876 white traders among the Indians played their vitally shameful part, as they had done since Colonial times, selling arms and ammunition to the enemy.

These traders now had the new repeating rifles, Spencer and Winchester, which had been perfected as early as 1866, but the army continued to be supplied only with the Springfield single-loading rifle. This carbine had a serious defect: when heated in action, the ejector often failed to

throw out the empty shell and men fighting for their lives had to pause to pry it out before reloading. But if the army did not have the new repeating rifles, the settlers, hunters, and explorers along the Western border did have them; the unscrupulous traders had them, and, presently, the Indians. Any Indian would exchange many valuable furs for a repeating rifle and a supply of ammunition.

The career of George Armstrong Custer had been meteoric. He graduated from West Point at the age of twenty-one and, three years later, was a major general in command of the Third Cavalry during the Civil War. After the war he was appointed lieutenant colonel of the newly formed regular Seventh Cavalry. He was given considerable latitude in the selection of the men and officers he was to train in one of our finest military units. Serving under General Sherman in 1867, Custer was in Kansas fighting those raiding Sioux and Cheyennes. The Seventh saw action on the Republican River where the Cheyennes were wiped out, together with their women and children. Due to the severity of this action, to the charge that he had once abandoned a group of his men to be tortured by Indians, Custer was court-martialed and sentenced to loss of rank and pay for one year.

Officers less successful than General Custer held that he was reckless in battle rather than daring, too willing to sacrifice his men for personal glory. He was proud and arrogant as well as handsome. He wore his yellow curls in a shoulder bob any girl of today might envy. He had warm friends and bitter enemies, but both friends and enemies knew him to be a man of great personal courage.

The fateful year of 1876 found General Custer in command at Fort Lincoln, near Bismarck, in Dakota Territory.

And in that year the many scandals of President Grant's administration brought into the open the long-alleged sale of sutlerships in the army and traderships among the Indians. General Belknap, Secretary of War, was imprisoned and brought to trial, charged with having profited per-

sonally from these sales. Though the verdict was "Not proven," General Belknap was forced to resign to avoid impeachment.

Prior to the verdict, General Custer, out at Fort Lincoln, decided to put in his two bits to sweeten the kitty, as he had the legal right to do. He wrote Washington that he had personal knowledge about the sale of traderships among the Sioux which would help to convict Secretary Belknap. The fur trade with these Indians was highly profitable and Custer knew that traders were secretly selling the new repeating rifles to them. He was called to Washington to testify.

But when he appeared before the House committee, Custer could offer no concrete proof of his allegations. He could not support his knowledge, accurate though it was, with documentary evidence. He was publicly reprimanded and removed from his command at Fort Lincoln! President Grant was so incensed that he directed General Sherman, then commanding general of the army, to forbid Custer even to take the field against the Sioux in the campaign then being planned. Only the persistent efforts of General Sheridan, who regarded Custer's services as essential to that campaign, induced Grant to relax his severity and consent to Custer serving, in command only of the Seventh Cavalry under the over-all command of General Terry, who superseded Custer at Fort Lincoln.

A student of this period of Custer's life is forced to ask a question: When in St. Paul, on his way back to Fort Lincoln, why did Custer have his Samsonesque yellow curls cut off? At the battle on the Little Big Horn the Indians did not recognize him.

In the preceding year the marauding bands of Sioux and Cheyennes had been told that if they did not return to their reservations the army would drive them there. This resulted in large numbers of Indians still on the reservations going on the warpath under Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse. The number of hostiles was not known but the war party

was presumed to be large. (It was the largest these two tribes had ever activated.) Sitting Bull was the chief strategist, the recognized chief of staff who made the big medicine but took little actual part in the fighting. Crazy Horse did fighting enough for both, assisted by Gall and Rain-in-the-Face.

The War Department now put into effect its concerted plan to subdue these doughty Indians. A force under General Gibbon was to come east from Fort Fetterman in Wyoming. A second force, under General Crook, with infantry and artillery, was to come up the Missouri River from Nebraska, and the third force, under General Terry, was to advance from Fort Lincoln. Each of these forces numbered at least one thousand men. The three groups were to encircle and contain the Indians for a decisive battle. It did not work out that way. Possibly only the generals knew why. At any rate, acting alone, General Crook's force fought a winter action in which ten troops of his cavalry were so severely defeated by Crazy Horse that several courts-martial followed, as wounded men were left to be tortured by the Indians. Then, on June 17, Crook again gave battle on the Rosebud and once more was so decisively beaten that he retreated to his base, leaving Crazy Horse free to give his attention to Terry and Gibbon.

Terry's force left Fort Lincoln on May 17, with Custer in command only of the Seventh Cavalry. When this force joined Gibbon's, the latter was to relinquish his command to Terry. This would have been the joint force that Custer would have commanded had he kept his two bits in his pocket. General Gibbon left his main force camped on the Yellowstone near the mouth of the Big Horn River and led a small party to meet Terry, which he did on the Powder River. Here a scouting party was sent out which reported a trail of many Indians leading southwestward toward the Little Big Horn. It is indicative of the rough terrain—or of poor liaison—that on June 17 that scouting party was within forty miles of where Crook was fighting

and retreating, and that neither Terry nor Gibbon then knew of this battle.

General Terry could only surmise the rendezvous of the Indians but his surmise proved to be correct. It was on the Little Big Horn. On June 22 he ordered Custer, in brief, to take his six hundred men of the Seventh Cavalry, with rations for fifteen days, to pick up that Indian trail and ascertain where it led, to send a scout to Gibbon's main force which would then be in motion toward the Little Big Horn, reporting the findings of his mission, and to rejoin Terry within those fifteen days.

Did Custer disobey his orders? Had he survived the battle, would he have been court-martialed on two counts—disobedience to orders and the division of his force before a superior enemy? Why, for many years, was it found expedient to falsify in historical textbooks the account of the so-called Custer's massacre?

If Custer had not disobeyed his orders, how could he have been halted at noon, on the fourth day out on his mission, on that bluff of decision overlooking the Indians' camp that stretched for three miles around a bend in the Little Big Horn River? And as he looked down on that camp, of which he could see only a part, we can know what Custer knew at that fateful moment.

He knew that in New York, after his recent Washington fiasco, in a talk with General Carrington, he had referred to Sherman's censure of nine years before and said the time was coming when he could clear himself and "if he had a chance he would accomplish it or die in the attempt." Later, in St. Paul, he knew that he had said to General Ludlow that, in the coming campaign against the Sioux, "he would cut loose from Terry."

He knew if he now gave battle he would not have the element of surprise in his favor, since the Indians would have had scouts out to report his presence in their vicinity.

He knew his Seventh Cavalry was only a part in the concerted plan to surround and contain the Indians for a

decisive battle. He knew what disruption of that plan would mean. He knew he was uninformed as to the number of the enemy. He knew he faced merciless and brave fighters. He knew that General Gibbon's force could not be far away and that he had not sent a scout, as directed, to advise Gibbon of the Indians' place of encampment.

He knew his men and horses had been on the march for the greater part of thirty-nine days since leaving Fort Lincoln. He knew that for the past three and one-half days they had traveled day and night through country where water was scarce, had covered 106 miles, a part of which led through the notoriously rough Bad Lands. He knew the weather had been exceptionally hot. He knew his tired horses had had no water for the last twenty-four hours and that they were close to exhaustion. He knew the Indians' horses would be fresh.

He knew that his men were armed with the old defective carbines. He had excellent reason for knowing that many of the Indians had the new repeating rifles.

He knew he was going to divide his force of six hundred men into three parts, sending one battalion under Major Reno, and another under Captain Benteen, to take up positions which might preclude contact with his own battalion once the battle was joined.

No braver men ever fought for their lives than that doomed battalion Custer led to slaughter that hot June Sunday seventy-six years ago—their retreat cut off, both flanks turned, and between them and the river the greater part of a force estimated to have been from four to six thousand victory-crazed, well-mounted and well-armed Sioux and Cheyennes. No help from Reno or Benteen. Ammunition going—gone. How dearly could these doomed men sell their lives?

When, some thirty-six hours later, General Gibbon's force reached the battlefield from which the Indians had retreated, to bury 225 stripped, scalped, and mutilated

men, they found dozens of carbines with empty shells still in them because the ejectors had failed to work. No time to stop and pry out those empty shells. They found broken gunstocks that had been used in a last futile gesture of defense. Those doomed men could not sell their lives dearly. Indian casualties were known to be few.

Some years later Rain-in-the-Face said that the Indians had not feared Custer's men because their own guns were so much better; that near the end of the battle (thought to have lasted two hours), when the white men could not fire any more, the Indians saved their ammunition and went in with tomahawks and war clubs. It was, he said, like killing sheep.

George Armstrong Custer—and the heroic men he led to slaughter—have their monument at the historic site on the Little Big Horn. If the causes for which men fight and die have any relevancy whatsoever to the reasons for erecting monuments to the military leaders of those causes, there should be erected beside Custer's a monument to Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse. For these leaders of their people did not fight to salve a wounded pride, nor did they sacrifice their men in an effort to gild again a tarnished fame. They fought in defense of the homeland guaranteed them by solemn treaty, the homeland of which we had robbed them.

Due to Custer's disruption of the concerted plan to subdue the Sioux, many more lives were to be lost before their final defeat. History taught me that this defeat took place at the battle of Wounded Knee. It was not a battle. It was a massacre.

Missionaries among the Plains Indians had early indoctrinated them with a belief in the white man's God, risen from the dead to bring peace and justice to all people. From this teaching the Indians made the not illogical deduction that this ghost god would restore to them their lost lands. Worship and propitiation of this risen god took form in the ceremonial ghost dance, in which both men and women

participated. It was not a warlike religion; rather, it taught that their lands would be restored to them, not by fighting but by the intercession of this risen god. This belief and its accompanying ceremonials spread westward as far as Oregon and northward among the Sioux. But when a group of Sioux tried to hold their ghost dance, local authority forbade them to do so.

A small band consisting of 130 men, women, and children left the reservation, led by a minor chief, Big Foot. They were not on the warpath or armed for fighting. They sought a safe place to hold their ghost dance, their own way of beseeching justice. The Seventh Cavalry was sent to bring them back to the reservation. It found the Indians camped in a hollow between low hills. On these hills the white men took up positions commanding the camp. But Big Foot promptly surrendered. Small detachments were sent down to search the Indians' camp for weapons.

It was Christmas time. Perhaps the cavalrymen had indulged in too much seasonal cheer. From years of fighting them, these men had no liking for the Sioux. At any rate, when one detachment reached Big Foot's tepee and the chief appeared, twelve bullets were fired into his body.

To the men on the hills the sound of shooting was the signal for battle. They opened fire. When the shooting stopped at the end of an hour, 130 Indian men, women, and children lay dead. Among them, twenty-five cavalrymen also lay dead, killed by their comrades. Another twenty-five were wounded, some to die later of their wounds. One white man had been killed with a tomahawk in the hands of an Indian.

No one wrote a stirring poem about this last charge of the Seventh Cavalry against the torturing fiends.

Historical terminology should be corrected. For generations our textbooks, encyclopedias, and works of historical reference have termed the engagement on the Little Big Horn "Custer's Massacre." It was not a massacre. It was a

battle between two armed forces. It was a disastrous battle because it was sought and precipitately joined by Custer.

The engagement involving Big Foot's following of 130 unarmed men, women, and children should be called "The Massacre of Wounded Knee."

(On June 3, 1948, seventy-two years after the battle on the Little Big Horn, ceremonies were held at Custer, South Dakota, to initiate the sculpturing on the side of Thunderhead Mountain of the head of Crazy Horse as a lasting memorial to this Indian chief and his Sioux tribesmen.)

CHAPTER 5

SOME FORTY yards in the rear of the mess hall were —well, in my teens I read a novel by an English author in which a courtly, dignified Englishman was named Mr. Backhouse. I was horrified. What was that woman writer thinking of? Didn't she know what the word meant? Didn't English people have them? If they didn't, what did they have? The book answered none of these questions, but thereafter the small structure in the rear of my home was addressed with a prefix.

At Crow Creek Mr. Backhouse had been fruitful and multiplied. There were four of him, all in a row. He was weather-beaten and decrepit and his thin framework of boards seemed to long for a bit of London fog to conceal the dire straits to which he had fallen. In his two central portions he was square and undersized and in his presence we white people spoke disparagingly of him. In his larger extensions at either end he was rectangular and more ample in his perforated design and the Indian boys and girls treated him abominably. And he suffered, all four of him, from matutinal popularity.

Bucket in hand, I wended my way rearward. A few feet away Mr. Lamb, similarly ladened, was courteously unaware of my existence. Acutely aware of both of us was the line of boys at our left. In their own language the boys shouted words I knew were insults but which I liked to think were directed to the line of girls at my right. It was difficult to reprimand boys for using language I did not understand. For all I could prove to the contrary, they

might have been shouting compliments. So comforting a thought was precluded by knowledge of schoolboys of the North Woods. Like them, those Indian boys enjoyed any situation that humbled the pride or invaded the privacy of their teachers.

Miss Swinton made her morning pilgrimage protesting every step of the way. She was impartial in meting out censure for a personal indignity for which she blamed the Honorable Commissioner of Indian Affairs and the august members of Congress who appropriated the meager funds for the school.

"They might at least keep the knotholes plugged up," she said, after an unpleasant personal episode. "Or make 'em of boards that don't have holes. Why don't they build us some new ones halfway decent?"

Why, indeed. I was learning that the Indian Service was the unloved and unwanted stepchild of Congress. It wore the cast-off clothing, the patched shoes, the thin underwear of people who could not vote; it could safely be skimped in the interests of people who did. In line with Miss Swinton's censure, I wondered what member of what Congressional committee was responsible for my table being a packing box.

"There used to be a table in this room," said the seamstress. "Maybe that kindergartner from Boston, she was so hopping mad when she saw the room she was expected to live in, and after paying her way clear from Boston just to look at it—maybe she broke the table and threw it out the window. More likely someone stole it—so she could have two."

It was Mrs. Hillyard who paid visits to the rooms in the mess hall and found that Mrs. Holmes did have two tables, and returned one of them to me. Mrs. Holmes, a teacher, was a good-looking woman of thirty-five. When she answered my knock on her door one Sunday afternoon, I found her room dark, the shades down. She wore a soiled wrapper and her eyes were red from weeping. She said

she was not feeling well and shut the door in my face. I did not intrude again.

At the end of the first week I reported to Mr. Hillyard. One week had been long enough to arouse indignation at the scanty food given Indian children at breakfast. I did not know that for sixteen years I was to see other children systematically underfed.

"Mr. Hillyard, the little girls do not get enough to eat at breakfast. The larger boys won't let them eat. They say some word to them across the table and those girls just shrivel up. What is it the boys say?"

The superintendent looked at me somberly. "I don't know. Probably the worst word they can say."

"But why? The girls do not get their share of bread and molasses. The boys pour all the molasses on their own plates and the girls go without. I can't watch twenty tables at one time. When I do see that the molasses pitcher reaches the little girls before it's empty, the boys say that word and they put the pitcher down and hang their heads. They seem afraid to eat. They leave the table hungry."

"Have you tried reprimanding the larger boys?"

"Yes, sir. It does no good at all. When I tell a boy to stop saying that word, tell him to take only his share of molasses, he glares at me and does it again as soon as my back is turned. And, anyway, the bread is not fit to eat and there isn't enough of it, and the molasses is nothing but blackstrap. Why can't there be two pitchers of it on each table, one just for the girls?"

"You must understand that at this school we people in charge have nothing to say about the kind of food given the children. We are responsible only for the way that food is prepared. The bread is as good as can be made from the poor grade of flour sent here. We send the Indian Bureau estimates of the amount of foodstuff needed, but those estimates are often reduced in quantity. For instance, I asked for an increase in the quantity of molasses for this year. I did not get it. So there is only one pitcher to a

table. Two pitchers now would mean no pitcher at all before school closes."

For the first time, but by no means the last, I spoke without thought of my subordinate position. "Then the seating arrangements should be changed, Mr. Hillyard. Let the boys sit by themselves and call each other names. Let the little girls sit at tables of their own. They won't get their share of—"

Mr. Hillyard's stern voice brought me up sharply. "You think one week here qualifies you to condemn a routine that is the result of careful planning?"

I felt my face crimson. Like the little girls, I shriveled. He looked at me thoughtfully. "The planning I mentioned derives from these Indians' belief in the inequality of the sexes. For centuries their women have been beasts of burden. Chattels. For many years here we have been trying to eradicate that belief. We insist on equality of the boys and girls. You have learned the boys resent this. You have yet to learn how keenly they resent it and the brutal things they do to express it. That word they hurl at the girls at table is intended to put them in their former place. They succeed because the girls are still dominated by their inherent belief in their inferiority. Now, after many years, we can see few benefits from our planning, a part of which is to have boys and girls eat together. But eventually we hope to eradicate their discrimination between the sexes. We may even succeed in having the boys adopt some of the simpler forms of courtesy to women."

Courtesy! At those wolfish breakfast tables! I wanted to laugh. I was learning not to laugh at superintendents.

"In this work, fundamental objectives must come before merely desirable aims of the moment. Do you still think—" He paused.

"That molasses is more important than sex equality?"

He smiled. "Exactly."

Perversely, I did. I felt that if I were a small Indian girl I would prefer getting enough to eat to gaining a

highly doubtful equality with boys. I'd try to get that for myself and, meanwhile, be sure of my share of molasses.

"Mr. Hillyard, am I to infer that for the sake of a future sex equality I am to let the little girls leave the table hungry?"

He frowned. "Perhaps you will devise more effective methods of controlling the bigger boys. Meanwhile, do the best you can to see that the girls get their share of food."

He rose. I was dismissed. I took my red face back to my room where it matched Aurelius' leather cover. Devise more effective methods for controlling the bigger boys! Shortly I was to devise such a method, with a goodly degree of success, for which I would receive a second reprimand.

I walked over to the agency to see Tom.

I was in need of the peculiar comfort a cat can give. Tom was more self-sufficient, more adequate in meeting his own feline crises, more able to live in harmony with his own nature, than I could ever hope to be. It was a negative comfort. So far as Tom was concerned, he would as willingly have given me a flea. As a matter of fact, he gave me several. But if you like cats, you cannot stroke their soft fur without absorbing something of their placidity, without sensing their spirit of independence that, above all other animals, enables them to walk alone. Tom comforted me simply by being himself.

On my return Miss Swinton was waiting to pounce on me. At an Indian school an employee was not interviewed privately by the superintendent without other employees learning of it. As usual, Miss Swinton hoped for the worst.

"Got called up on the carpet, eh?"

"How silly. Mr. Hillyard asked me to report to him why it takes the little girls so long to eat at breakfast."

"Breakfast, and dinner and supper. Them girls don't git enough to eat no matter how long it takes 'em. They hide dry bread in their pockets to eat in the sewing room. Or try to. I take it away from 'em. They can't eat and sew, too."

"Is the work more important than food?"

"Here, it is, if I want to stay on the pay roll. It's different with you teachers, but if I'm to go on gitting my check I've got to git all that work done. What did you tell him?"

"That it was because of something the bigger boys say to them."

"That Mr. Lamb! Why don't he make 'em stop. Did Mr. Hillyard say why he has the boys and girls eat together?"

"He said it was to teach them sex equality."

Miss Swinton's snort was one of righteous indignation. "Sex equality! What right has he or any other man to ask us to teach what we ain't got ourselves? Equality! Can we vote? Can we hold office? Can we git as much pay for the same work as a man gits? Can we do anything except what men can't do or won't do? Why shouldn't them Injun boys think they're better than women? White men think the same way. And ain't it just like us, now, trying to make them savages what we oughter be and ain't. Trying to make Christians out of them heathen when we ain't ever acted like Christians to 'em. There's always dirty work at agencies. There's some going on over at the agency right this minute. You'll see."

"The only time I've seen the agent he said I could expect trouble here at the school."

"Did he now?" she asked eagerly. "What kind of trouble?"

"No kind in particular. Just trouble."

"He didn't tell you to expect the sun to rise tomorrow, did he? Expect trouble! How's a body to expect anything but trouble in a toad hole like this. You'll find it, all right. Better watch your step. You're on probation, you know. Though what you want to stay here for is more'n I can see."

I did not need Miss Swinton's reminder that my permanent appointment at the end of six months would depend entirely upon the report Mr. Hillyard would then make concerning my work. On the shaky ladder I was climbing,

my foot had slipped once in the first week. I resolved never again to question the wisdom or routine of the Indian Bureau's policy of education. Yet even as I made that resolution, I knew that with my traits of mind and character I would honor it more in the breach than in the observance.

CHAPTER 6

ACROSS THE table from me in the mess hall sat a troubled woman in her late thirties. Her name was Mrs. Lake, assistant matron assigned to boys' quarters. She had been recently widowed and left without resources. Here, on a salary of forty-five dollars per month, she was trying to maintain herself and her two sons, both under ten years of age. Mrs. Lake, too, was serving her probationary term of six months.

In a Federal service largely composed of old maids and widows, Mrs. Lake's situation was not uncommon. Her dilemma pointed to the most potent cause of friction in an Indian school mess, the cost of board. Everybody wanted enough to eat but few could afford to pay a sum adequate to obtain this sufficiency. Single employees wanted chicken on Sunday—the pinnacle of Indian Service gourmandism—but Mrs. Lake, for instance, did not. Chicken on Sunday might mean that, from her meager salary, she would not have at the end of the month the fifteen dollars she hoped to have to supply all the other needs of herself and her children.

The average monthly cost of board at Crow Creek was fifteen dollars. For each of her sons Mrs. Lake paid one-half of this adult charge. This was another source of dissension. Employees were divided between those who insisted children over five years of age should pay full board and those, more directly concerned, who insisted they shouldn't. The former, while conceding that children did not eat so much as adults, maintained that they wasted the

difference by taking on their plates more than they could eat. Employees who took the contrary view, usually parents of the children in question, said the amount of food eaten could not be taken as a standard or some woman would pay only half what the farmer paid, since he ate twice as much. And any such estimate of individual intake would be beyond the mathematical skill and judgment of any mess manager.

Recently Miss Swinton had entered mess in one of her frequent indignant moods. She flourished a letter received from a friend at another school. "Just listen to this," she cried. We listened willingly. Miss Swinton's remarks were productive of mirth unless one happened to be the subject of them; in that case they might be somewhat embarrassing.

" 'The principal teacher here,' " she read, " 'has been at this school ten years. He and his family board in the mess. This mess has a rule that children under five do not pay board. They have raised three brats to the age of five without paying a cent for their board.' "

Miss Swinton glared at us as if we were guilty of so great a miscarriage of justice. And poor Mr. Lamb, who should have learned not to call himself to the seamstress's attention, remarked guilelessly:

"That is the only incentive for marrying in the Indian Service that I have so far observed."

"Marry!" snorted Miss Swinton. "Marry. I'm glad there's some incentive. You men certainly don't furnish any."

Leaving Mr. Lamb folded in his corner, Miss Swinton returned to her letter. " 'There's a couple here with a brat fifteen years old. Now they're claiming that if another couple can raise three to the age of five without paying board, they can raise one to the age of fifteen without paying either. They are demanding a refund of what they have paid.' "

Miss Swinton attacked her neglected boiled beef angrily.

It was usually boiled. Meat for pupils and employees was purchased from the Indians. Indian cows seemed to have neither steaks nor roasts—nor fat. Given any cut of beef, the mess cook plopped it in the pot to boil. The mess paid its own cook, whose salary was included in the cost of board. Her skill was commensurate with the small sum given her.

I had decided that if I learned to eat the food in mess and maintain health and spirits on it, ever afterwards I would be able to maintain them anywhere on any diet I was likely ever to know. If a woman brought pleasing curves of flesh to Crow Creek, it was barely possible she might keep them. She certainly would not acquire them.

Board for my first month was unpaid. Something had gone wrong over at the agency. The agent informed Mr. Hillyard that we were to be paid quarterly, until further notice. The feeling was general that the agent was motivated by spite and the desire to make Mr. Hillyard unpopular with school employees. Rumors, vague but persistent, hinted that the agent wanted to replace him with a man more amenable to his schemes, whatever they were. We never definitely learned.

Since the quarter embraced Christmas, resentment was keen. At an Indian school, Christmas, at best, was a dreary prospect. Only the packages the stage brought in, the small ones it took away, gave an outward semblance of holiday cheer. Any real cheer had to be supplied from our own spiritual resources, which were difficult to keep replenished. Unable to buy gifts, we made them. I spent my few remaining dollars in the purchase, from a catalogue, of linen and embroidery silks. Uncle Jim would have to wait longer for his money, and get more interest. But many employees were seriously hampered by the agent's arbitrary edict, since they had obligations of various kinds to meet. Nerves were more on edge than usual, tempers even shorter.

In anticipation of my first salary check, I had written

letters covering subscriptions to several magazines. Now I faced two more months with nothing to read. No newspapers, books, or magazines were supplied the school. The Bureau sent in the yearly supply of textbooks and seemed to have no further interest in the matter. These textbooks fared but poorly. A young Sioux's first impulse when given a book was to tear out its pages and replace its illustrations with drawings of his own.

Cold weather had come, coal fires burned cheerfully, and the long evenings cried aloud for books—and there were no books. Petty irritations of the day followed me into the solitude of my desolate room. It took a determined mind to push them outside and keep them there. But my mind had no place to sit down and be happy. Thoughts wandered where fancy took them and too frequently fancy took them no farther than the narrow, insanitary corridors of the school, corridors that had no exit to the world outside.

There were few opportunities for congenial companionship. Weary at the end of the day, employees returned to their rooms to comfort or muddy their thoughts.

With feet on the ledge of the stove—where they were none too warm because of the cold air that swept around the loose window frames and up through the wide cracks of the floor—I embroidered endless doilies and centerpieces by the light of the oil lamp, being careful not to splinter the silk thread on the rough arms of the chair. I fashioned inch-wide drawnwork in squares of linen for handkerchiefs. I had not been designed by nature to sit and sew a fine seam, at least not patiently. My Christmas gifts that year were made in a spirit of rebellion, which, fortunately, did not show in the finished products.

In my lap the little heap of embroidery silks of soft reds and blues, greens and yellows, formed a small oasis of vivid beauty. They seemed to smile kindly and with courage. Colors, like human faces, wear their own varying expressions. In any group of women around a bargain counter,

we are unlikely to see a face as intrinsically appealing as an old rose cushion; in any gathering of men, a face that promises to withstand the vicissitudes of the years with the unfading staunchness of the flowers on old needlepoint.

There is an infectious mirth hidden in colors that is their share in the wry humor of life. Woven into the dun fabric of living, colors can be made partially to take the place of human relationships. For with them colors bring laughter.

CHAPTER 7

THE RISING BELL rang at six o'clock of a dark, cold mid-December morning. In the hollow of the hard mattress, beneath four heavy wool blankets which had not kept me warm, I wondered just what aspect of white civilization was so essential to Indian children that they had to be hustled out of bed in the cold and dark to receive it. Whatever it was, couldn't it have waited another two hours till daylight? Or was it of so transitory a nature that another two hours would find it vanished?

For forty-eight hours one of South Dakota's famous blizzards had raged, bringing snow two feet deep and more on the level. The northwest wind whistled in through the loose window frames, swept up through the cracks of the bare floor, under which there was no cellar. During the night I had put more coal in the stove and it glowed deceptively. Just how deceptively it glowed I was to learn when I crawled out of bed to find the enamel pitcher without its thick coating of ice of the previous mornings. Instead, the water in it was so solidly frozen that it bulged in a symmetrical curve.

I willingly gave up the ritual of washing in icy water. I sat on the bed to put on my cold clothes. Long woolen underwear, heavy wool stockings; the clasps of the whaleboned corset were hard to fasten with fingers growing numb by the second. Corset cover, two long wool petticoats, a wool dress. Somehow I managed to get the many hooks and eyes, buttons, tie strings, and an occasional safety pin, connected up with their opposite numbers. I

did not try to lace my high shoes, thrusting them unfastened into high felt overshoes that had only one clasp.

I tried to comb my hair but my hands were too numb to hold the comb.

I was shivering so violently that even my thoughts were jolted loose. As they often did, they had gone far afield to bring back to me some related memory, some relevant incident to be twisted into ribaldry. That cold morning they brought back Washington Irving. I remembered that Irving had once said that, in his day, when a woman had put on her whole armor, the citadel of chastity became impregnable.

Mr. Irving's wholly masculine viewpoint had irritated me. He might at least have paid a passing tribute to the effort and skill required to put on that armor. He should not so lightly have considered assaulting a citadel so laboriously fortified. I hoped, though not caring greatly, that Mr. Irving had solved his destructive half of the problem as successfully as I had solved my constructive half, though I doubted if he ever attempted the solution in subarctic temperatures. But I had put on my whole armor in a room at least fifteen degrees below zero and was ready to go out into the blizzard to say grace for two hundred Sioux Indians.

I completed my armor with coat, scarf, and mittens. When I opened the front door of the mess hall, wind and snow swept in and I shut it behind me with difficulty. Under the snow all familiar surfaces were leveled, the steps to the walk hidden. I groped my way down them in the dark, turned left to girls' quarters some yards distant. The wind blew the scarf off my uncombed head and I secured it by taking the ends between my teeth. Snow was above my knees. Between two buildings I plunged into a drift to my waist. I could not hold my long skirts above the snow as I floundered through. When I paused in the middle of the drift to get my breath, the wind took advantage of my open mouth and blew the scarf away in the general

direction of the agency. Dimly the light in girls' quarters shone ahead. It took a lot of floundering before I reached it. When I caught my breath inside the dining room, I began brushing snow from petticoats and underwear.

The night watchman, a man rarely seen during the day, came forward from where he had been standing beside the stove at the far end of the room. He watched me brush snow from my legs, holding up his lantern the better to observe the view.

"Know how cold it is in here?" he asked.

"Twenty below," I guessed.

"Wrong. It's twenty-three. It was thirty-eight outdoors last night."

The dining room was long and narrow, with twenty tables, each seating ten boys and girls. At the far end the coal stove was drawing merrily, but it could make no appreciable impression on the frigidity of the barracks-like room. Overhead burned three large oil lamps, the ceiling black above them.

In the kitchen beyond the girls were dishing up the oatmeal, breaking loaves of bread into chunks, filling pitchers with coffee. I had seen the coarse, grayish flour supplied the school and was not surprised that bread made from it was heavy and unappetizing. Sacks of low-grade coffee beans came in over the same route. The cook had to roast each day's supply in the oven, grind it in a hand mill. These children drank coffee three times daily. For it there was neither sugar nor milk. Butter, cheese, fresh fruit, and vegetables were never seen in that dining room. The daily diet of bread and molasses, coffee, meat and gravy was as unalterable as the law of the Medes and Persians. The small school herd supplied milk for the oatmeal only. That morning there was no milk.

Brushing snow from my inner garments, I wondered if the cows were frozen, or only the farmer.

I heard the girls coming downstairs from their dormitory. That dormitory was unheated. I knew routine re-

quired the girls to fold their garments neatly at night, to stand beside their beds to dress in the morning. I also knew that Miss Blanchard's kind heart led her to break routine on mornings such as this, that she permitted her girls to warm their cold clothes beneath their bed blankets and to dress there as best they could.

The long lines of girls entered. They were wearing their small head shawls, again due to Miss Blanchard's kindness. They took their places at table, standing half frozen to await the arrival of the boys.

Coming from boys' quarters beyond the mess hall, the boys would have to flounder through the same drifts and, I hoped, break some sort of path to the mess hall. I knew just how cold those boys would be. They had dressed in a frigid room, washed in icy water in an unheated washroom. Later I learned that both boys and girls were as unwashed as I. All pipes were frozen. Without benefit of sex equality, they had profited from one of the minor, backhanded blessings that are often the by-product of adverse circumstances. No young Sioux would regard as a hardship the lack of cold water to wash his face.

The boys were late. On the tables oatmeal and coffee were cold by the time the door burst open and one hundred young Indians crowded through with much brushing of snow and blowing on fingers. They had neither overcoats nor mittens. They were wearing their everyday clothes, far less warm than their wool uniforms for Sunday. Routine took no cognizance of blizzards. Those boys looked, and were, half frozen. And at the end of the room was that invitingly warm stove.

I took my place on the dais in center of the room; I waited longer than usual for the boys to take their places, for silence—or for what passed for silence in a Sioux dining room. Most of those miserable boys went obediently to their tables, but at the far end of the room several of the larger boys remained beside the stove. I did not blame them, but routine reared its ugly head.

"Please take your places, boys." Two boys did so. Three remained by the stove.

"Please go to your tables." They did not obey.

Leaving the dais, I went down to the stove amid a dead silence as the eyes of two hundred Indians watched with interest the outcome of this unusual event. Shaking with cold, I said as pleasantly as chattering teeth permitted:

"I know you are cold, boys. We are all cold, and your breakfast is getting cold, too. You must go to your tables."

Two boys did so. The largest, a head taller than I, glared at me with hatred and did not move. I did not blame him for hating me. Why shouldn't he? Rebellion in every fiber of his half-frozen body, he said insolently:

"I do not mind a woman. I stand here."

The blow I landed on that young Indian's chin may not have hurt him much, but it surprised him as much as it surprised me. It had not been premeditated. I expected a blow in return but was too mad to retreat.

"Go to your table!" A reluctant image of hatred, he did so.

As I went back to the dais, every joint in my armor, every hook and eye and button and safety pin, even the tie strings, creaked with rage. Not at that boy, but at the intolerable conditions at that Federal institution. From my vantage point, I looked at those cold, miserable children. There they stood, every one of them oozing ingratitude, waiting for me to be grateful for them.

It was too much. I bowed my stiff neck.

"Lord, we are not thankful for cold oatmeal without any sugar and milk. We are not thankful for this poor bread and molasses. We are not thankful for anything in this horrible place. Amen."

At the word "Amen" the customary noise greeted me as two hundred stools were yanked from under the tables and the same number of unhappy Sioux seated themselves. Going from table to table in the vain effort to see that little girls got their share of molasses, I found it, too, had re-

belled. It was too cold to pour. When I tried to spoon it out, my hands were too numb to do so.

At the end of the half hour I tapped the bell that was the signal for rising. At the second tap the girls left the room, with the exception of the kitchen detail that must clear the tables, wash dishes, and set the tables for the noon meal. The boys marched out with greater disorder than usual, with many a black look at me. I was free to go to my own unappetizing breakfast in the mess hall.

Outside it was still dark, the blizzard unabated. But the boys had made a path of sorts. I ate my own cold oatmeal, with sugar but no milk, feeling my underwear cold and clammy. In my frigid room I was about to put off my wet armor when the door burst open and a boy I recognized as Mr. Hillyard's orderly handed me a note before slamming the door behind him. I was to report to the superintendent at once.

I knew the sound of that blow to the chin would reach Mr. Hillyard but I had not expected it to be so prompt. Had the sound been accompanied by my impious grace? A subordinate, summoned into the presence of her commanding officer, did not stand upon the order of her going. She went at once, unwashed, uncombed, damp and apprehensive.

In the dark the bigger boys were out shoveling paths in a blizzard that showed no signs of ever being anything else. No matter how cold their bare hands got, paths to laundry, sewing room and classrooms must be cleared. Sacred routine must not be interrupted by a mere matter of health and insufficient clothing. The boys clearing a path to the office deliberately blocked my way and I detoured through the piled-up snow shoveled to either side.

The office was an inner room and did not receive the impact of the northwest wind. As he rose, Mr. Hillyard looked irritatingly warm and dry. I sat down in the small snowdrift clinging to my inner garments.

"You had trouble in the dining room this morning?"

"Yes, sir."

"Tell me about it, please." I did so.

"You think striking that boy was the best way of meeting the situation?"

"Mr. Hillyard, you told me I might devise more effective methods of controlling the older boys. I seem to have done so. At least the method made that boy mind me."

"It was also the one thing you could have done to humiliate him before other boys. Being struck by a woman, I mean. There will be repercussions in every department of the school. That is regrettable. I know the boy. He has made Miss Rugby trouble before. Did you stop to think he might have injured you?"

"No, sir. But I was surprised he didn't."

"He knew he would be punished. Do you believe in corporal punishment?"

"Well, my father certainly did."

"I see. We are not forbidden to use corporal punishment when absolutely necessary, but we try to discipline the boys in other ways—by depriving them of playtime, making them work longer hours. We avoid striking them whenever possible. Please remember that."

"What should I have done?"

"You might have sent a boy for Mr. Lamb."

"Mr. Lamb! Why, he wouldn't ——" I stopped. Mr. Hillyard smiled in understanding.

"By the time Mr. Lamb got there, that boy would have been at his table. You have made me responsible for order at breakfast. If that boy had had his own way, every other boy would know he did not have to obey me. I'm sorry."

"Yes. Well, don't be too sorry. The boy will be disciplined."

I waited anxiously, but he did not mention my reversal of thanksgiving. And just then the first school bell sounded. I got to my numbed feet.

"Mr. Hillyard, am I expected to work for three hours in that cold classroom with every garment I have on wet to

my waist? I'll have to or be late for school. I've had no time to change."

Startled, he looked at my uncombed, unwashed person. "Do you mean there was no path cleared to the dining room this morning?"

"No, sir. The snow was to my waist in places."

"The night watchman should have cleared a path. Was one cleared yesterday morning?"

"No, sir."

"I am sincerely sorry. I'll look into this. Take as long as you need to change."

"Thank you." At the door I turned impulsively. "Mr. Hillyard, will you please excuse me from saying grace at breakfast after this?" Before he could fall back on that sacred routine, I said quickly: "I do not think anyone has the right to ask me to be hypocritical for two hundred children. There's a verse of scripture I should like to say instead."

Even his Vandyke beard disapproved of me. "What verse would you prefer saying?"

I thought fast. I had no verse in mind. " 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help.' These children need help, Mr. Hillyard. They are as apt to get it from the hills as any other place."

He looked at me somberly. "Very well, if you prefer it, in your present mood. Perhaps later you may feel differently."

I thanked him and went back out into the blizzard. It was not yet fully daylight. At least tomorrow morning that night watchman would be doing what he was supposed to do, instead of providing himself with a view. I lifted up my eyes to the only hill in the vicinity, on which stood the frozen water tank. I could expect little help from it.

In the mess kitchen I begged the cook for a little warm water. "Everybody's been after water. Maybe there's a little left in the reservoir. Everything else is froze solid. I don't know what I am to cook dinner with."

With a dipper full of warm water I got my hands warm enough to comb my hair. I removed my full armor in the frigid room, replaced it with a dry one. Not an easy task, Mr. Irving. I regretted the impulse that had led me to lift up my eyes to the water tank. I had behind me six weeks of my probationary term and two reprimands. I did not analyze that impulse, yet I felt that if now I bowed the head to a minor hypocrisy the time would come when I would bow the knee to a shameful one; that once I had done so, some corner of my life would be given over to the enemy, not again to be possessed in peace of mind.

I could not foresee that for sixteen years I would bow the knee to a shameful bureaucratic hypocrisy.

The two sticks of candy were gone. I had left them on the table for the two small boys who daily brought in coal and carried out ashes. They had made more of a mess than usual. When I had asked Mr. Hillyard how to pay the boys, he had said: "Pay them with candy. Pennies mean little to them as they are not allowed to go to the agency to spend them."

I bought candy at the trading store at the agency, two sticks for a penny. When Miss Rugby learned I gave each boy a stick, she complained to the superintendent. I was overpaying the boys. She could afford to pay only half a stick, and her boys had refused to carry coal unless they got a whole stick.

It was my first personal experience with labor trouble.

On my way to the schoolhouse, half an hour late, I glanced over at Mr. Backhouse. He wore a foot-high white topper and looked very cool and aloof. For once he was enjoying, all four of him, the privacy which Englishmen believe their birthright.

Nobody had shoveled a path out to him.

CHAPTER 8

THE BLIZZARD blew into the open two atavistic traits of the boys. They did not like to shovel paths, any paths, but particularly paths for girls. Back of these boys were countless generations of paths cleared for them by women. Not in so short a time could they accept a way of life in which they must do the shoveling. It was a form of gallantry beyond their understanding. Bitterly they resented our placing the girls not only on a plane of equality in the matter of paths, but on a higher level as well. To their resentment was added the impetus of that blow to the chin from a hated white woman.

When school was dismissed the day of that blow, several of the bigger boys mauled two of the girls so severely that Miss Blanchard had to put them to bed and summon the physician from the agency. The boys had concentrated on the girls' scrofula sores, which the physician smeared with mercuric ointment more generously than usual. Mr. Hillyard issued an order to us teachers to dismiss the girls first thereafter and give them time to reach quarters before dismissing the boys.

Sophia Ghost Bear appeared in kindergarten circle with an ugly bruise on her cheek. "Did you fall and hurt your face, Sophia?"

She laughed. "He hit me, Roland."

Sophia seemed to think Roland's attentions were some kind of a compliment. It was, I thought, the only kind she was ever likely to receive.

When the blizzard abated on the fourth day, the older

boys, in their short playtime, stormed the hill with its water tank seeking fun. They tramped down the snow, poured water over it, and made a smooth incline on which to coast. On what? They had no sleds. But in a not remote past their ancestors had used buffalo ribs to slide down hill on. Thanks to us, there were no buffalo ribs. Also due to us, behind each building stood wooden trash barrels the staves of which were similar in design. Mr. Lamb reported the disappearance of the barrels. The staves fell to the larger boys. They tied strings to one end and coasted standing. They also assumed the prone position that North Woods children called "belly-bunk."

The staveless small boys were not idle. Nature had provided a sure means of transportation down that icy hill. I heard Mrs. Lake call across the yard:

"Roland, don't you slide down hill on your pants."

But Roland continued to slide. His pants were government pants and did not cost him anything. He knew peculiar white people considered pants a necessary part of a schoolboy's equipment. If one pair wore out, another would be forthcoming.

No envious girl ventured near that hill. Her share came later when Miss Swinton's sewing room was deluged with pants in need of patches in the rear. It was a manifestation of male nature that did nothing to soften her harsh view of the sex in general.

"Them little imps!" she cried in mess. "They don't know which end is which. Ain't they got feet? Why ain't they made to use 'em instead of their——" She paused suddenly to glare at Mr. Lamb, as if he had been on the point of committing an indelicacy. That evening Mr. Lamb told me he had again asked for a transfer.

For four days the stage did not get through from Chamberlain. It arrived at dark on the fifth day with four horses on the point of exhaustion, as were the two men who came with it to shovel a road through the drifts. It brought the first of the Christmas packages.

I tried not to think about Christmas.

Everybody had colds. The work went on as usual. At an Indian school no provision was made for a mere cold when its routine was established. But Mr. Hillyard was absent from dinner one day and conversation, freed from official restraint, flowed more openly than usual. At the other table the farmer said:

"Too bad we can't shoot them poor critters."

"What poor critters?" asked Miss Swinton hopefully.

"Them Injun cows up at the corral."

The barns and corral were some hundred yards from both school and agency. They were the one place I had not visited, thinking I was unlikely to be detailed there for duty.

It happens every year after a storm," said Miss Blanchard sorrowfully. I asked what happened.

"Them Injuns on the reservation," replied the farmer, "are too shiftless to cut prairie hay for their stock come winter. They let 'em range for food. When snow comes cattle can't get to what dead grass there is. They starve to death, if they don't freeze first."

"That agent is to blame for that," snapped Miss Swinton.

"Not altogether he ain't. He's only got three reservation workers at the agency. They ain't enough to do much good among them thousands of Injuns. They try to make 'em cut hay. Some of 'em do. Mostly they just turn their critters out to live if they can. Ever' winter some of 'em find their way to the corral. Smell, probably."

"You mean those cows are standing outside the corral in the snow? Why don't you feed them?"

The farmer was scornful of my ignorance. "Feed 'em. Feed 'em what? We got just enough to feed the school and agency stock till spring. And it's government fodder. I have to account for ever' hundredweight of it. I can't feed them loose cattle."

Elderly Miss Rugby raised a voice rarely heard outside the classroom. "It's as Miss Blanchard said, year after year.

The only property these Indians own is stock. They can't afford to lose their cattle. I've often wondered why the Bureau permits it. Why can't hay be cut and stored for the stock that finds the way here?"

Again the farmer was scornful of feminine reasoning. "If we did that, if the Injuns got word that their critters would be fed here, they never would get in any hay at all. They've got to learn that if they are too lazy to cut their own fodder, they lose their stock, that's why."

Mr. Lamb said tentatively: "Perhaps we could take up a collection and buy some hay. The stage could bring it out."

Promptly Miss Swinton exploded. "Collection! Buy hay for cows! Why don't you ask us to pray for them cows? Maybe you got your salary check last month. Maybe you've got a pull with that agent. Collection!"

Miss Blanchard smiled in sympathy for Mr. Lamb. "It wouldn't do any good, Mr. Lamb. Some cattle from the reservation will be standing outside the corral all winter. We couldn't feed so many."

I had been told that the Indian Bureau restocked the Indians' herds when they became depleted. I asked: "But if the Bureau buys more stock, couldn't it feed the present stock cheaper than buying more cattle?"

For once the farmer agreed. "Of course it could. Hay's cheap here. It seems to figger them Injuns have got to learn to take care of their stock themselves."

"Are they going to learn if, every time they let a cow starve to death, the Bureau replaces it?"

"It don't, not ever' time, not by a long shot. Anyway, what have we got to say about what the Bureau does? We do as we're told. And it don't pay to ask too many questions, either."

Miss Swinton rose. "Collection!" she snorted as she left the table.

Mr. Lamb felt free to venture another suggestion. "Anyway, those poor animals should be put out of their misery

—standing outside that corral, starving and freezing in sight of food and shelter. If we can't feed them, why can't we shoot them."

The farmer became excited. "Try it! Just try it. Shoot an Injun's cow today and tomorrow he will be at the agency demanding pay for it. What's the agent to do then? Ask the Bureau to pay for it? Not if he wants to hold his job, he won't. Anyway, it will be thirty below again tonight. Them cows will all be dead by morning. Ain't got no meat on 'em."

Miss Blanchard said in her gentle voice: "The Indians do not mean to be improvident. It is because they always had plenty of wild game that they did not have to provide for. They find it hard to learn our ways, now that the game is gone."

I went to my room thinking the Indians would be better off if they never learned some of our ways. The room was cold, but distinctly more comfortable since the wind had stopped blowing. Miss Blanchard had seen many years of effort to teach boys sex equality—and her little girls went hungry. She had seen years of teaching Indians to be provident—and cattle still starved. What was wrong? I didn't know, but I believed that unnecessary cruelty was the unpardonable sin.

That evening the bright colors of embroidery silks seemed unable to laugh. I put my work aside at nine o'clock and went to bed. There was no other place to go. But I did not sleep.

CHAPTER 9

AT AN INDIAN school Christmas was not a time to be eulogized. It left no great store of happy memories with the white employees, but, happily, to the Indian children it brought the rare event of full stomachs. The sight of pumpkin pie rapidly disappearing before the onslaughts of the offspring of Sitting Bull's warriors was something to be remembered.

The three classroom teachers, detailed for duty to the school kitchen, made those pies, thirty-six of them. They were sweetened with sugar instead of the molasses the cook thought we should use. The eggs came from Chamberlain. Eggs were an item of food never seen in the pupils' dining room and but rarely in the mess hall. For once routine was interrupted and boys and girls sat at separate tables. This was to insure yet another aspect of sex equality—that the little sack of hard candy beside each girl's plate did not find its way into the pocket of a boy to join his own sack cached there. As they left the dining room, each boy and girl was given one apple. On the following morning there was no milk for oatmeal. It had gone into those pumpkin pies.

For several days I had noticed that Mrs. Hillyard was not her usual cheerful self. More than many of us, she managed to display an equable happy spirit, perhaps because she was not an employee, or perhaps because she had the solace of her small son of eight years whom she taught at home. White children were not eligible to enter classrooms for Indian pupils.

Mrs. Lake's two sons were pitiful. Her duties left her little time for her own children, who shared her one small room in boys' quarters. Housed with a hundred boys, they had no playmates. If they ventured to join the games of the small Indian boys, they merely got bloodied noses for their pains.

When Miss Swinton came to my room of an evening it usually meant that she had some new gossip. I never learned how she heard things. She just heard.

"Mr. Hillyard is going to be investigated," she announced gleefully.

Investigated! I was to hear that word at various schools for many years, rarely without a feeling of indignation. "They expect an inspector over at the agency most any day now."

"At the agency? Why doesn't he come to the school if he is to investigate Mr. Hillyard?"

"Because that agent has brought the charges against him, that's why."

"What kind of charges?"

"I dunno yet. I can't find out. It's that crooked agent. Maybe we'll all have to testify."

"How can we testify if we don't know what the charges are?"

"Oh, that inspector will just ask questions, try to pry something out of us against the superintendent. He won't pry anything out of me. Mr. Hillyard is a whole lot better than the other two superintendents I worked under." Then she added hastily, as if she might have conceded too much praise to a male: "There ain't no superintendent any better than he oughter be."

"They won't ask me to testify, will they? I haven't been here long enough to learn much of anything." Miss Swinton grinned happily.

"That won't make a mite of difference. Better watch your step. If you find fault with anything, that inspector will investigate you. That's one of their tricks, trying to

make you say something they can use against you. I got caught that way once, at a better school than this. The matron there was the superintendent's wife. She got it in for me because I sassed her when she came finding fault with my work. After that she wouldn't give me enough big girls to git all the work done. Well, some inspector come along investigating something or other and I went to him, told him I couldn't do my work proper unless I got more girls; told him I'd git a black mark on my efficiency report if I didn't git all that work done. I got transferred to this toad hole two months after. Involuntary transfer, mind you. That gives you a black mark on your efficiency report ever' time."

"What are efficiency reports, Miss Swinton?"

"Them's the forms superintendents have to fill out ever' six months, for ever' employee. Sends 'em to the Bureau in Washington. Them reports has everything on 'em from the color of your eyes to does your skirt placket gap in the back. That goes under neatness. Was you born with brains—they call that native intelligence—or have you got hold of some since. Courtesy—that means do you git along with all the bums you find at an Injun school. Duty—do I git all them clothes made on time or not. Health—that's to see if you can last another six months. Efficiency reports! Git two or three bad ones and you're off the pay roll."

"How did you learn about them, Miss Swinton?"

She grinned again, sheepishly this time. "Well, at that other school I got sort of friendly with one of the agency clerks——"

"Why, Miss Swinton," I jibed, "friendly with a man?"

"He wasn't much, even for a man. He was just an old skeesicks whose wife had up and died on him. Wanted a woman to take care of him when he got old. There was a lot of things in that office I wanted to know about, so I let him spark me up a little. Told him I'd make him a pie if he'd give me copies of my efficiency reports. So he did.

Them reports was better than his pie, for they was all 'good' but one and his pie was made out of them wormy dried apples they send in for the school cook to pick the grubs out before she uses 'em. If she has time. I got 'poor' in courtesy for sassing the superintendent's wife."

"Don't the reports ask anything about how you understand and work with Indians?"

"Nope. Injuns ain't mentioned."

"Who makes out the superintendent's report?"

"I dunno. Has he got one? The agent maybe. He's boss."

"Who makes out the agent's report?"

"Nobody. He's teacher's pet. He's sure of his job unless he tries to sell the reservation to some sucker. They say that's what our agent is up to—trying to git hold of some Injun's land for himself. But I can't find out nothing sure. Them agency employees are awful closemouthed."

"But none of us has any reason to complain about Mr. Hillyard. He isn't responsible for conditions here."

"Of course he ain't. The Bureau sends men to these schools and expects 'em to work miracles with an old shoestring tied up in knots. Anyway, I bet you have to testify."

After Miss Swinton left I examined the state of my conscience. I had slapped an Indian. I had been impious. As Miss Swinton had not taxed me with the latter offense, I felt certain nobody knew about it. All the pupils knew of that bit of routine was that the word "Amen" signaled the pulling of stools from under the tables. It made no difference to them that I lifted up my eyes. As for being a failure as a kindergartner, neither agent nor superintendent had visited my classroom to discover that failure.

Only a saint like Miss Blanchard could live at an Indian school and keep a New England conscience on active duty. Still small voices were prone to be a bit overwhelmed by the exigencies of daily life. I wondered if there was a Federal limbo for the voices of those whose possessors found it convenient to relinquish them. I felt quite sure that

Mrs. Lake was anxiously wondering if Washington had heard of the marked similarity between the stockings worn by Indian boys and her own sons and was sending an inspector to look into it. No doubt the farmer was wondering how he was to account for the three yearlings, left outside the corral during the recent blizzard, which had subtracted themselves from the property roll by a method difficult to explain.

Over in the pupils' kitchen the harassed cook might be remembering the unhappy puppy that had found its way into the cauldron of boiling meat and had been served to the pupils at dinner. As the cook maintained, some young Indian had put that puppy where it had no business being. The pupils would not mind. To the Sioux, dog meat was a delicacy now that the buffalo and elk were gone.

Miss Swinton maintained that teachers did not have to worry during an inspection. If the inspector visited the classrooms and found the pupils sitting quietly in their seats with their shoes blacked and their noses wiped, he would send a good report to Washington. Even so, a teacher's burden was not light. It was possible to have the shoes of forty pupils all shining at the same time, but forty simultaneously clean noses in an Indian classroom were nothing short of a miracle.

A few days later we heard an inspector had arrived at the agency. For two days Mr. Hillyard was absent from his office. At supper on Friday he rose to say: "I have an official announcement to make. The inspector wants each employee of the school to report to him at the agency Saturday afternoon. He will question all of you. For my part, I hope you will answer his questions frankly and honestly."

He sat down amid complete silence. We were embarrassed. We resented being interrogated about this man behind his back. As usual, the silence was broken by Miss Swinton, whose personal reactions were always prompt and vocal.

"Saturday afternoon! I'd like to know when I'm to git my washing and ironing done."

On Saturday afternoons the laundry was turned over to employees for their own purposes. This bit of routine found no favor with the laundress, who said we left her neat laundry "ever' which way."

I walked over to the agency on Saturday and waited my turn to be interviewed. Entering the agent's office for the second time, I found it warm and fragrant with cigar smoke. The well-dressed man behind the desk looked up from his papers and, a bit reluctantly, got to his feet. I sat down in the chair he indicated. An agency clerk, whom I had not seen before, turned a page in his shorthand book.

"Your name, please." I gave it. He looked for and found my employment card. "Kindergartner, eh? Serving your probationary term?"

"Yes, sir." The inspector leaned back and smiled affably. He smiled with his eyes and I felt more at ease.

"You got sent to a pretty cold climate. Getting along all right?"

"Yes, sir. And in northern New York I was used to weather as cold as this."

"Do you like the Service? Going to stay in it?"

"If you let me." He laughed.

"What judgment have you formed about the work here?"

"Do you think ten weeks qualify me to pass judgment on a branch of service entirely new to me?" I chuckled inwardly when I realized I had paraphrased Mr. Hillyard's reprimand. It was comforting to learn that reprimands can be useful as well as unpleasant.

"I'll ask the questions. You answer them, please."

"My experience here has been too short to form any judgment about the work."

"I see. Then perhaps you have some opinions about it. For instance, you may have an opinion regarding the fitness

of your superintendent for the position he holds. Have you?"

"Yes, sir, a high opinion. Mr. Hillyard is kind. He is always courteous. He has been patient with me, with the mistakes I know I've made and probably with some I didn't know of."

"You think Mr. Hillyard manages the school capably?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you have no complaint at all to make?"

"Yes, I have. I have no complaint against Mr. Hillyard or any employee at the school. But I do have a complaint to make about the horrible room I am expected to keep alive in. You couldn't put a yellow dog in that room without expecting him to howl."

"I'm sorry about that. Many of these northern schools are neglected. We have other schools far more desirable. Perhaps you will have better luck in your next assignment." He rose. "That will be all. Thank you."

Outside I met the agent. "How you getting on?" he asked. "Did you tell the inspector about the trouble at the school?"

I did not like this man with the shifty eyes. "We do not have any trouble at the school. We all like Mr. Hillyard." I spoke without thinking of my good resolution. "Mr. Hillyard isn't to blame because we aren't going to be paid for three months."

Hurrying back to the school to get my laundry done, I wondered if the inspector's phrase, "your next assignment," had an ulterior meaning. I was not entitled to transfer during my term of probation and new employees were rarely transferred during their first year of duty. That evening Miss Swinton entered my room with her eyes shining. Before I could tell her I thought poorly of her opinion of inspectors, she said:

"That inspector is straight. I know a straight man when I see one even if I don't see one often. That agent won't make his charges stick. You'll see."

As she frequently was, Miss Swinton was right. Monday evening at supper Mr. Hillyard faced us smiling, his Vandyke beard happily agitated. "The investigation is over. Before the inspector left, he told me that his report to the Bureau would recommend that I be completely exonerated of the charges of inefficiency made by the agent. I sincerely thank you all."

Miss Blanchard correctly spoke for all of us. "We are very happy about the verdict, Mr. Hillyard. In justice, it could have been no other."

A few years later I was to learn of a quite different verdict.

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CHAPTER 10

IN LATE January Crow Creek broke out with measles. We did not know where three small girls first contracted the disease. To our knowledge they had not been exposed. Few parents visit their children at the school during the winter. But Miss Blanchard reported three cases of measles —in a school of two hundred pupils. She did what she could to isolate the sick girls. She put pallets on the floor of her private room and cared for the girls there. Then Mr. Lamb reported two of his boys sick. Crow Creek prepared its inadequate facilities for a siege.

There was no hospital, no nurse. There were the large unheated dormitories with their rows of iron beds. Well children had to sleep in the same room with the sick. Soon all departments had to be closed except the kitchen and laundry, and all other employees detailed to the dormitories —dormitories where the temperature kept step with the zero weather outside. No extra heating arrangements could be improvised. And in those upstairs dormitories were no toilet facilities except the row of malodorous slop buckets lined up against the wall.

Those buckets had to be carried downstairs and fifty yards to the rear to be emptied. For a time pupils not yet ill performed this unpleasant duty. But the time soon came when we employees had to empty slop buckets—an accomplishment for which civil service had failed to test us.

With Miss Rugby I was detailed to help care for small boys. Mr. Lamb, with Mrs. Holmes, had charge of large

boys. Miss Swinton helped Miss Blanchard with the girls. With little help, the laundress worked day and evenings to supply clean bed linen. Mrs. Lake looked after the boys not yet taken sick and cooked three meals daily in the mess hall. The young cook had promptly come down with measles. Mrs. Hillyard took Mrs. Lake's two sons into her cottage and cared for them, along with her own son, finding time to help in the dormitory as well.

The work was far too hard for Miss Rugby's frail body. She could not run downstairs from time to time to warm her numbed hands at the stove in the boys' playroom. Stairs put her out of breath. But she complained only of lack of sleep.

In that frigid room the sick children had to leave their beds day and night to use the buckets. When the boys asked for "Minnie," I knew they wanted a drink of water. But if Minnie had an opposite number they did not call it, or I did not understand. It would have helped, for some of the boys preferred a wet bed to getting up in the cold to use the bucket.

At the end of the first week Mrs. Holmes went to her room and stayed. She said she was too ill herself to care for others. Whatever her fancied ailment was, it wasn't measles. Passing her window on the way to the mess hall at mealtime, I noticed the shades were drawn. What did this young woman think about in the dark seclusion of her room? Of her son whom she saw one month out of twelve and for whom she denied herself to take him expensive presents? Of the emotional disaster that she was permitting to wreck her happiness? We never knew. Lacking understanding, we dismissed Mrs. Holmes as "queer."

Poor Mr. Lamb's sense of delicacy received many shocks. He was tireless in doing what he could for his charges, under circumstances he found embarrassing in the extreme. There was no water in the dormitory, and the means of heating it was limited to the top of the stove downstairs. We tried to heat enough to wash each patient's face once

daily. No doubt an occasional face went unwashed—not for the first time in its wearer's life.

I wore my full armor—an armor that soon looked soiled, sorry, and weary of slop buckets. It was an armor that Mr. Irving never would have dreamed of assaulting. In spite of it, my teeth never stopped chattering. Almost I forgot there were ways of life that did not smell horribly, where hands and feet were not aching with cold.

Over in the school kitchen the cook made quantities of nourishing soup. The farmer and carpenter brought it over in milk cans. Each boy received as much as he would eat, with chunks of bread. In sickness, Indian children were little stoics. Even Aurelius could have found no fault with them. There was no whining. They lay meekly beneath their blankets. Their beds had no pillows. Indian children will not use them. They accepted our ministrations without gratitude, their eyes devoid of any emotion other than resentment against us white people who had brought them here.

The physician from the agency called daily to feel a few pulses, put more mercuric ointment on scrofula sores. "They are doing fine," he announced. "Just keep them warm. That's all, just keep them warm."

That's all—just keep them warm!

The agent, or the physician, had placed the school under quarantine and made it out of bounds for agency employees. No man or woman from the agency came to help us care for the children. But Mrs. Burt, who was not subject to the agent's authority, had from the first helped her sister care for the girls.

Word reached the parents on the reservation that their children were sick. To them the word measles conveyed no meaning as to the nature of their illness. From the dormitory windows we could see blanketed figures squatting in the snow, waiting for someone to bring them word of their children. Their miserable horses stood beside them with drooping heads.

Mr. Hillyard was prompt to go out to them, to try to tell them their children were not seriously ill. Yet they remained there for long hours. Mr. Hillyard did everything possible to help us care for the children, to bring them through without fatalities. On at least one occasion he helped carry slop buckets. On more than one day he entered the dormitory at an inopportune time, to retreat until we were more decorously employed. Of us all, Mr. Lamb was the only one who could blush with his teeth chattering.

We were fortunate in the weather, which remained clear. Paths stayed open. One cold morning as I carried two buckets to the rear, where Mr. Backhouse received them unwillingly, I met Miss Swinton returning from a similar errand. To my surprise, she laughed.

"What do you think of an Indian school this nice, cold morning?" she asked. I set the heavy buckets down to take time to rid my lungs of the foul air of the dormitory.

"Oh, I was wondering if the Honorable Commissioner of Indian Affairs were here, if he would be a gentleman and carry these buckets for me."

"Honorable Commissioner of Indian Affairs! I've been in this work fourteen years now and I've never laid eyes on a Commissioner yet. He's setting down in Washington all snug and warm and not giving a measly damn about what happens to us out here. So are all them Congressmen, them that's too stingy to build a hospital here. Some schools have 'em. But not the Sioux. Didn't they scalp Custer?"

She filled an empty bucket with snow in a futile effort to clean it. "Wouldn't I like to tell that Commissioner a few things! Not that it would do any good. Cost me my job likely."

"How is Miss Blanchard?"

"She's tired. She's plumb wore out. She's too old for this sort of thing." She added suddenly: "They say Mr. Hillyard wired the Indian Bureau to send an inspector here." Now how, I wondered, had she heard that. "Wants

that inspector to report on this mess—trying to git a hospital maybe. And I'll bet my next salary check, if I ever git it, that there won't be no inspector sent here. Measles ain't incompetent. Measles ain't got morals. Them's the two things they investigate. I never heard of our health being investigated. You'll see."

She picked up her buckets to go, but asked a last question. "Any of your boys up and die on you?"

"No, but Mr. Lamb has one very sick boy. He——"

"Mr. Lamb! He's just a big measle himself."

"You are unfair, Miss Swinton. He has worked as hard, or harder, than any of us."

"Works hard, and gits nothing done. You wait and see if that inspector shows up."

Later we learned that Mr. Hillyard did ask to have the shamefully insanitary conditions at the school investigated. No inspector came to make that investigation.

Meanwhile, Mr. Lamb was demanding a bedpan.

He was genuinely worried about a boy whose scrofula sore had worsened during his illness, as had many another. He wanted his patient kept warm in bed. Mr. Lamb insisted, not unreasonably, that the Indian Bureau would know that with two hundred pupils and some forty employees, someone among them would find himself in need of a bedpan, and would have supplied that need. He knew there was no such article at the school. He asked Mr. Hillyard's permission to ignore quarantine and go to the agency in search of it. In view of the boy's condition, Mr. Hillyard granted it.

At the agency the property clerk showed Mr. Lamb the property roll. I was to handle many such rolls at other agencies. On them, under Pans, were listed: pans, bake; pans, bread; pans, bed; pans, milk—pans *infinitum*. And there on the agency roll was indeed one pan, bed.

But the clerk knew nothing of its whereabouts. When he had entered on duty some years before, a bedpan had been listed on the roll. It was not in use. It had not been

expended. It had not been condemned. Therefore it remained on the roll but, apparently, not elsewhere. Mr. Lamb returned empty-handed. He also returned feeling ill. The next day he was broken out nicely and went to bed, where Mrs. Hillyard cared for him and for his patient.

Later, when we learned that Mr. Lamb had generously given measles to the property clerk, who should have had them years ago, we did not grieve unduly.

When the siege was finally lifted, every face in the mess hall showed strain and fatigue. All had severe colds. Miss Blanchard was a pale shadow of her former self. Miss Rugby went to bed for two days to try to regain her lost strength. Mrs. Holmes reappeared, looking very well. And at supper Miss Blanchard said with feeling:

"I don't know what I would have done without Miss Swinton. She was always on hand, day or night, to help me, to save me steps, to see that I had some time to sleep." We looked at the seamstress, whose thin face reddened at words of praise that so seldom came her way. "God bless you, Miss Swinton."

Miss Swinton snorted—a peculiar snort that was perilously close to tears. Of all of us, she had been given the hardest blow. It mattered little if the children missed nearly a month of classroom instruction. But in the sewing room her work was far behind its schedule. The gingham dresses for the girls would have been well on their way to completion for early summer wear. Somehow the slack must be taken up, her girls driven a little harder. The flood of material to be made into garments would again engulf her. Her tongue would again shape itself to acrimony. And her check at the end of the month would take no cognizance of her many hours of overtime labor. And from long experience Miss Swinton would expect no great benefit from Miss Blanchard's invoked blessing.

Personally, I reflected that I had supported and upheld the Constitution against a particularly smelly domestic enemy during an unrelieved siege. I wished the Constitu-

tion would uphold me to the extent of giving me enough hot water to remove the scars and odors of battle all at one time, not bit by bit.

When again I was free to sit of an evening with my embroidery, I found my hands too roughened to work with silk threads. But the laughter of their colors did not fail. I pondered a question that had troubled me—what if measles had been smallpox? On the reservation smallpox was not infrequent. The school children had not been vaccinated. Would the Indian Bureau, the arbiter of life here, have left the few white people to deal with it unaided? Would it have sent in nurses and a competent physician? Where would they have been housed? There was not one vacant room at the school. At the agency there was one guest room reserved for visiting inspectors.

From the siege I did derive something useful. By the time it ended, I had reached the promised degree of insensitiveness. I could sleep soundly, dreamlessly, on the hard, concave mattress of the bed.

CHAPTER 11

THE CHILDREN in the kindergarten circle, again singing their song of greeting to a cheerless new day, were pitiful.

All of them had severe colds—colds were never absent from that circle in winter. Their noses ran with no signs of an intention ever to stop. More faces than usual glistened with mercuric ointment. But their poor hands gave them more trouble than colds and scrofula sores. They washed in icy water with coarse laundry soap. The skin cracked at the joints and the joints became swollen and inflamed. I looked at little Sophia Ghost Bear's pathetic hands, knowing they would darn stockings for four hours that afternoon. Roland's hands were even worse, for small boys did most of the scrubbing of floors in their quarters.

I had been at Crow Creek nearly four months. During that time no inspection of the health of the children had been made.

At supper Mr. Hillyard said: "You will all report to the agency tomorrow, at any time your duties permit. You will receive three months' salary. The agent wants each of you to provide some kind of a small sack." A sack for carrying a salary check! We stared at him. Had manna, to be sacked, fallen from heaven on the agency?

"You will receive your pay in silver dollars."

"Silver dollars!" said Miss Swinton. "Did you ever! I'd like to know how I'm going to git all them dollars into my bank account in Chamberlain. Give 'em to that stage driver to carry?" From her tone of voice we knew that

not one of her hard-earned silver dollars would be entrusted to any man.

Miss Blanchard asked quietly: "Did the agent say why we were not to receive a check as usual?"

The superintendent's beard, which badly needed trimming, was agitated with indignation. "He said it was more convenient for him to pay you in cash. You will have to endorse your salary check first. I am sincerely sorry for the trouble this will make for all of us."

Miss Swinton's vocal sound of protest was louder than usual. "That agent is postmaster over there. He wants to make us buy money orders, so he can make a few cents off us. He won't git no money order out of me!"

I walked to the agency in the crisp, cold, wintry sunshine. I carried a sack made of several thicknesses of a crossbar muslin curtain thus come to no good end. In the office I endorsed my check and signed the pay roll covering cash payment. The clerk had the money counted and ready. I received one hundred and fifty silver dollars. I counted them again, taking my time, the agent watching me. I expected the question he asked.

"Having any trouble over at the school?"

Suddenly I was angry. "Only the trouble you make us."

It would be long before I learned to think twice before voicing a contrary opinion in this work, thrice before volunteering a truth I knew would be unwelcome. The agent scowled. I wondered uneasily if he had anything to say in those efficiency reports. On my way back to the school I met Miss Blanchard and the seamstress. Miss Swinton took my sack to heft it.

"It's heavy! Ain't it just like that agent to make us work just carrying our pay?"

Miss Blanchard did not look strong enough to carry her own one hundred and fifty silver dollars. I walked on, thinking that when I had paid Uncle Jim his loan and interest, and paid my mess hall bill for three months, I would have fewer than thirty silver dollars left. Some of them

would trickle through the agent's hands for money orders for magazines, one of which would be *The Independent*, with Corra Harris' hilarious book reviews.

Early March brought another blizzard, with more snow for the boys to shovel, another outcropping of hatred for the sex equality those cleared paths meant to them. Again Sophia appeared in the circle with an ugly bruise on her face, another compliment from Roland Little Elk. I did not like to think of what the future held for Sophia. Regardless of what we taught her, only one way of life was open to her on the reservation.

May brought the end of my probationary term. Mr. Hillyard summoned me to his office, smilingly handed me the official letter from the Bureau that placed me permanently on the rolls as kindergartner in the Indian Service.

"You have earned this. I was able to give the Bureau an excellent report of your work here. Moreover, you have displayed an unusual cheerfulness under conditions that make a cheerful spirit difficult."

I knew I had a flippant, surface gaiety that concealed a more serious mental attitude. I deserved no credit for that. I knew I was a failure as a kindergartner. I was still lifting up my eyes to the water tank from whence came no help. I remembered that slap and the blows the girls suffered because of it. Suddenly comprehension dawned. It was those slop buckets!

I had carried them cheerfully enough, but I wondered if any other woman had ever arrived permanently on the Federal pay roll by so malodorous a route.

"Thank you, Mr. Hillyard. I am pleased, of course. But I know I am a failure as a teacher for these children. I have my own living to make, but I do not want to continue making it as a teacher."

He was surprised. "What makes you think you are a failure?"

"Because I hate teaching. I've always hated it. I can-

not be successful in a work I am not fitted for. Perhaps in some other position in this service——"

"What other position?"

"Office work, a clerkship."

"You think you have an aptitude for figures?"

"Yes, for simple figures anyway." He smiled.

"They do not use calculus at the agency. But it is not easy for a woman to get a clerkship."

"They let a woman take the examination. If I can pass that examination, would you be willing—I know I have no right to ask—but would you recommend me for a clerkship?"

"Gladly. It might not do much good, however."

"In vacation in August I want to go to the nearest city and take that examination. And the one for matron as well."

"Matron! That would mean a reduction in salary. Perhaps to forty dollars a month. You are too young to be given a head matron's position."

"It would be worth ten dollars a month to stop lifting up my eyes every morning at breakfast." He laughed.

"You are not going home for vacation?"

"No, sir."

"Very well. Take both examinations. But remember, I do not consider your work here a failure. I shall be happy to have you stay here in your present position."

Late in May a little pain that for some time had gnawed intermittently in my right side decided to bite. I didn't like that bite or the sore place it left. It happened on Saturday, so I lost no time in the classroom. I tried to forget it. But a month later it bit again, and then yanked, and it could not be forgotten. I had been in bed two days, where Mrs. Hillyard kindly brought me hot toast and tea which she had prepared. She said:

"I dislike to say this, but I think you should call a doctor from Chamberlain. The agency doctor will——"

"Put ointment on it."

The physician from Chamberlain had no hesitancy in diagnosing the pain as appendicitis. He told me to make arrangements for an operation at once.

"I can't. I will have to earn the money for it first."

"When will you be able to go?"

"In August I think, if the operation doesn't cost too much."

"You have had two attacks. You understand procrastination endangers your life?"

"I know. But I cannot go before August."

He protested, but kindly offered to make all arrangements with a surgeon he knew in the nearest city. I paid him his reasonable fee of twenty-five dollars—silver ones—for that long drive from Chamberlain, thinking I should have said September rather than August. I went about my duties with a nagging pain that received no help from the water tank.

In August the elderly physician and the sisters were kind to the girl who came to them alone and a bit frightened. After a few days I rather enjoyed just being idle in a comfortable bed. When I was able, Dr. and Mrs. Terry came to take me for a drive. I looked at the team of spirited, matched bays, and could not look long enough at their sheer beauty. I noted the loose checkreins—knew those horses held their heads high from pride, not because they were inhumanely checked.

Somehow I found courage to ask Dr. Terry if I might drive them. The old colored coachman looked at me doubtfully, Dr. Terry with anxiety for his four-inch scar, and Mrs. Terry with just plain worry. But the coachman gave me his seat. At touch of the reins I knew those horses had sensitive mouths, would exert no pull on them. I knew, too, that at the hands of this colored man they had known only kindness. Always I have judged people by their treatment of animals. I drove them for an hour and brought them back unfretted, and in that hour was the only pleasure I had known for nearly a year. When I thanked

the coachman for trusting me with his beautiful horses, I saw my first set of perfect teeth.

I left the hospital treasuring the memory of Dr. Terry's disinterested kindness. To that kindness he added the smallness of his fee, which he gauged to my ability to pay.

I took two civil service examinations.

The examination for matron in the Indian Service was so absurdly simple that a child of twelve should have no trouble in passing. The examination for clerk tested the applicant's knowledge only of elementary subjects and her skill, speed, and accuracy with figures. At the end, I was asked to write an essay of five hundred words on the subject: Should the United States establish penal colonies?

There was a penal institution in New York not far from my home, but I never had heard of a penal colony. It suggested the out of doors. If a penal colony meant getting men out from behind bars and into the open, I was distinctly in favor of it. I used up the five hundred words before I exhausted my affirmative arguments and used two hundred more to complete the essay.

And then my imp of derision, that all my life was to prompt me to question all established, authoritative forms of material, mental, and moral guidance until they proved themselves worthy, prompted me to add a postscript to my essay. If the United States needed a penal colony at once, if it would install some plumbing and greatly improve the kind and amount of the food served, the Crow Creek school for Indian children could be made to serve the needs of two hundred criminals.

I never knew whether the unfortunate examiner who found himself afflicted with that essay actually succeeded in reading it, or if he just counted the number of words and decided that an applicant who used two hundred more than required, and threw in a postscript, must have an intelligence of sorts and gave her a good grade anyway. Or perhaps he thought she was hopelessly stupid but gave her credit for trying.

I returned to Crow Creek with an empty purse. When I received my grades in November I found them perfect in the examination for matron except in writing, where the grade was fifty. In the clerk's examination I received a grade of seventy-five in writing. I wondered what kind of an orthographic sliding scale the civil service examiners used. I passed the clerical test with a general grade high enough to assure me a clerkship had I worn trousers.

I had passed three examinations without experience in the work they covered. I felt no pride in the matter. I knew those tests were designedly easy, for no person capable of passing more rigorous tests would accept the low salaries paid. I marveled that the government saw fit to entrust the education and health of a racial group to the incapable, unskilled hands and minds for which those examinations were designed.

I took my grades to Mr. Hillyard. He kindly wrote the Bureau to recommend my transfer to a clerkship at some other agency. Reluctantly he also asked that I be transferred as matron. A few weeks later, when the transfer came through, it was to a position as assistant matron at a school on the Colorado River at forty dollars per month.

Mr. Lamb looked at me reproachfully, and Miss Swinton emitted the grandfather of all snorts.

"I know you ain't got any sense or you wouldn't stay in a toad hole like this. But asking to be demoted! Taking an examination just so you can git ten dollars less ever' month! There's a lot of fools in the Injun Service, but you ain't likely to run acrost a bigger fool than you be."

I went over to the agency to say good-by to Tom—and the Burts. For them and Miss Blanchard I had deep respect. I could not share their zeal in saving the red man's soul. I had been far more concerned in his children getting enough to eat. But to their courage, their sincerity of purpose, their forgetfulness of self in helping others, I rendered admiration. In the Indian Service, I was not to see their like again.

I left Crow Creek without regret, lifting up my eyes for the last time at breakfast. The next rung of the ladder beckoned—with ten dollars splintered off. I had lived on an Indian reservation for fourteen months, but I left it knowing nothing of reservation conditions and little about Indians. I took with me the vague but instinctive feeling that the aims and purposes of that school rested on a more unsure foundation than the shaky ladder I was trying to climb.

I also took with me the memory of two hundred pitiful, diseased, and hungry children.

CHAPTER 12

CHANCE? Was it chance that was sending me to witness an injustice so great that in after years its memory was to give me no peace until I tried to exorcise it in the only way open to me? Of the many people who witnessed that injustice, why was I alone driven to attempt the only rectification possible? When my request for transfer reached the Bureau, was it chance that provided the vacancy in the school on the Colorado? At no other school would I have witnessed the tragedy that was to alter the course of my life, and alter it against my will.

It was comforting to know that I would remain on the Crow Creek pay roll until I reported for my new duties. The cost of the long journey—including my first Pullman—had taken the last of my small savings. But the feeling of independence softened every jolt of the car wheels. And my new pivot tooth was a solace for the lost canine that had recently given me three days and nights of pain and an aching drive of twenty-five miles in sub-zero weather.

In Chamberlain the dentist proved to be, surprisingly, not only young and handsome but competent with a foot-pedaled drill. The North Woods dentist used a drill agonizingly rotated by hand with himself as motor power. That tooth was beyond saving. The dentist deadened the nerve, filed off the tooth, cleaned the root canals, and cemented in a non-aching tooth—all without hurting me. For good measure he threw in a mild flirtation that, after the famine at Crow Creek, was not at all unwelcome. Some forty years later, years that made any dentist give

me a brief look and reach for his electric drill, I was to remember that dentist in South Dakota when that tooth had to be re-cemented by a completely non-flirtatious English dentist in Hong Kong.

My full armor became burdensome before I reached the school on the Colorado, where I was to remain for only four months—months that altered the current of my life. The train pulled into the small frontier town, where my first orange trees greeted me from beside the station. I recognized the palm trees with their unfamiliar fronds. Across the river the buildings of the school crowned a steep hill. On the platform an Indian came up to me, lifting his hat.

"Are you the new matron?"

"Yes. And you?"

"I am Joseph Escalanti. The superintendent sent me down to meet you. If you will give me your check, I'll have your trunk sent up."

I gave him the check, watched him walk away, instinctively straightening my shoulders. I had the odd feeling that I had met an Indian cleaner than I was after the long train ride. He returned, took my suitcase, and walked with me across the long railway bridge and up the steep path. The Indian walked without effort; I panted with the weight of my armor under a surprisingly warm sun.

"Are you employed at the school?" Should I call him Joseph? Did you "mister" this kind of an Indian?

"Yes. I am disciplinarian. You are small boys' matron, so you will work with me."

I thought this man might be a more efficient disciplinarian for Indians than the effeminate Mr. Lamb. He was swarthy, darker than a Sioux, and about thirty. He was cheaply and neatly dressed, with no coat over a clean blue shirt open at the neck. His gleaming hair was trimly cut, his round face stolid. I wondered at his easy English for he was obviously a full blood.

On the small plateau of the hilltop the school spread

Joseph T. Escalanti

As an Indian policeman, wearing the gun with which white people drove him to take his own life.

around a rectangle of sand, two sides of which were shaded by trees new to me. I asked their name.

"Pepper trees. This is the office. I'll wait for you."

I entered the office to meet—Arrogance. Arrogance of manner and features and—I was to learn—of a mean mind bloated with authority. I relinquished my letter of transfer. Yes, I had a good trip down from South Dakota. Yes, I expected to like Arizona. I found I did not have to take another oath of office. I had, it seemed, been defending and supporting the Constitution all the way from Crow Creek.

"I will notify Mr. Hillyard that we have taken you up here as of January 10. I have a letter from him speaking highly of your work. Now, you have your own quarters in the boys' building. I'll take you over."

"Thank you. But Joseph—Mr. Escalanti—is waiting for me outside."

"Call him Joseph. We don't 'mister' Indians around here. All right, have him take you over."

The superintendent did not introduce the woman who sat at a corner desk with a typewriter. So there were women clerks in the Indian Service! I left the office resolved to ask that woman how she had managed to become one.

Along the sandy path the dense shade of the pepper trees was welcome. We passed two buildings before Joseph stopped at the large one at the farther end. He opened a screen door, put my suitcase inside, raised his hat, and left me to enter my new home. I was not now surprised that no boys were visible. At this hour they would be in school or at work.

I entered—and stared. This was no Crow Creek room. It was large, sunny, with tinted walls, and comfortably furnished. On the floor were the first Navajo rugs I had seen, but somehow I knew them. Crossing to a door that stood ajar, I found one of the few bathrooms I was ever to see at a reservation school. Overcome, I sank into a

comfortable chair thinking that not in vain had I lifted up my eyes. I felt more at home when I noticed the iron bed in a corner with its familiar hollowed mattress.

At supper in the mess hall I confronted another group of strangers to be sorted into their respective niches. I hoped to have the help of another Miss Swinton. There was only one table, seating fifteen people. Even at that first meal I sensed that here Miss Swinton would fare poorly. There was none of the friendly, informal conversation of Crow Creek. There was little of any kind. From the head of the table the superintendent, like a hermaphroditic Janus, turned two faces toward us. In time I learned that when the face was feminal and smiling, tension increased and people ate in silence. When Janus turned the scowling, masculine face, tension relaxed and little frowns ran around our faces like illegitimate offspring seeking placement in irrelevant speech.

I wondered why these people feared that smiling face. Of what were they afraid?

The woman clerk sat across the table from me. Everyone called her Miss Rachel. She had done as I hoped to do—qualified under civil service and then obtained transfer from a lower position at her superintendent's request. Miss Rachel was thirty-five and good-looking—at least above the table. She was burdened with such enormous hips that, unless they were seeking permanent lodging, they should avoid all chairs with arms.

In four months I was to learn little about reservation conditions aside from their unbelievable squalor. The reservation was not large. There were only one hundred pupils. I had only thirty small boys in my charge, sharing with Joseph some responsibility for the larger boys. Our duties overlapped at many points. Janus did not consider it necessary to give me any instructions about these duties. I was left to discover them for myself.

Like many another government school, this one was formerly a Catholic mission. There was a mission church

close by on the reservation. The age of the school and the smallness of the tribe made it seem probable that all reservation Indians had once attended it. The Indians were said to be Christianized. Yet in sixteen years I was not to witness such scenes of degradation as could be here seen within ten minutes' walk of the school.

The reservation was below sea level. Its torridity provided the Weather Bureau with its highest recorded temperatures. The Indians never needed, nor seemed to want, any shelter other than their open, brush huts. They slept on the warm sand. Children went naked till puberty, wearing clothes reluctantly at the school and, I learned, shedding them with no false modesty.

The reservation of cacti and mesquite needed only irrigation to make it bloom and smile. Its only arable soil was along the Colorado River, whose annual overflow assured the Indians of small crops of corn, planted by making holes with a stick and dropping in the seed. The harvest depended more upon the ministrations of nature than of Indians. They were desperately poor. The school fed the children. Weekly rations were issued the old and sick.

From the brow of the hill I could look down upon a cluster of miserable brush huts and view the human degradation of their occupants, or I could look beyond to works not made by man; I could look to the Colorado winding its silt-ladened way southwestward, its advance upon the Gulf guarded by troops of giant saguaro cacti standing like gibbet sentinals through the years; or I could look to the distant, wind-turreted buttes that nightly did homage to the sun-god in a pageantry of colors.

A few walks down the path, a few visits to the brush huts, made me understand the depravity of the schoolboys. From childhood they had witnessed birth, copulation, and death. I learned to be on guard. Any ordinary gesture of friendliness might be taken for something quite different. The boys did not share the Sioux's hatred of the other sex, perhaps because few of them were without sex experience.

Daily I watched the women from the reservation cross the grounds on their way to the station in town to sell their worthless strings of beads to tourists. Their hair hung loose over their shoulders, in bangs to their eyes. It was clean and brushed. They wore a number of full, cotton skirts, ruffled and banded in many colors. A new skirt was put on over the old, the soiled ones, being stiff with dirt, making a good substitute for the hoop skirts that, as a child, I watched maneuvered into pews on Sunday.

One Saturday afternoon I went over to the warehouse where Miss Rachel and Joseph were issuing rations to the older Indians. It was then the first of March and the sun was hot. Outside the warehouse a small group of aged men and women sat passively in the sand. The women were clothed but several men wore only a G string.

Once these degraded people had known courage, had cherished and defended a way of life that seemed good to them. Now they were a remnant of a tribe we have brought to such bestial depths that even awareness of their degradation had been taken from them. They were bent shapes in evil rags, without hope and without memory of a time when they once knew hope.

I entered the warehouse with an old hag of a woman. She spread a filthy square of cloth on the floor. At the scales Joseph weighed out her ration of flour, put it in the middle of the cloth. She gathered the four corners, tied them, again spread the cloth to receive the ration of beans, tied it again and opened it to receive the scanty ration of sugar. A few grains were spilled. She licked her palm, gathered dirt and sugar from the floor, licked her palm again. Then she hobbled away, to give place to the next recipient of a proud nation's bounty.

I was embarrassed. These were Joseph's people. Was he ashamed of them? Did he resent the poverty to which we white people had reduced them? Did he even know the history of his own tribe? Outwardly he was strikingly different. But inwardly? Could wearing the white man's

clothing, living as white men here lived, alter the current of his blood?

On my way back to quarters I was depressed. Reared to a belief in a benign providence, I began early to shed fragments and tatters of that belief along the way. Yet it persisted. Now it was impossible to see these Indians only as a people despoiled. In them and in their destiny a primal cruelty was made manifest. I saw them alike victims of man's greed and of an elemental ruthlessness in the natural order that wrings from the heart of a just man a cry for justice from his Maker.

On the path before me came the figure of an old man bent over his staff of mesquite. His long, matted hair nearly concealed a face no longer wearing the aspects of humanity. As we met, he stopped, raising red-rimmed, half-blind eyes. He was nude except for a little white cloth sack supporting his genitals, tied with a string around his rib-gaunted waist.

He stared vacantly at the white woman in his path. I stepped aside to let him pass. I went on to quarters. My belief in a benign providence had been sadly jolted, but my feeling of depression was swept away in gales of laughter. For on that little white cloth sack blue letters spelled out the words

Pure cane sugar
2 lbs.

CHAPTER 13

FROM MY quarters in the boys' building a short corridor led to the dormitory where slept some fifty boys. From the dormitory a door opened into their playroom containing lockers for their Sunday uniforms and their clean daily clothing, put there when it came over from the school laundry. Each boy's garments were marked with his name and were placed in the lockers in the order in which the boys lined up weekly to receive them. A small medicine cabinet to which I had the key held simple household remedies, chief of which was a liniment for bruises. The school had no resident physician. One from town called twice weekly for a casual inspection of the pupils' health, and during the four months I was at the school he found no boys in need of his attention. An outside washroom contained toilets and showers for the boys.

The dormitory had no toilet facilities. Both doors leading into it were locked at night after the boys were in bed. Truancy was frequent and troublesome. Boys had to be locked in if any were to be present for morning roll call. The dormitory had only two windows at one end, iron-barred and without glass. No proper ventilation was possible. The boys slept in a fetid atmosphere. And here were the all-too-familiar slop buckets lined up against the wall.

The last duty Joseph and I performed at night was to line up the boys for roll call and march them into the dormitory, where he supervised their undressing. Afterward, before locking the door into the corridor, I made an

inspection and turned off the ceiling light. The school had electricity. Joseph locked the door leading into the playroom.

The supervision seemed inadequate. I did not like this locking up of large and small boys together. During the first week, about eleven at night, I unlocked the door and stepped inside the dormitory—only to retreat hastily. The stench of urine was sickening. All three buckets were running over, a stream reaching nearly to where I stood. As Joseph got the boys up in the morning, I knew he had the buckets removed and the floor wiped up before I supervised the making of beds after breakfast.

Back in my room I was possessed of an urgent desire to transport that evil dormitory, boys, buckets, and smell—particularly the smell—into the office of the Honorable Commissioner of Indian Affairs. I felt there should be some point of contact between the ivory tower and that fetid dormitory, some awareness that might lead to screened sleeping porches in a climate that cried aloud for them.

The following morning I went to the office to requisition four more slop buckets.

"What do you want them for?" I told the superintendent what the slop buckets were for.

"Make the boys go outside before they go to bed."

"Joseph does make them. They have to use the buckets later and three are not enough. The floor is soiled long before morning."

"Make the boys scrub it up."

"The floor is scrubbed every day. But the smell is bad. The dormitory cannot be ventilated with windows on only one side."

"Grumbling about the dormitory too, eh? Boys have slept in it for forty years." Janus turned to Miss Rachel. "Have her sign a requisition for four buckets. Remember, you will be charged with them. Get them at the warehouse on ration day."

I spoke to Joseph about the dormitory. He was surprised.

"I slept there all my life till the day I got married. The buckets always ran over."

"But you must have disliked it, Joseph."

"I guess I never thought about it."

A few days later he knocked at my door to ask me to take over his duties on Saturday, the following day. "The superintendent has given me permission to be away on Saturday to help with the cremation of an old woman who is dead down there. She was my mother's sister. They want me to help."

"Cremation, Joseph?"

"That old woman, she wasn't a Christian. The Church can't bury her. The old people will burn her the old way. It is not a good way. The Church does not like it. They want me to help make the burning pile."

"What do they make it of?"

"Things of the dead. But this old woman had no things. We'll have to make it of brush. Miss Rachel gave me an old blanket to wrap her up in. It had moth holes."

"Is it too far for me to go and watch, Joseph?" He frowned.

"Cremations are always early in the morning. White people do not go. They are not nice to watch. The fire, it does something to the body, makes it jerk, like it was alive. I do not like to watch."

He gave me his keys. "The boys will have their orders to line up for their clean clothing in the morning, and to wash."

On Saturday I found the larger boys in line. As I unlocked the lockers I heard suspicious sounds and turned to confront a line of naked young Indians. They had seen no reason for not undressing as they did when Joseph issued them their clean clothes. Since they were in need of clothing, there seemed little to do but give it to them. Soon, from the washroom, came sounds of merriment and running water. When the small boys lined up, it was with orders to keep their clothes on.

In the afternoon I went over to the warehouse to get the buckets. Miss Rachel was issuing rations alone and accepted my offer to help. I seized the opportunity to ask a question.

"Miss Rachel, I have never seen Joseph's wife. She is never with him. Why doesn't she eat in the mess hall with him?"

"You must have seen her. When you do, you'll know why she doesn't eat in mess. Wife!"

I was surprised at the venom in her voice. "Where does she eat?"

"With the pupils. She and Ramon."

"Ramon?"

"Joseph's son. He's twelve. Lizzie works in the school kitchen. She's supposed to help the cook. A lot of help she is, to Joseph or anyone else. Wait till you see her."

That afternoon, when I lined up the boys for their short march to their dining room, I went with them. I went into the kitchen to see Lizzie. I had seen her before but had taken her for one of the reservation women, one of the fat, filthy squaws whose unclean hands held out their strings of beads at the station.

Lizzie was washing dishes at the sink. Her hair hung loosely over a dirty blouse, her many skirts were stiff with dirt, her feet bare, the smell of her unwashed body offensive.

"You are Joseph's wife? I came in to see you, Lizzie."

She looked at me from hostile eyes. I knew she would not speak to me. On my way to the mess hall I recalled what I had been told about Joseph. Motherless at the age of four, his father had placed him in the school. He had never left it. Of the sisters who had cared for him he had only pleasant memories. They had taught him to be truthful and honest, taught him neatness, habituated him to personal cleanliness. They taught him chastity, to war with the urge of his primitive blood. When the age of seventeen made them fearful of that conflict, they consented to his marriage with a girl of his tribe. And Lizzie,

too, had been clean and neat in her school uniform when she knelt with Joseph before the altar of the mission church.

Now all that remained of the sisters' teaching was Lizzie's hatred of it and of her life at the school as the wife of a man to whom the years had made her abhorrent. Lizzie wanted to live on the reservation. It was to the reservation that she turned for companionship, driven to tread the path from the hilltop down to the stagnant pool of tribal degradation. Whom shall we blame for the urge that drove her?

Joseph had stayed on the hilltop. To him this school was home. Here he found the friendly associations and social equality to which he had been reared. He had been trimmed and cut to a pattern nature had not used for him. Externally he had grown to fit that pattern. Yet I knew this Indian had neither the skill nor innate ability successfully to meet the requirements and the competition of the white world he had been taught to like. Aside from the school, there was no place where he would be accepted as an equal, where he could earn a living as an equal.

Shopping in the town across the river, I was reminded of Miss Swinton. Again I was told to watch my step. The dark-skinned man who waited on me asked: "Newcomer at the school?" I nodded.

"Better watch your step. Funny things happen up there. Lots of transfers. Lots of talk."

I made no reply but that evening I walked over to see Miss Smithers, one of the two teachers. There was an undercurrent of fear at the school that I wanted to understand. Miss Smithers was a pretty, friendly woman of thirty. I hoped to find in her some of Miss Swinton's love of gossip.

"Miss Smithers, will you tell me what it is that employees here are afraid of?"

"So you have noticed, have you? Well, their jobs for one thing. We all feel insecure."

"Why? Because the superintendent has a temper?"

"It's partly that. But in the past year three people had to accept involuntary transfers. And six months ago a teacher was dismissed from the Service on a morals charge. After an investigation, of course. Perhaps the inspector thought he had cause for discharging her, but none of us believed he had." She hesitated. "It was about Joseph. You work with him. Do you like him?"

The question took me by surprise. I realized neither liking nor disliking entered my feeling about the Indian. "I'm interested in him. I don't know much about Indians and he is the first—well—educated full blood I've known. So far I've known only wild Sioux. How did it concern Joseph?"

"I might as well tell you. Everybody here knows. That teacher who was dismissed, she was an old maid—like myself." She laughed. "Not so good-looking though, and older. She fell in love with Joseph, head over heels. Hung around him, wrote him notes, chased him. She needed a transfer all right. But none of us believed there had been anything really wrong. You can't hide that sort of thing at a place like this. And Joseph didn't seem to care a hoot for her as I could see."

"There was an investigation?"

"Was there! The inspector asked every one of us what we knew about it. I told him I didn't know anything. All the others told him the same. But the superintendent got hold of a note she wrote Joseph, got it away from the boy she sent it by, asking Joseph to meet her. Joseph said he never had answered any notes. But anyway she was dismissed. The superintendent wanted Joseph dismissed too, but the inspector said no. The superintendent can fire Joseph any time, really. He isn't under civil service. Joseph couldn't pass a written examination. The inspector told Miss Rachel—she heard the whole thing of course—that he knew enough about Indians to know that Joseph had not taken the initiative. Do you think he was right?"

"Yes, I do." I spoke instinctively. But I had noticed the Indian's passivity, his unquestioning acceptance of all the ways of a life molded for him by white people. From those ways he departed in no particular. I doubted if he was capable of independent action.

"The inspector only reprimanded Joseph," said Miss Smithers. "But he told him if such a thing happened again he would be dismissed."

"Is that the other reason you are afraid?"

"Well, we are afraid for ourselves mostly. We never know what the superintendent is going to do. But we're afraid for Joseph, too. We all like him. As a teacher I can always depend upon him to help me manage some of the unruly boys. He can tell 'em what's what in their own language."

"If he were dismissed, he would have no other place to go?"

"Only the reservation—with Lizzie. Since I've told you this much, I might as well tell you more. We all know that, too. Moral wrong! Can any man look at Lizzie and blame Joseph? Didn't that inspector know what he would do in Joseph's place? Isn't the superintendent doing what they dismissed that teacher for—though I don't believe she was doing it. We all know it. Miss Rachel is the only employee whose room is in the office building. She really knows. She is the only one of us who has proof—she and Old George."

"Old George?"

"Joseph's father. He is night watchman. You've seen him."

"I didn't know his name or that he was Joseph's father."

"Old George is a cut above his tribe. He was a scout in the Mexican War. He's been watchman for years. He would make a good witness if he would talk. But he won't, except to Joseph. You can't make Indians gossip as we white people do."

"Then Joseph knows?"

"Of course. Miss Rachel tells him more than she tells the rest of us. Tells him too much, we all think."

"Why? He has the right to know if he has to defend himself again." Miss Smithers looked at me appraisingly.

"For one thing, Miss Rachel should remember that other woman who was too interested in Joseph; remember what will happen to Joseph if——" Miss Smithers changed the subject abruptly. "Did you make the drawnwork in your handkerchief? Will you teach me?"

On my way back to quarters, certain trivial events in the mess hall took on a new meaning. Teachers here were not assigned duty in the pupils' dining room, which was in Joseph's charge during mealtime. He came late to his own meals in mess, where the cook kept his food warm in the kitchen. Usually most employees had left the table before he entered—but not Miss Rachel. I had often met her coming in as I was leaving. I recalled certain meaning glances across the table. I thought now I knew why Miss Rachel came late to meals.

On my table was a postcard picture of Joseph which he had recently given me. He had knocked and entered. "Want to see what kind of a policeman I was?" The photograph showed him wearing holster and gun, his stolid face unsmiling.

"When were you a policeman?"

"Years ago—Indian policeman—before they made me disciplinarian."

"Will you inscribe it for me, please?"

He did not understand. "Will you write your name on it?"

He took his fountain pen from the clip on the pocket of his shirt and proudly wrote his name. The Indian wrote a far better script than my own.

CHAPTER 14

THE TOWN across the river was to celebrate on a Saturday the opening of the first minor project to control the floodwaters of the Colorado. There was to be a parade in which the Indian pupils were to march. A professional baseball team, returning from a series of games on the West Coast, had consented to stop over and massacre the local sand-lot team. In this unequal contest the employees were keenly interested.

At breakfast on the great day the superintendent gave the girls' matron and me our orders. "Have the boys and girls dressed and in line for inspection at one o'clock sharp. See they look spic and span. Boys are to wear their uniforms."

"Uniforms!" As usual I spoke without thinking. It was only April but at noon the sun was torrid. The boys' uniforms were the same heavy wool garments as were worn at Crow Creek in winter—that is, worn on Sunday. "You mean their winter uniforms?"

"Perhaps they have other uniforms that I don't know about? If they have, I'd like to see 'em."

"I'm sorry. I thought the boys would be too warm. They have clean school clothing."

"And look like ragamuffins in line. I said uniforms and I mean uniforms. See they wear 'em."

Perhaps the additional order to me was prompted by my question, or by the fact that once the boys were dressed I would have a free afternoon. At any rate, Janus added: "You march down with the boys. Stay with 'em till they

are in line in the parade. And see they all get back afterward."

I acknowledged my orders, given in the presence of many witnesses. I knew the second order was unnecessary, as Joseph had already been detailed to take the boys to town and to march with them in the parade. We got the boys bathed and dressed in the heavy uniforms, which they put on reluctantly. Nails were inspected, shoes blacked, hair brushed. I noticed Joseph had put on a white duck suit for the occasion. Beneath his white straw hat with a red band his hair gleamed from much brushing.

At one o'clock the boys were ready for Janus' inspection. "See that you keep your coats buttoned up, boys. I'll tend to the boy I catch with his coat unbuttoned in that parade."

We marched the boys down the steep path, over the railway bridge and into town where the thronged streets were thick with dust. The boys were unruly for they were sweating in their heavy clothes. I stayed with them till the parade started—the parade in which, I learned later, the boys brought no credit to themselves or the superintendent for orderly conduct. I then went to the ball game to laugh at the absurd antics of the visiting lions as the inept gladiators of the home team were thrown to them to make us a holiday.

But I did not forget I was on duty. I left the game in time to rejoin Joseph and the boys as we had arranged. I marched back with them, helped get them into their day clothes before the supper bell. I entered mess hall a few minutes late to find employees sitting in silence. I glanced at the superintendent. The dreaded smile made me think Janus might have missed the ball game. I had my chair pulled out when Janus asked harshly:

"Who gave you permission to go to town this afternoon?"

I stared speechlessly, probably with my mouth open.

"Neglecting your duties. Going to ball games."

I was too angry to remember I was only a subordinate. "You gave me permission. You ordered me to go over with the boys. I did so."

"You are a liar!"

I turned and left the room, impolitely slamming the door behind me. I heard Janus shouting for me to return. I did not heed. At my desk I wrote my first letter to the Indian Bureau. From the draft I deleted the angry words, rewrote it as a statement of fact. I reported my superintendent for unjustly accusing me and of using abusive language in the presence of many witnesses. I asked for a transfer. I was so filled with rage that I even ventured to remind the Bureau that I was eligible for a clerkship and asked a transfer to that position. Anger made my illegible scrawl worse than usual.

Later, when my temperature had returned to normal, I made two copies of the letter. In the dark I went down the steep path into town and mailed one of them. On my return I left the other on Janus' desk in the dark office.

As I lay sleepless I knew I faced either transfer or dismissal. I had a few dollars in my purse, not enough to take me far. It would be two weeks before I could expect action from the Bureau. In spite of the uncertain future, I presently found myself grinning. I had been called a liar—and several of the small boys believed I was just that.

When I left the North Woods I had hopefully packed my ice skates. I had hung them on the wall where several small boys discovered them and asked what they were for. I had put them on, told the boys that in the cold north a river like the Colorado became solid and slippery and you could go skimming over it with skates on your feet. They did not believe me. They never had seen ice but they thought they knew a liar when they saw one.

I went about my duties, endured the silence and the averted looks. I knew these people were afraid of their jobs if they had to testify against the superintendent in the event of an investigation. Janus ignored me, made no

mention of my letter. Joseph had been absent when I received my orders, absent when the word "liar" had been hurled at me. I was glad to know he could not be made to testify against the person who held his means of livelihood in the hollow of an unkind hand. If Joseph had heard of my trouble, he did not mention it to me. He had the reticence natural to all Indians.

I was surprised when Miss Rachel came to my room one evening. I knew as clerk she had read my letter, knew that as a trusted employee she had not come to divulge the action the superintendent might have taken concerning it. Why had she come? Of the employees she alone had not been friendly. Looking at the ungainly woman's attractive face, at the bulge of her huge hips over the sides of the chair, I knew I faced a woman whose unhappiness clothed her like an ill-fitting habit. Miss Rachel asked abruptly:

"Well, what did you think about Lizzie?"

"Lizzie doesn't bear thinking of, Miss Rachel. She's dreadful."

"Dreadful! She's worse than dreadful." Suddenly this woman's love and hate were vented ludicrously. "They have a double bed!"

Her intensity of emotion was embarrassing. "I've tried and tried to issue them two single beds. The superintendent won't let me. Just laughs and says Lizzie is plenty good enough for Joseph to sleep with."

I began to understand why she had come to see me. She had to confide in someone—or lose self-control completely. She knew I would be leaving soon, knew that her secret—which was no secret—would be safe with me.

"I'm sorry, Miss Rachel. I think I understand."

"No, you don't. You can't. You think it strange I can love an Indian, a full blood—that I want to marry him. Joseph and I would have been married long ago if it wasn't for Lizzie. Lizzie!"

No word could express the hatred in that one name. I gave over my own reticence and asked:

"Does Joseph love you, Miss Rachel? Does he want to marry you?"

"He wants to marry me. I don't know if he loves me or not. I don't even know what love means to an Indian. They are not like us."

What did love mean to Joseph? I did not know. But I felt that the intensity of emotion possessing this white woman was not possible for him. If he wanted her for a mate, was that want not due in part to his acceptance of a way of life redirected and guided by white women?

"Joseph believes in hell! He believes he will go there if he divorces Lizzie and marries me. I tell him there is no hell. He doesn't believe me."

"You know his church will not sanction his divorce, Miss Rachel."

"I know. And he's afraid. Afraid of hell! I've told him other churches sanction divorce for cause, but——"

"Has Joseph cause?"

"Cause! Isn't Lizzie cause enough? Lizzie!"

"Miss Rachel, why don't you ask for a transfer? Forget Joseph. There is only trouble ahead for you, and for him. They can take his position away from him. They can take your position, and your good name, away from you."

At mention of her good name she broke utterly. The room was filled with the sound of her strangled sobs. "I—I know. The superintendent is watching for the chance to do both. But there is nothing wrong. I'm a good woman. I never see Joseph alone except at meals and issuing rations before a lot of old Indians. There's nothing wrong. I could help him. There's only Lizzie. She would be happier on the reservation with another dirty Indian like herself. All because Joseph is afraid of hell."

"They can ruin your good name without guilt on your part."

"I know that, too. The superintendent could have me investigated. I couldn't face that. I couldn't."

"Then go away while there is time."

"I can't face that either. I love him. I can't leave him."

I felt pity and contempt for this woman's weakness. I was long to blame her for her craven spirit, for the cowardice that in the crisis led her to value her good name above all else, to give over all else in a last vain attempt to save that fragile garment that can be rent by any malicious tongue.

"Won't you talk to Joseph, tell him he won't go to hell if he gets a divorce?"

"No. You have no right to ask that of me."

"Why? It's nothing to you. You'll be leaving soon."

"It's between you and Joseph—and his church."

Miss Rachel heaved her ungainly flesh from her chair. "I'd hoped you would talk to him. I'll talk to him myself, about seeing a lawyer in town. They will talk to Joseph of sin. Scare him. Sin! Is there a worse sin than keeping him tied to a filthy animal like Lizzie? Lizzie!"

When she had gone, the hatred that name conveyed seemed to linger in the room. I forgot my own uncertain future for a time in thinking of these two hopelessly entangled people, hopeless because courage was lacking. But there was nothing I could do.

Nothing I could do, but others could do much. Under Miss Rachel's urging Joseph went, not to the lawyer, but to the priest to whom he had always gone for guidance. Fearful for the Indian's apostasy, the priest went to the superintendent. And Janus, given evidence of a proposed moral wrong, wired the Bureau asking that an inspector be sent to the school immediately.

I did not know of these things when, a week later, I entered mess for the noon meal. Across the table Miss Rachel's eyes were unfriendly, fearful. Janus entered with a stranger that we all sensed was an inspector. My heart sank, seeing myself as the subject of an investigation. But when it returned to its normal position, it came up fighting. Janus was smiling a smile that each of us knew boded ill for someone at that table.

"This is Inspector O'Connel, everybody. Little matter here needing his attention."

I heard Miss Rachel's strangled gasp across the table. Her face was livid with fear. She rose blindly, rushed from the room, our last sight of her being the jellylike quivering of her fugitive flesh. Her fear was reflected in every face at the table. One by one we left, to exchange questioning looks, to say nothing, to go about our duties awaiting events we were powerless to avert.

Miss Rachel had rushed to her room, thrust a few things into her suitcase, fled down the path to hide in town until the evening train. We never saw her again. She fled in blind panic at the threat to her good name, all other emotion swallowed up in the terror of a rigidly moral woman to whom a good name was above love, above honor; a thing to be saved at all costs, and in the attempt to save it to be lost irretrievably.

We had no way of knowing what transpired that afternoon in the superintendent's office. We knew the inspector summoned Joseph, learned he left the office relieved of his position at the school. There were some who saw the Indian leave the office and walk directly to his quarters. But no one saw him take his revolver from the drawer. No one saw him fire one shot into his heart.

To the body of its son dead by his own hand the mission church denied Christian burial.

Lizzie, Lizzie the unclean and repulsive, in her rage and in her hatred of all of us, was savagely magnificent. It was Lizzie who fiercely claimed the body, wrapped it in a blanket from her bed. It was Lizzie and her people who carried it down to the reservation. It was Lizzie who built that grotesque funeral pyre close beside the mission church. And who among us could understand the thwarted, primitive urge that goaded her?

Whom do you blame for the will in you
That feeds itself and makes you dock weed,

Jimpson, dandelion, or mullen,
And which can never use any soil or air
So as to make you jessamine or wisteria?

Joseph had been frugal, had perhaps forced frugality upon Lizzie. In their joint bank account in town were nearly one thousand dollars. Was it a final gesture of contempt for everything this school represented or a primitive's love for ceremonial display that made Lizzie exhaust that sum of money on her husband's cremation? She went from store to store, leaving empty shelves behind her. She bought dozens of gaudily patterned wool blankets for the pyre's foundation; bolt upon bolt of flamboyant cotton velvet, silks, and showy prints to wrap around the body inside the blankets—and around the blankets. Countless garish shawls these Indian women love to wear around their heads were added; bolt upon bolt of wide red ribbon; pairs of shoes and stockings; piles of sleazy underwear—everything of luxury to Lizzie that she must have long craved for herself she now relinquished to that pyre. In the five-and-dime store she exhausted the supply of gauds and gaily painted toys. The eager merchant got out for her the stored Christmas tinsel and ornaments to pile high the summit of the pyre. From its sides, like grinning gargoyles, celluloid dolls peered out from the garish heap.

Who built that pyre, Lizzie or we white people?

In the dimness of early morning we went down the path to the reservation. The friendly desert stars were twinkling out one by one. None of us knew the tribal significance of the four short lines of mourners slowly converging upon the pyre. None of us knew the meaning of the mourners' weird chant. We watched Lizzie and her son and Old George take their honored places nearest the pyre. A grotesque figure came forward with a lighted fagot. We watched the little fires spring up, spread. We did not know the meaning of the savage litany lifted by many raucous voices that rose to a crescendo of wailing as the eager

flames licked up the high-piled gauds—an ancient people voicing an ancient sorrow.

Beside that flaming pyre Lizzie would stand motionless, wrapped around with stifling fumes, till the greedy fire sank at last to glowing embers, till tinseled dust returned to dust, till the nethermost blanket gave up its reluctant fibers in spirals of cindery smoke.

CHAPTER 15

JOSEPH'S death left me with no duties. The boys were quick to take advantage of the unusual circumstances and disappeared on the reservation. The sacred routine of the school vanished with the inspector who left us hastily when he learned the outcome of his efforts to purge a moral wrong. I hoped his conscience troubled him. I knew he would not now trouble me, knew the superintendent had not reported to him the infraction of the regulation that forbids an executive to use abusive language to a subordinate.

My trunk was packed but it had no known destination. Whatever its destination might be, it could not go far. I was too angry really to worry. The injustice done the Indian left me seething with indignation. I had learned that the inability to prevent or correct a great wrong engenders the keenest rage the mind of man can know.

I was not surprised that no employee ventured to report to the inspector the superintendent's immoral conduct. I had overcome my own none-too-strong impulse to make that charge, in support of which I had only gossip. I realized I was acquiring the viewpoint of all subordinates —keep your own conscience clean if you can and let others do the same.

It was a viewpoint that made cowards of us all.

A few days later the orderly brought me a letter from the Bureau, addressed to me through the superintendent. Since my bread and butter depended upon its contents, I

opened it fearfully. It was my transfer to another school as clerk at six hundred dollars per annum.

A bit hysterically I began to laugh—at the devious ways by which I had arrived on Federal pay rolls. I had not been permanently appointed as kindergartner because of proficiency but because of a cheerful spirit in carrying slop buckets. It had been those buckets that had led Mr. Hillyard to recommend me for a clerkship. The clerkship I had now received for reporting my superintendent for calling me a liar. Had the boys behaved themselves in that parade I might have remained indefinitely a matron at a lower salary.

And how, I wondered, could I plan a life apparently controlled by irrelevant chance?

I stopped laughing to reread the letter, which directed me to report to the Leupp Indian School in Arizona. The fare was within my means. My private bathroom afforded the only regret I felt in leaving this hateful place. And in all my life there was never to be a time when I valued mere comfort above serenity of mind, a serenity not to be achieved by keeping in my life a person who unjustly accused me. Not even an Indian Service bathtub can cleanse you of the foul word "liar."

To the jolt of the car wheels taking me northward I pondered the Indian's tragic death. From my meager knowledge and understanding of Joseph I believed that hatred, not love, had prompted his act. Not love of a white woman, nor the loss of any woman, but hatred of the life from which we had taken him, and to which we were returning him.

Could Miss Rachel have saved her good name and Joseph's life? Had she possessed courage to challenge Janus and the inspector with her proof of the superintendent's immoral conduct, met the crisis with intrepidity instead of cowardly flight? Of all futilities, the hypothetical questions we ask of life are the most inutile. In time I came to see that the tragedy derived from this woman's traits

of character—a good woman whose craven spirit served her as chastity.

I reached the isolated, wind-swept desert town that was again twenty-five miles from the Indian school. No team from the school met me in response to my telegram. I learned there was no stage to the school, the mail going in daily by Indian rider. I had just enough money to hire a team and driver to take me in, the driver being another young man with whom I again quarreled mildly about his thin horses. In early morning I climbed over another high wheel of an open wagon, once more going to a strange place to unknown duties.

The desert stretched into infinity on every side. No living thing was visible. This was no grassed prairieland but a high plateau of red sandstone where grew the shrubs and sage of the Colorado delta, but no cactus. In the distance buttes lifted fantastic shapes and colors into an unbelievably blue sky. After the heat on the Colorado the air was cold and bracing. I did not mind the sun that blazed down on the open wagon, but it gave me a sunburn across my shoulders which a starched shirtwaist later obligingly peeled off in flakes.

Midway to the school the wind began blowing abruptly, to envelop us in clouds of heavy red sand that stung as it hit. My nose began to bleed. What little road there was vanished. The driver slackened the reins.

"Do the horses know where we are going?"

"Yup, been there once before."

"With you driving?"

"Yup."

"Then why don't you know the way? I don't see how such thin horses can know more than you do."

At end of an hour the wind stopped blowing as abruptly as it began. The horses stopped, waiting directions from the driver. Getting none, they turned at a sharp angle. I hoped they knew where they were going across this trackless, empty desert. They did, bringing us to the school in

midafternoon. It had the deserted look of all isolated Indian schools when pupils and employees are at work, but to my surprise the buildings were new and modern in construction.

I asked the driver to stop at the office building. Entering, I introduced myself to a tall, thin woman who sat sewing at a desk. She greeted me cordially.

"We was looking for you. Come on, I'll show you your room. Take her trunk over to the employees' building," she directed the driver. We walked past a row of neat little cottages to a two-story building beyond.

"Are you a clerk here too?" I asked.

"Well, I be and I ain't. I'm Mrs. Mason, the superintendent's wife. I'm financial clerk. But I can't make head or tail of all them forms and reports. That's why my husband asked the Bureau to send us a clerk with lots of experience in office work. He ain't had office experience either. He told the Bureau the work was too heavy for just one clerk. Here we be."

Before entering the building she called to the driver. "Bring that trunk upstairs." He did so reluctantly.

"Mr. Mason is out on the reservation somewheres. You can unpack and come to the office in the morning."

"Where is the mess hall?" I was hungry.

"Right down them stairs. We passed it coming in. Supper's at five-thirty." She departed—leaving me to face the peculiar fact that I had been sent here as an experienced clerk.

I looked at the new and ample furniture in the large corner room, at the hardwood floor with Navajo rugs, the familiar black iron bed with its entirely unfamiliar level mattress—the first I had so far encountered. At the end of the hall outside I found a bathroom with hot water. I wondered at the soiled appearance of the tub, but learned the cause later when my first bath left me coated with a sediment that vigorous rubbing only partially removed.

At supper I again encountered another group of strang-

ers, some thirty in number. I was seated at the superintendent's table where Mrs. Mason introduced me to him but to none of the others. Mr. Mason was a stocky man of about fifty, untidy, who wore his mantle of authority a bit awkwardly. He was friendly.

"So you're my new clerk, eh? Lots of office work here. This is one of the most important schools in the Service. Takes a pretty smart man to run a place like this. I ought to have smart employees but I don't always get 'em." He looked around the room where the only sound was that of cutlery busily employed on enamel plates.

"What other schools have you been clerk at?"

I had prepared myself for that question. I had bluffed my way into the Service as a kindergartner and now I would try bluffing my way as an experienced clerk.

"I think you will find me capable, Mr. Mason. This is a new school, isn't it?"

"Brand new. And I'm the man who got it here. I bossed the laying of every stone, every piece of machinery. I ain't always been a superintendent. Been a farmer for years, worked with these Navajos, understand 'em. The Office saw I was too smart a man to keep on as farmer. It made me superintendent here. Mighty important school."

I observed the furtive, amused glances that passed from table to table. Five minutes were enough to tell me this man had neither the liking nor respect of his employees. I was eating my first meal of sagebrush-flavored mutton—a flavor so strange I asked what I was eating.

"Navajo mutton," smiled a woman across the table. "You learn to like it or go hungry. Or go hungry if you do learn."

I had noticed the plain, meager food. I learned about that, too. That night I was amused to find I could not sleep on the new, level mattress. I missed the familiar hollow.

In the office the following morning Mrs. Mason said: "Right away you'd better go to work on these exceptions.

We made out the quarterly reports the best we could but the Bureau took all them exceptions." She gave me several official sheets. I did not tell her I had never seen a quarterly report, much less Washington's exceptions to one.

"Where will I find the office copy of the report, Mrs. Mason? There is one, isn't there?"

"Right in this file here." She removed a mass of papers and put them on a desk in the inner office. "This is your desk and that's your typewriter."

I felt like making a little bow to that typewriter, since it was a stranger to me. I was glad when Mrs. Mason returned to her sewing in the outer room, leaving me unobserved as I began acting like an experienced clerk. At the end of the day the documents of the quarterly report and the Bureau's many exceptions to it had aligned themselves. Most of the exceptions were to errors in simple arithmetic. Addition seemed to be a weak point with the Masons.

That evening, and many subsequent evenings, I went to the office to practice on that typewriter. It was an old Oliver, built like a cantilever bridge, apparently for the purpose of concealing the traffic of words across it. Incidentally I supported Mr. Mason's claim that there was lots of office work here—and earned a fine reputation for diligence in performing it after hours. At end of a month I had earned the needed confidence, had become familiar with the bureaucratic forms of simple accountancy used, and had lifted up my eyes in gratitude that no one in that office had the knowledge or ability to pass judgment on my work while I was learning how to do it.

I also learned that the great amount of work existed only in Mr. Mason's mind. There was no agency work and the school accounts were few and simple. During office hours I had ample time to practice on my cantilever bridge. And I witnessed my first instance of nepotism in the Indian Service.

There was a rule that permitted a superintendent to have a member of his family appointed financial clerk

without benefit of civil service. I had been at some expense —and considerable trouble—to qualify for my position. Mrs. Mason, as financial clerk, sat and sewed in the outer office, her sole duty the distribution of the daily mail. Her salary was $120 yearly higher than mine. I did not mind. I liked the office work, as I had known I would. And this was the third rung of the ladder.

From the first I had been surprised by the tender years of the Navajo children in the school. When it was opened, few parents brought their children in. Employees had been sent out to search the hogans, to scour the reservation for children. Few girls as old as thirteen were found who were not married. Navajo tribal custom permitted marriage at puberty. There were few older girls here to do the heavy work of laundry and sewing room and kitchen. Girls of ten years had to do this work. Many of the children were only five years old. They had known only the free nomadic life of the desert. They had never sat on chairs, slept in a bed, used knives and forks. They did not know how to wear their new clothes. Many of them were seeing white people for the first time and discovering little in us to admire. They were in school against their own will and, in most cases, the will of their parents.

For the first time in this work I asked myself: What right have we to take these children from their parents? What right have we to break up Indian homes? Why do we deny Indians the rights we claim for ourselves?

There was no answer to my questions, either at the school or in the limitless desert that I came to love with a deep affection no other land was ever to supplant. Navajoland was a land one must love or hate. It permitted no neutrality. It was a harsh and beautiful land. At sunset the distant buttes slipped softly from purple to mauve to gold in a never-ending riot of glorious colors. Buttes stood as stern sentinals over the desert's naturalistic faith, called all lesser gods to bow before their own deity, the sun-god. At their feet serrated rock fragments turned acolytes to

offer up the evening sacrifice for a dying land, serving the altar in vestments of purple and gold.

At night the brilliant stars were close and friendly, as only desert stars ever are. I came to see the land as a pagan land, pitiless, lovely, and joyous. There was no place here for the luscious litanies of men. To them there was no response from the brooding silence of the desert. The cattle on a thousand hills could not be His. The shepherding was too pitiless. Here the sparrow fell unheeded. Apostate, the land withdrew from green pastures and still waters. The ancient sands disdained the promise of resurrected fruit and flower—the soft faith of lesser lands. It was a land without mercy—and beautiful beyond compare.

CHAPTER 16

MRS. MASON, before my arrival, had drawn the salary checks for May. Here our checks were considerately cashed for us by the Indian trader at the trading post. He was a half-breed, a graduate of Haskell Institute in Kansas, a school that did excellent work with its students, who were largely mixed-bloods. He was an intelligent, amiable young man, liked by all of us.

Early in June he entered the office, his face showing the pleasure of an Indian about to correct a white man's error. He gave Mr. Mason a check.

"I can't cash that check, Mr. Mason."

"Why can't you?" Mr. Mason examined the check. "What's the matter with it? It's for forty dollars, ain't it? That's the assistant matron's name, ain't it?"

"That check doesn't call for any sum I know of."

"You'll cash it or I'll know the reason why."

"I only cash checks as an accommodation. I certainly will not cash that one."

Mr. Mason tossed the paper on my desk. It called for the payment of "fourty" dollars. "The Treasury will not honor this check, Mr. Mason. The sum is misspelled."

"All right, if you're so smart. Cancel it and draw another. And draw the checks yourself after this."

The young Indian impudently closed one eye at me, and I impudently closed one in return. I wondered at the reasons, whatever they were, that caused the Bureau to place this ignorant man in a position of authority over whites and Indians.

One of the two teachers was Miss O'Rouke. She was forty, plain, too thin, careless in dress, but possessed a redeeming sense of humor. One day at dinner she told of a little Navajo who had created a minor stir in her classroom. Like all the children, he had taken unwillingly his new, strange garments. He had put on his pants with the buttons to the inglorious rear. Neither had he troubled to fasten them. To him buttons were negligible ornaments serving no useful purpose. In the commodious frontal slack he had stored a supply of bread and molasses from the breakfast table and gone to school carrying his snack before him. Miss O'Rouke was worried for fear he had set a style her other boys would follow.

"Do you want to see the high-water marks the recent flood left us?" she asked one evening. Flood marks on this desert! We crossed the red sand to the school building. To my delight she gossiped.

"Mason selected the site for this school here on the Little Colorado. Any Navajo could have told him that the land right here is flooded when the rains turn it from a dry bed of sand into a real river."

"Rains!"

"Deluges. Cloudbursts. The heavens open. Look at this." She indicated a line of discoloration two feet high on the walls. "Water made a sweet mess inside. This site is lower than land on either side. A mile or two either way and the school wouldn't have been flooded."

"Can't the floodwater be diverted?"

"I don't know. They say Mason convinced the Bureau that he could establish an experimental farm here to teach Navajos how to farm the desert. When you were driving in, did you notice patches of white deposits everywhere?" I said I had. "This land is alkaline. This school is built on an alkali flat. The river water is alkaline too. Farm! Farm with water that corrodes the pipes or chokes them with sediment. This school cost a pretty penny to build, too. But the Navajos got paid for freighting supplies.

Some women planted flower seeds, and there never will be even one blade of green grass grow here."

"So that is what makes the water taste so bad and leaves you all scummy when you bathe."

"Leaves your insides scummy too. I've had trouble with mine ever since I came here. No analysis of the water has been made. We don't know what it is doing to our insides but we know it does something."

I thought of my clothes that were gray and sticky after I washed them. "How on earth does the laundress manage?"

"Every drop of water used in that laundry has to be brought to a boil with a chemical added that brings the sediment to the top. They ladle it off in bucketfuls."

"Perhaps we'll have to use a chemical too."

"I shouldn't be surprised. Mason was mad when I asked for a transfer and said the water was making me sick. He's very touchy about it. He knows the whole field service is laughing at his experimental farm on an alkali flat."

Unknown to her, the laundress was about to be made the agent of a bit of retributive justice. The school had a ruling that each woman employee should serve as mess manager for a period of three months at a time. The laundress was serving her time. She had kept the monthly cost of board to eight dollars per person. Quite simply, we had all gone hungry. She had two thick braids of beautiful yellow hair which she wore as a coronet above a round, pasty face as devoid of intelligence as a yeast cake.

One day as Mr. Mason opened the office mail he uttered a shout of surprise and pleasure. "I told you this is an important school. The Commissioner is coming! The Commissioner of Indian Affairs himself is coming!"

"When?"

"Day after tomorrow. I've got to meet him in town. See that the office work is O.K."

He rushed out to give similar orders to every department. There would be a mighty scrubbing of floors and pupils. Only an optimist will wash a little Indian today in the

expectation that he will be clean tomorrow. There would be the wearing of Sunday clothes to work and much examining of private consciences. At the corral the driving mules were consternated by a grooming. And we were all hoping something helpful would result from this unprecedented visitation. And could so exalted a personage taste the alkaline water without doing something about it?

Our mess cook was an elderly woman and overworked. To help her she had only two small Navajo girls who were seeing a kitchen for the first time and could make little of it. When the cook asked the laundress for extra items of food in honor of the Commissioner's visit, the laundress indignantly refused.

"What's good enough for me is good enough for any commissioner."

On the great day Mr. Mason, as surprisingly groomed as the mules, left for the long drive into town. When I left the office at five o'clock he had not returned. But when I entered the mess hall for supper I was somewhat alarmed to find that Mrs. Mason had relinquished her seat beside me and in it sat the Honorable Commissioner of Indian Affairs. As Mr. Mason did not include introductions among the amenities, I introduced myself.

Most of the thirty people present probably regarded this visitor from the ivory tower as a being slightly lower than the cherubim—a political cherub with a pseudo-celestial Bond Street tailor. Here in our midst was the man who, with a scratch of his pen, could improve the lot of all of us; could, with considerable more effort, make that lot even more intolerable.

The Commissioner lifted his glass of water, glancing around the room at his corps of employees. In spite of our Sunday clothes, we had a lean and hungry look. As he tasted the alkaline solution he frowned and swallowed with obvious effort. He set the glass down hastily, though he must have been thirsty after that long drive. The platter of stringy mutton was passed to him, then a dish of potatoes

boiled in their jackets; a dish of canned tomatoes with crackers broken in it. The coffee in his cup was as anemic as the canned milk diluted to a bluish weakness. Beside his plate a small helping of soggy bread pudding awaited his attention. And upon all of these things the honorable gentleman looked with profound distaste.

Suddenly my imp of derision that never leaves me jogged my mental elbow. "Go on. Say it. You'll never have this chance again. Say it."

Leaving my food untouched, I bowed my head with what I hoped was a thankful expression—an expression not easily assumed over Navajo mutton. But I really was praying—praying that the Honorable Commissioner would notice my devotional attitude. He did. He had taken up his knife and fork—a sheer act of courage on his part—when he saw my piously bowed head. He looked around quickly to see if anybody was asking a blessing on this food. Nobody was. He looked at me questioningly.

"Mr. Commissioner, I am waiting for you to return thanks."

"Return thanks!" He looked at the food on his enamel plate. "What for?"

"Well, for a year you made me return thanks for worse food than this, for two hundred Sioux Indians. I supposed you followed the routine you made me follow."

Down the table Miss O'Rouke chuckled. The Commissioner frowned. Without benefit of a blessing, I attacked my food, watched him toy with the food he could not eat. When I reached for my dish of bread pudding, it was too much for him. He rose abruptly, excused himself, and left the room. With him he took in rags and tatters the illusion I had cherished about Indian Commissioners. For here was a commandant who ordered the privates of his bureaucratic army to do what he himself could not or would not do. He could not drink the alkaline water he asked us to drink daily. He could not eat the food made necessary by the low salaries he paid the industrial em-

ployees. He would not return thanks for unpalatable food but required me to do so. And tonight he would not sleep —or I hoped he wouldn't—on one of his hard mattresses.

Above all, at this school named for him and built on an alkali flat during his administration, was the ignorant bully he had placed in command over us. He had driven twenty-five slow mule miles with Mr. Mason. What depths of the superintendent's boastful ignorance could he have failed to plumb?

We did not see the visitor at breakfast. He had given over his intention of visiting the reservation. Mr. Mason drove him back to town, probably in search of the nearest Harvey House. The school relaxed and put off its Sunday clothes.

I had been at the Leupp School six months when I had a letter from Miss Smithers. Lizzie was living with an Indian on the reservation—without benefit of clergy.

CHAPTER 17

THE MISSIONARY stopped our card playing.

Summer was ended, nights were surprisingly cold on that high plateau. There were no amusements, no place to go of evenings, nothing to read. My magazines helped but there were not enough of them. Two evenings a week some of us played five hundred and the missionary heard of it.

She was an unattractive old maid with too many lean years behind her. She represented some Fundamentalist sect in the East that had built her a shack near the school. She had recently entered upon her self-imposed duty of converting the Navajos and keeping an eye on our activities.

She came to the office and asked Mr. Mason to forbid us to play cards. "Cards are instruments of Satan, Mr. Mason. Gambling. These innocent children must be saved from any knowledge of cards."

"Gambling! You can't learn a Navajo nothing about gambling. Born gamblers, all of 'em. Any Navajo can give a white man cards and spades and beat him at his own game. Gambling!"

"You should forbid it, Mr. Mason. You should forbid all of their wicked, heathenish games. Employees here setting them a bad example!"

"My employees don't set no bad examples. I see to that. What's wrong with a game of five hundred, I'd like to know."

"Cards, all cards, Satan uses for his evil purposes. Mr. Mason, if you don't forbid card playing I shall feel it my

duty to write the Indian Bureau that I am hampered in my work here."

Mr. Mason reluctantly surrendered. He liked to play a poor game himself. But he knew the trouble a missionary of any creed could cause a superintendent. The Indian Bureau avoided as the plague the stirring up of religious dissension. I wrote a notice for the bulletin board in the mess hall. No more sinful card playing. As I tacked it in place I noticed another, signed by the missionary. It invited employees to the meeting she had arranged for that evening in the school building.

Curious as to what the woman might have to say to the young Navajos who understood little English and spoke it even less, Miss O'Rouke and I went over at eight o'clock. The children, some seventy in number, and a few employees, were already assembled. From the platform the missionary painted for us a wordy picture of a heaven with its streets of gold, populated it with singing angels with wings. She placed her God on a white throne judging the sheep and the goats. The goats were the wicked people who played cards and gambled and did other evil things. The missionary could not bring herself to speak of the evils of sex, though she probably ached to do so. Possibly she felt handicapped from lack of experience.

She then painted a graphic picture of the hell provided for goats. She told those children they would go to hell to burn forever and ever if they did any of the things she told them not to do. I was indignant—then delighted when from the back of the room the engineer, a burly independent man, said loudly: "To hell with such talk!" He left before the missionary could recover from his sacrilege, and rang the school bell. At the familiar sound the children rose and marched out.

On our way back to quarters Miss O'Rouke said, laughing: "The missionary won't get far with that sheep and goat business. The Navajos think too highly of their goats."

"She should have paved the streets of her heaven with silver if she wanted to make it attractive to Navajos. They could make a lot of jewelry from silver streets."

The following afternoon from the office window I saw the missionary approaching, probably to report the engineer's shameful conduct. As she reached the porch, three Navajos, two men and a woman, rode up and dismounted. They had ridden long miles in the saddle and they saw no reason why they should not relieve themselves. The poor missionary was outraged. She called to Mr. Mason.

"Mr. Mason! Mr. Mason! Come and make them stop! Right in front of me!"

Mr. Mason, always ready to stop anything he had not himself ordered, rushed out. "Hey, get to hell out of that," he shouted.

Perhaps the Indians did not understand, for they did not immediately get the hell out. The missionary, shocked to the depths of her spinsterish soul, departed hastily, one outrage forgotten in view of a greater one. Mr. Mason came back to the office grinning broadly.

As if the missionary's speaking of angels had summoned them, two angels descended upon the school—scientific, out-of-our-world angels in riding boots and leather jackets. They brought remembrance of the world outside the Indian Service, the very existence of which we were prone to forget. They rode in late one afternoon seeking shelter and sustenance. Adequate shelter we could give, but the sustenance we offered was plainly not to their liking. One of them was young and after supper he introduced himself to me as John Langley. He asked:

"What do you people do here evenings?"

"We ossify."

"What about a game of cards?"

"The missionary has stopped our playing cards. We were endangering the Indians' souls."

"I've been seeing cloven hoofs on the reservation for three months. I've been out with a scientific survey group,

archaeologists, men from several other scientific societies. I'm the geologist. Big group."

"Where's the rest of it?"

"Gone out by different routes. Lundstrom and I are headed for Flagstaff. Got an Indian guide to take back the horses we rented. So we can't play cards? Is talking forbidden?"

I took him over to the bulletin board and showed him a notice written and posted by Mr. Mason. The matron was a devotee of New Thought and was possessed of an urge to talk about it at table. As she was a woman of considerable intelligence, her comments were frequently beyond the superintendent's range of interests. Hence his notice:

> Employees are forbid to talk at table about things that do not interest other people. You may be a grate deel smarter than other people but after this keep your oppinions to yourself.

The geologist read—and whistled softly. From his field jacket he took a case of colored pencils. Selecting a red one, he corrected Mr. Mason's spelling. At the bottom of the notice he wrote: "Corrected, but not approved, by courtesy of the United States Geological Survey."

"Oh—you're from the Survey? Do you like fudge? Chocolate fudge? We haven't been forbidden to make fudge yet."

John owned up to being very fond of chocolate fudge. "Come to my room at eight. It's the second from yours. I'll get Miss O'Rouke. Perhaps your friend would like to come."

"Lundstrom? He's going to bed. It's been a long ride. He's saddlesore."

Miss O'Rouke had the only chafing dish at the school. I rushed upstairs to tell her she had just promised to make fudge in it. John appeared promptly at eight. With his mouth full of fudge he sat down, only to rise quickly from the hard chair. I suspected that Mr. Lundstrom

was not the only saddlesore member of the expedition. John walked up and down and talked. How he talked!

"I've just spent three months on the most amazing land, among amazing people. I'm new to the Survey—this is my first field expedition. This Navajo country, it's—it's stupendous. There aren't words to describe it, its rock formations, the colors of their strata, the canyons—why, in one canyon we found evidence of people who lived here centuries before the Navajos, and the Navajos have been here for five hundred years. There's no other land in the world like it. And the Indians"—he paused for more fudge—"these Navajos are the proudest people, the most independent racial group in this nation. They are indigenous. They have a better right to be called Americans than we have. Not that they want to—that's what they call us and they don't mean it as a compliment either. You read of people belonging to the soil. What does that mean to me, born and reared in a city? You don't put down roots in concrete. But these Navajos—take a Navajo on his horse—his purple headband is the color of the buttes. Likely as not he'll have a yellow handkerchief around his neck. His red velveteen blouse blends with the red sandstone rocks and sand. Why, even his silver conchas around his waist are the color of the alkaline deposits. He'll be wearing turquoise too, maybe a lot, maybe only a little, but some—turquoise ties in with his religion someway—why, that Indian is a part of his own land incarnate."

John reached for more fudge, sat down, rose quickly.

"Before coming on this expedition I read everything I could find about the Navajos. They were fighters and raiders way back in Spanish times—they stole their first horses and sheep from the Spaniards—they fought us. When Kit Carson and the army got through with them there were only about six thousand of them left, and Carson got them only because he shut them up in Canyon de Chelly and starved them out—a sorry bit of American history that was. But a different kind of history could be

written about them, and I bet will be written, about their arts and crafts—why, their artifacts——"

I interrupted. "What's an artifact?"

John grinned at my ignorance. "You're wearing one."

He indicated the silver and turquoise necklace a Navajo silversmith had made for me from silver coins. "And their rugs, their beautiful rugs, all woven by women." He pointed to the rug on the floor. "Found the imperfection in this rug?" I had not known it was imperfect.

"It's there, I know," said Miss O'Rouke. "I know that much about one of their superstitions. A Navajo believes perfection is the end—the weaver who makes a perfect rug will die. In every rug——"

"Here it is," said John. In a corner of the rug he pointed out a deviation from the design so slight as to be entirely unnoticeable. "You'll find one in every rug. They've always made their own dyes, from dock, rabbit bush, mountain mahogany, and juniper. They had no native red dye. In early times they probably killed the Spanish invaders to get their red uniforms more than for any other reason."

John paused for more fudge. "You know, this Navajo reserve has sixteen million acres—Arizona, New Mexico, and over into Utah. Only a little of it is fit for cultivation. It's grazing country, or used to be. One agent told me there are forty-five thousand Indians living on it today—on land where white people would starve to death. I tell you a white man could spend his lifetime here and still not learn all the Indians' superstitions, their religion, their identification of themselves with their land. Gosh, but they are a proud people."

"And a poor people," said Miss O'Rouke. "What I want to know is why the Indian Bureau doesn't help them to market their rugs and jewelry, instead of leaving it to the Sante Fe and the Harvey Houses. The traders buy their rugs, to sell at a profit, but there is no unity of effort to provide outlets for the trade. And why do we import the

folk products of other countries and leave the Navajo product to shift for itself?"

John was amazed. "You mean in these schools the Indian Bureau doesn't encourage—help—their arts and crafts?"

"Encourage! Help! These schools forbid instead of help. Look at the girls in this school, girls who should weave the rugs of their generation. We teach them to sew. We'll teach them how to hemstitch later on, probably. It will be so useful on the reservation! Same thing with the boys who should be the silversmiths—they learn how to run laundry machinery. Do you know what we are doing in this school? We are sacrificing the Navajos' arts and crafts on—on the altar of a split infinitive!" Miss O'Rouke's plain face was suffused by her unusual eloquence. "As a teacher I'm helping in that sacrifice."

John sat down, only to get up again. I wondered what kind of a card game we might have had.

"I can't see any sense to that. And you know there's another angle to all this—we all noticed it. Our party did not come to report on soil conditions—I was sent—there may be coal and oil on this reservation—but I'm telling you this land is dying. A lot of it is already dead, from overgrazing and erosion. Indians know nothing about soil conservation. Our expedition reported to every agency on the entire Navajo reservation. There's a lot of them. All the agents had orders to help us get Indian guides, horses, food. They helped us, all right. The agents seemed O.K., most of them. And they all told the same story—how the Indian Bureau constantly urges them to have the Navajos increase their flocks of sheep and goats. I didn't once hear erosion and soil conservation mentioned. And the land is dying. Erosion has been going on for years. The sheep eat even the grass roots—when the infrequent rains come the water can't be absorbed. The water forms little gullies, the gullies become arroyos, the water drains off, the land dies. Erosion."

He reached for more fudge, to find it, too, had been

subject to erosion. "Here I am, talking about Indians to you reservation employees who probably know a lot more about them than I do."

"We don't know anything about them," said Miss O'Rouke. "We are not expected to know anything about them. We are expected to make them over into white people. I've never been on the reservation, never saw a hogan. We can't see the forest for the seedlings—that's how I see these children; seedlings we are to make grow up into our own kind of timber. I don't think in the Forest Service the employees are expected to make a pine seedling grow up into an oak."

"What do you stay here for?" asked John.

"I like to eat," she said shortly. He grinned.

"Find any encouragement in that supper tonight? Anyway, thanks for letting me talk. I'll get along. Early start in the morning. Your cook promised us a before-sunrise breakfast."

He shook hands cordially. "And thanks for the fudge. Good night."

We listened to his footsteps down the hall, his door closing. Miss O'Rouke picked up the empty plate. "What do we stay here for! Easy for him to ask, just out of college and the whole geologic world at his feet to explore." At the door she turned, the empty plate held to her flat breast like a barren shield.

"Damn being a woman."

The following morning a group of people was standing before the bulletin board laughing at the geologist's notation on the superintendent's notice when Mr. Mason entered. He went over to see what we were laughing at. He read, turned red and angry, tore the notice off. He looked around for the corrective agent, but he and Mr. Lundstrom had departed on their long, saddlesore ride to Flagstaff.

CHAPTER 18

TO EKE OUT her small salary the laundress did washing and ironing for some of us. She had recently refused to continue this service for the Masons. Mrs. Mason had complained that she sent back her husband's one weekly shirt in a worn-out condition.

"His shirt is so dirty I can't git it clean. Wash it yourself after this." To Mr. Mason, this was rank insubordination.

"I'll show her who's boss around here. Write a letter to the Bureau," he told me. "The Bureau will tell her to wash my shirts—or else."

I wrote the letter, thinking I knew what the answer would be. I was so incensed at the superintendent's bullying and ignorance that I put into the letter a polysyllabic word of obscure meaning that had no business in it. I never learned what, if anything, the Bureau made of it. It was a mean thing to do and it left me feeling quite pleased with myself. The Bureau's reply told Mr. Mason that he had no more right to insist that the laundress wash his shirt than to insist that the seamstress should make it. Mr. Mason was furious.

I reached the decision that the Bureau did not consider the work we were engaged in required intelligence, or even an awareness of its ultimate aims. No employee was here because of an interest in Indians and their welfare. We were here to make a living. Some of us acquired that interest, but we were given no opportunity to cultivate it. We knew little or nothing of reservation conditions.

For mental stimuli we had the daily routine and the many petty irritations this life engendered.

Here, too, the beauty of colors did not fail me, and this could be made to take the place of human companionship. The desert spread its riotous richness of hues. Sunsets encompassed the horizon impartially and did not limit their glory only to the western sky. When the glory faded, the stars were soft and close.

Only occasionally was the daily, dreary routine broken by an event unusual enough to divert thought into broader channels. The visit of an old Navajo provided such an event. Like most tribes, the Navajos practiced polygamy, a practice frowned upon by the Bureau and missionaries alike. Efforts were being made to discourage it. Hence our visitor.

His face was deeply lined from many years in the open but his spare body was proudly erect. The front of his velveteen blouse was nearly hidden by many silver and turquoise necklaces, many strings of turquoise beads. His waist was encircled with a wide belt of large silver conchas. Dimes and half dollars edged his leggings. Plainly he was a man of many sheep. Also, it developed, of many wives.

Disdaining a chair, he sat on the floor. He brought the Indian trader from the post to act as interpreter. We had no regular interpreter. Mr. Mason insisted he needed none since he spoke the Navajo language—how well I did not know. We rarely needed one, as few Indians came to the agency.

"He came in to tell you, Mr. Mason, that he has heard that the Great White Father does not want him to have more than one wife. That he doesn't think it is wrong for him to have as many wives as he wanted and could afford. But now he is old. One wife is enough. He has given up his other two wives. He wants to know if he did right."

"Of course he done right." Mr. Mason was pleased. "Tell him he sets a good example to the other Indians. We

can't go on letting 'em have all them wives. 'Taint Christian. Got to put a stop to it. Had three of 'em, eh? Ask him what he done with the other two wives."

I listened to the strange words, wishing I understood.

"He says his first wife never had any children. His second wife had several, all grown up now. Then a year ago he took a young girl for his third wife. But now he has just one wife."

"Good," said Mr. Mason. "Of course he kept the young wife?"

There was more Navajo talk. As he listened, the young trader was plainly surprised.

"No. He says he kept his first and old wife."

"Old wife!" Mr. Mason's eyes were popping. "Why, the blasted old fool. Sure you understood him right?" The trader nodded. Mr. Mason turned to me. "Here, you're a woman. What do you think of what the old fool done?"

"I think he is the noblest Roman of them all."

"Eh? Roman—he ain't no Roman. Ask him what he done with his other two wives." There was more Navajo talk.

"He said he gave his second wife her share of sheep, that she didn't like the new wife and was willing to go back to her clan. He says the girl's mother sold her to him for sheep, so he let her keep the sheep and the girl, too. He says his first wife is old like himself. He kept her because he wanted to."

"Well, I'll be damned. Never heard of such a thing. Tell him he done right to keep just one wife but that he was a damn fool not to keep the young one."

The old Indian listened to the white man's words of wisdom. He rose, drew his blanket around his shoulders like a toga. He spoke briefly, strode from the office. The trader grinned broadly.

"He said it was white men who are fools about women, fools about other things, too."

Many years later I was to remember that old Roman. I gave him a white skin, a romantic setting, and put him into a story for *Century Magazine*. In addition to his silver and turquoise, the O. Henry Memorial Award Prize Stories gave him the accolade of two stars.

A Navajo ceremonial for the healing of a sick woman was being held about ten miles from the school. One night a few of us drove over by mule team. Like many ancient people, the Navajos believed that sickness is caused by evil spirits, spirits which can be driven out and health restored by the intercession of their own Great Spirit. From the perimeter of the circle of hundreds of Indians around the huge campfire, we watched the half-naked, painted figures of the dancers. Outwardly the spectacle seemed merely grotesque. We were too ignorant of the ancient faith of these people to understand this ritual which, to them, was sacred. But could we doubt the sincerity of their belief in and reliance upon their own Great Spirit? Was it less a true invocation because the suppliants wore paint and feathers instead of clerical garb and Easter hats? That petitions were offered around a campfire instead of in a stuffy room? These Indians petitioned their Great Spirit in faith that it was able and willing to heal the sick. They also believed that, according to their faith, it should be unto them.

Among them there was no diversity of faith. A part of them did not say: Our God is the only true God and he must be worshipped in our way. Never have they slaughtered each other that one way of worship might prevail. Can missionary work succeed here if Christian workers of conflicting creeds continue to present a disunited front to these Navajos?

Like the Navajos we lived mostly on mutton, but in nearly three years I had never learned what their sheep lived on. We had no fresh fruit or vegetables, or milk. We bleated at the very sight of more mutton on our plates, and left the table hungry. There was nothing we could

do about the alkaline water, but we could shoot rabbits. We bought .22 rifles and on Saturday afternoons and Sundays drove the mule team over to the buttes, where rattlesnakes were nearly as plentiful as cottontails. Poor little rabbits—we felt like brutes shooting them, but shot just the same. We skinned our own kill and the mess cook made rabbit stew with dumplings. If hunting was good, mutton might disappear from the table for two days.

Returning late one Sunday we passed the missionary's shack. Generously, or so we thought, we offered her two rabbits. They were indignantly declined. "I wouldn't dream of eating game killed on the Sabbath. I wouldn't set such a bad example to these Indians. To how low a level a biased mind can descend!

The following day the lady was more severely affronted. Desert rivers often find themselves in the predicament of having no water to flow. Rains elsewhere had turned the Little Colorado from a bed of dry sand into a river with water in it. An Indian, riding in to the agency, found himself confronted with it. To avoid the long ride back in wet clothing, he left his pants on the farther shore and entered the office wearing only his velveteen blouse. The blouse was far too short to serve the purpose of modesty, a purpose he saw no need to indulge. It chanced to be mail time and the missionary came in to see if she had any. She gave the Indian one look, shrieked, and went from there.

Either she was not an opportunist or was not made of stern stuff. As she had no means of transportation, her only chance of accomplishing her mission with adult Indians was at the agency. On the two occasions she had met them there, she had fled. Yet on both occasions the Indians were obviously in need of conviction of the error of their ways.

Mr. Mason hustled the puzzled redskin over to the warehouse, from which he emerged smiling and wearing a new pair of blue overalls. I wondered if he might not set another style. Free overalls at the agency when there was

water in the river would be one white man's fashion the Navajos could appreciate.

During my stay at the school I witnessed but one tangible service to the reservation Indians. Yearly they brought in their flocks to be dipped in the agency dipping plant. One day the desert would be silent, empty. The next day it would be filled with sheep, filled with their wailing. The flocks had come far through a well-nigh waterless land. It was not strictly a desert land; it was only becoming so. Time was when grama grass grew waist-high. Even now the slight vegetation supported these flocks, but the scantiness of the growth was reflected in the undersized, pitifully thin bodies of the sheep after shearing.

After they had been dipped in the vile-smelling mixture that killed their vermin, the sheep wailed long and loud. Listening in the night, it was as if the barren land had found its voice and was begging for mercy, and found no mercy; as if the very stones cried out for pity, and found it not. And one morning the flocks would be gone, with the land again silent and somnolent—and beautiful.

And I watched Mr. Mason forge thumbmarks.

In the warehouse were most of the agricultural implements sent in when this "experimental farm" was established on its alkali flat. At all agencies such implements were issued to Indians in exchange for labor. Some of the smaller ones the Navajos found useful for other purposes and obtained them by hauling supplies from the railroad. These expendable items were listed on a large voucher containing some twenty names of Indians, each of whom had to make his thumbmark. That was the only voucher that Mr. Mason handled personally, obtaining the marks at the time he issued the implements. He then directed me to sign as witness. I had witnessed several such vouchers.

In amazement I watched him make his own thumbmarks on one of these vouchers. He made no attempt to conceal his thumbwork. "There," he said, "the Bureau will never know the difference. Them Indians are scattered

all over the reservation. I can't get 'em in just to make their marks."

As usual he put the voucher on my desk for me to sign as witness. I did not think he was trying to defraud the government, though if he so attempted it would be by some picayunish way such as this—selling a few shovels and covering the sale on a voucher. He hadn't the intelligence to defraud in the grand manner. I interrupted Mrs. Mason's sewing to ask her to witness her husband's forged marks. Pleased that some part of office work was within her ability to perform, she cheerfully bore witness. But like bread on the waters, those marks would return to me after many days.

I forgot the matter in being made to witness yet another injustice to an Indian. The seamstress was a young woman, a half-breed and, like the trader, a graduate of Haskell Institute. She had been at the school longer than I, coming to a dry climate because of incipient tuberculosis. During her term of service, Mr. Mason had given this woman the grade of "excellent" on her efficiency reports.

Mrs. Mason was happily expecting the arrival of her daughter by a former marriage, who had been in school in the East. "She will be lonely here, won't she?" I asked. "There's so little here for a young girl to do."

Mrs. Mason smiled. "Oh, we'll find something for Mabel to do."

Mabel arrived, Mr. Mason driving into town to meet her—a courtesy he had failed to show me and to which I had been entitled. His failure had taken my last ten dollars to pay the driver who brought me in. Mabel was eighteen, pretty, and likeable.

That evening Miss O'Rouke came in to see me. "Better watch out for your job. The Masons will have Mabel on the pay roll inside two months. Want to bet on it?"

"How? Mabel isn't eligible for my job."

"She's eligible for her mother's. Maybe they'll try that, and find another place for Mrs. Mason."

"I'd be willing to accept transfer. The water doesn't agree with my insides either."

"I haven't got my transfer I asked for. But you wait and see if I'm not right about Mabel."

I did not have long to wait. The efficiency reports were due. As usual Mr. Mason filled the forms out with a pencil and gave them to me to be typed on the cantilever bridge. Also, as usual, my own report was good. On my first report, Mr. Mason had written: "she is cappable in her work, pleasant and affible in her manners!" I had corrected his spelling and continued to be pleasant and affable. He had found no fault with the quarterly accounts, which here were simple. As a matter of fact there was not enough office work to keep me busy. I had often wondered how the Bureau justified the employment of two clerks.

Typing the efficiency reports, when I reached the seamstress's report I stared. I found this young Indian woman charged with incompetency, slackness in her work, unable to get on with people, and recommended for immediate transfer. Indignantly I copied the false charges, helpless to prevent this injustice.

Shortly afterward Mr. Mason directed: "Write a letter to the Bureau. Ask it to give my wife one of them non-competitive examinations. For seamstress. Tell it to send the papers right away." I did so, seeing the pattern of Miss O'Rouke's prophecy take form. When the papers arrived, the Masons and Mabel retired to their cottage and together took—and passed—that absurdly easy examination.

When the grades resulting from these combined efforts reached the office, I was directed to write another letter calling the Bureau's attention to the seamstress's adverse efficiency report and asking that she be immediately transferred or dismissed; that Mrs. Mason be appointed seamstress in her place, and that Mabel be appointed financial clerk—for which no examination was necessary.

I wrote the letter unwillingly, though I was not greatly worried. I could not believe the Bureau would fail to see what was being done, fail to examine this Indian woman's many former favorable reports, fail to disapprove the injustice being done one of its charges. I still believed this service was for Indians, not just to give white people jobs. I was wrong on all counts. The young Indian woman was transferred—with a blot on her record. Mrs. Mason was appointed seamstress—a position for which she was fitted and one in which I hoped she would have some work to do—and Mabel was made financial clerk. In the office Mabel also distributed the mail and attended to her embroidery.

I wrote my second personal letter to the Bureau. I asked for a transfer. I put the letter on Mr. Mason's desk and waited for the expected explosion. He was furious.

"Here, you can't do this. There's all them accounts. Mabel don't know nothing about 'em."

"Mabel can learn, Mr. Mason."

He was angry. Mabel was angry. Things had not gone as they expected. He threw the letter on my desk. "I won't recommend your transfer. You'll have to learn Mabel first."

"I'll teach Mabel, but she will have to leave her embroidery at home." I made him still more angry by saying: "I've told the Bureau the water here is making me sick."

The following day when I went to get the press copy book to copy a letter, I found the drawer locked. I thought I knew why. Mr. Mason had written a letter either to give me an adverse report and asking that I be transferred, or to charge me with some offense that would result in an investigation. Behind Mabel's back I slipped my unapproved request for transfer into the mail.

For two weeks my affability and pleasant manners were put to a severe test, which they passed with a low grade. During those two weeks neither Mr. Mason nor Mabel spoke to me. Then one day Mr. Mason opened the mail,

grunted in deep disgust, and threw a letter on my desk. It was my transfer to another agency as lease clerk at $720 per annum. I grinned.

"Mr. Mason, I shall expect the team to take me into town day after tomorrow."

"Expect all you please. It won't take you. You wanted to go. Go the best way you can. Walk for all of me."

"I am entitled to transportation." I was angry. "Perhaps you would like me to report to the Bureau that in three years Mrs. Mason never did a day's work in this office?"

"The Bureau won't believe you, not against my say-so it won't." Which was true enough. "Anyway, you can't prove it."

"Mr. Mason, whose initials are on every letter and report from this office?"

I was bluffing. I had, of course, initialed the correspondence and was keenly regretting I had not also placed my mark on the reports. But the bluff worked. Mr. Mason yielded the matter of transportation unwillingly.

"All right. The team's going in anyway. Now, get out of here."

CHAPTER 19

RHYTHMIC sounds have always conveyed a message to me. Car wheels have had many opportunities to relay such messages, many of which were not of a joyous nature. On my journey from Leupp northward, the car wheels said all too plainly: Crow Creek—Mr. Backhouse, Crow Creek—Mr. Backhouse. I was not returning to Crow Creek, but I was going to another Sioux reservation in South Dakota—Yankton Agency, at Greenwood.

I had been indeed willing to obey Mr. Mason's order to get out, but I left the beauty and silence and solace of the desert reluctantly. If opportunity afforded, I knew I should sometime return. I had ample time on the way to remember that, of three superintendents, I had quarreled with two of them. I knew I would quarrel with them again under the same circumstances. From those conflicts I had wrested a clerkship and two promotions in salary and my imp of derision put thumb to nose and grinned approvingly.

Again I left a reservation knowing little about Indians or their mode of living. Except for the geologist I would have known nothing. I had no understanding of the ancient rites and faith of the Navajos. If the work in which I was engaged required for its success such a knowledge, as I thought it did, I had been given no opportunity to acquire it. Understanding of a people's religious beliefs is a requisite to an understanding of the people themselves. I was only familiar with the Bureau's system of accountancy that, as a by-product, seemed to be considered by it

as of far more importance than the human beings it dealt with.

From Wagner the daily stage carried me fifteen miles to the agency. I had no quarrel with the driver about his well-fed horses or the farming land through which we drove. It was early autumn and at the agency the familiar cottonwoods wore their yellow foliage. We passed the cluster of school buildings some quarter of a mile before reaching the agency office, the mission church, the trading post, and several dwellings.

Together with the mail sack I entered the office—and breathed a sigh of relief as I shook hands with the rugged, genial man who greeted me with smiling wrinkles around his eyes. Superintendent Estep said:

"Glad to have you here as Yankton's first woman clerk. You fill a new position, one I asked to have created to help in our land and lease work. That work is heavy here and getting heavier. Know anything about lease work?"

"No, sir." The courtesy came easily. I had not "sirred" Mr. Mason.

"I thought not. It will be a long time before the Bureau can allot—and lease and sell—that Arizona desert you came from. Trouble is, being an additional employee, there is no room for you here at the agency. There are two guest rooms in my house, but they have to be kept for visiting inspectors. Conditions are the same up at the school. There is one vacant room there, vacant because I consider it unfit for human habitation. The matron has done what she could with it, but you are not going to be very comfortable."

I told him I would be all right, thinking I would have a walk of a quarter of a mile four times daily and a South Dakota winter not far away.

"Come and meet your fellow workers," said Mr. Estep. I met them, four in number. The four males did not seem to resent the intrusion of skirts among them. No doubt later, when hordes of free-wheeling women in short skirts

Superintendent Evan W. Estep

He was removed from office by executive order of President Harding for spending eight hundred dollars, under written authority of the Indian Bureau, to purchase food and clothing for his ragged and hungry Indian pupils. Mr. Estep died in 1950 at the age of eighty-six.

invaded offices, they received a more ardent welcome than the armored, long-skirted pioneers whose sex appeal, if any, was not immediately apparent.

"When your telegram came, Mrs. Estep told me to bring you over for dinner. Hungry?"

"Thank you. Yes. I've been hungry for three years."

The superintendent's two-story house was across the sandy street. Mrs. Estep greeted me cordially. The friendship that began that day was to continue for a lifetime. At dinner, Mrs. Estep said:

"I dislike thinking of you living in that room at the school. We wanted to have it painted but the carpenter was busy. The walls are smoked from the oil lamps. It used to be a reading room for the pupils."

Mr. Estep laughed. "A reading room with no books and boys who wouldn't read books anyway. Your trunk has been sent up. You can get unpacked this afternoon and report for duty in the morning."

After dinner Mr. Estep walked with me to the school. "This will be quite a walk for you come winter. The snow gets pretty deep and there isn't traffic enough to keep the road open. When I got notice that a woman was coming, I thought of having your transfer rescinded. A man could manage better."

"I'm glad you didn't. I can flounder through any snow a man can wade through."

At the school, when he opened the door of a room, I was not surprised to have a bit of Crow Creek waiting like an unfriendly face I had hoped not to see again. "Quarters provided for employees here are a disgrace. You have a good stove—and that's about all. I'll ask Miss Snoddy, one of the teachers, to stop and take you to supper. Mess is in this building. Report at eight in the morning, please."

I did not mind the desolate room. In friendliness and human kindness much of discomfort can be forgotten. At supper I was greedy. Sioux beef had become more attractive since I last saw it, and here were the fresh vege-

tables and milk and cream I had not seen at Leupp for three years—and no alkaline solution. Shortly I gained back the fourteen pounds I had lost, and I let out my skirtbands.

And I was greatly relieved that Mr. Backhouse, only one of him and sadly shrunken, had moved indoors and lost his nomenclature.

I learned my new duties, learned, too, why those duties were necessary. At Yankton the Sioux had been allotted land in severalty, title remaining with the Federal government. Each Indian received 160 acres of land. These acres the Bureau hopefully expected the Indians to farm. Results were meager. Back of these Sioux were centuries of communal landholding. The long arm of heredity that directs them does not point with pride at straight furrows. The voices of their choir invisible chanted no paeans for tomahawks turned into plowshares. But a politically pointed pen in Washington scratched a signature to a shameful, land-greedy policy by which many tribes were being systematically deprived of their lands.

After individual allotment was made, the so-called surplus land was sold to whites and the accruing funds deposited in the United States Treasury, where they did the Indians little if any good. This allotment of tribal land resulted in the need for many more white employees to handle the voluminous paper work involved in the multitude of individual holdings, their leasing and sale, and the legal work necessary in the settlement of estates. Of the insufficient funds appropriated for maintainance of the Indian Service, more and more must be siphoned into the pockets of the white workers legally engaged in taking from the Indian his chief means of livelihood—his land, the land held by treaty, which made that land inalienable.

Inherited land could be sold, but, unless granted a fee patent, an Indian could not sell his allotment. When he died, his heirs could sell it, sale being made at the agency and approved by the Bureau. Land-hungry white people

were the purchasers. White people began moving in on the reservations. On the Yankton Reservation many thousands of acres had already passed to white ownership. Daily in my work I helped to bring these Indians nearer a landless penury.

This reservation could have grazed many thousand head of livestock but the Sioux were not farmers. Horses they had long known and they had a natural instinct for caring for animals as opposed to a complete lack of interest in agriculture. I asked myself a question: Why was not a planned, communal system of stock raising introduced here, including supervision and improvement in breeding, to the end that these Indians might become, in time, economically independent through their own efforts?

Of the many questions I asked myself about this work, that was one I could answer: Because no white man would be able to buy an acre of Indian land under such a program.

I learned the intricacy of land subdivision, how to lease and sell allotments. I learned to trace the ramifications of a Sioux's peculiar family relationships. When these Indians were allotted land in severalty, it had been necessary to recognize their plurality of wives, each of whom also received 160 acres. The legitimacy of children of a common male parentage also was recognized. When an Indian died and his heirs sold his land, I was confronted with certain difficulties concerning their heirship.

Each of his wives was an heir, as were their respective children. A son of the deceased may have died, leaving a plural family of his own. One of the wives may have strayed into the tepee of another Indian, taking her children with her. Not infrequently a wife came into the office to cast grave doubts upon the paternity of another wife's offspring. Her efforts to prove her charge frequently embarrassed the young Sioux interpreter when he tried to explain to me. When you consider that these Indians had no family name to serve as a unifying factor in tracing relationships, that such names as they had were unpro-

nounceable and common to other Indians, that few of them spoke or understood English, it becomes plain that the sale of a few acres of inherited land was not exactly a simple transaction.

If I failed to visit the begetting sins of an old Indian upon the third and fourth generation of the misbegotten, if I devised 1/120 of a share instead of 1/140, the papers were returned from the Bureau for correction. For in the Bureau were all the records I had diligently searched and there other clerks must search them again. Here again the correctness of the paper work seemed of far more importance than the fact that these Indians were being deprived of their land.

Both allotted and inherited land could also be leased to whites. Owners were only too willing to lease it, lacking any desire or ability to farm it for themselves. I made innumerable leases in favor of white lessees and became a notary public to facilitate their completion.

Whatever grave doubts field executives might have concerning this iniquitous land policy, they were powerless to change it. The Bureau neither asked nor wanted their opinion. They were asked only to get the voluminous paper work done accurately.

At Yankton Agency the positions of agent and superintendent had been combined in one executive, a desirable practice now being generally followed. I remembered the friction at Crow Creek between the agent and Mr. Hillyard and, as if in response to my thoughts, received a rare letter from Miss Swinton. The agent had again brought charges against Mr. Hillyard, this time effectively. Mr. Hillyard had been transferred. But the agent had one last card to play. The Hillyards left Crow Creek by stage, together with freight boxes containing their personal belongings. The agent sent his Indian police to overtake the stage while it was still on the reservation. These police halted the stage, broke open the freight boxes, leaving their contents scattered. Not even Mrs. Hillyard's trunk containing her

personal apparel was spared. The police said that the agent told them to search for stolen government property.

Stolen government property! I could think of no single item there that would tempt the pettiest of thieves. I saw Mr. Hillyard's Vandyke beard agitated with helpless rage at that final indignity. Those police were armed and were carrying out the agent's orders. Mrs. Hillyard would somehow manage to smile, as she always managed to smile at the indignities of Crow Creek. I shared his rage but not her smile, lacking her serenity.

Two years later I learned that the agent and two of his agency employees had been indicted and convicted of fraud. But I never learned the nature of that fraud or of the measures taken to perpetrate it.

Not even Miss Swinton knew.

CHAPTER 20

ON A WINTER morning I stood on the porch of the boys' building and looked at the unbroken expanse of snow between me and the agency. I had snowed for two days and the flakes were still falling. It was only zero but my full armor was needed against a biting wind. I had fifty yards to go before reaching the place where the road should be. It was only seven-thirty and not yet fully daylight. I had allowed half an hour for that walk through snow to my knees. My heavy, long skirts left such a trail that a Sioux tracker would have had trouble in identifying the animal that made it.

I reached the office gasping for breath and again damp to my waist. "Why didn't you wait till noon?" scolded Mr. Estep. "If the stage gets through it would have broken a way for you."

I knew he would not have said that to a male clerk. I did not ask favors for my skirts. Privately I wished that snow-damp underwear did not take so long to dry.

With three other clerks I had a desk in the main office. The Indian janitor, Felix, had kept a fire burning all night. It kept us, and several Sioux, warm. Some Indians lived close to the agency, which served them as a country store—with our desks as cracker barrels. At first they sat on the floor around the stove and smelled. When thoroughly thawed out, they came to lean against our desks. When tired of leaning, they hitched up their blankets and sat on our desks, the blankets spreading out over our all-important paper work.

When the desk happened to be mine, I took a stout steel pen and gave a vigorous jab to the rear of the sitter. In sixteen years I was able to do my work in a variety of smells, but I was never able to see through an Indian's blanket and understand what it concealed. But I did understand that my paper work was considered of more importance than the feelings of the jabbed redskin. He would grunt and go to sit on some other desk, to think poorly, no doubt, of women clerks.

The winter was long and cold, with its full quota of blizzards. Spring brought the Puritan urge to clean house. The carpenter brought me paint and brushes, two saw-horses, and a plank. On several Saturday afternoons and Sundays I painted the smoke-blackened walls of my room. Three days after I finished, the building burned to the ground.

My room was in the boys' building, a three-story-and-basement structure. The basement had a playroom and toilets and showers for the boys. On the first floor was a dormitory, two classrooms, and rooms for employees. The second floor contained the small boys' dormitory, the sewing room, and more rooms for employees, one of them mine. Employees occupied the third floor, the attic being used for a storeroom. It was here the fire started.

A man driving past the school discovered the thin spiral of smoke issuing from the roof. He gave the alarm just as the sun was setting. The small hosecart was of little use, the pressure carrying a small stream of water only to the first floor. The building was doomed from the start. School and agency employees did what they could, but soon all efforts were directed to removing the building's furniture. With other employees I learned the distinct advantage of having few worldly possessions. I spread two sheets on the floor, dumped my belongings onto them, tied up the corners, and threw the bundle out the window to safety. Someone carried my trunk down the stairs. I went back for my rifle, but forgot the ramrod hanging on the

wall. It was my sole loss. But two employees whose quarters were directly under the attic lost everything but the clothes they wore.

Around midnight, employees began looking for a place to sleep. Room for most of them was found in the girls' dormitory. Four of us found bed—and breakfast—with the Esteps. Among the employees, I was the only agency employee for whom a place must be made. And again a minor catastrophe worked to my advantage. The following day Mr. Estep said:

"I'm going to give you one of those two guest rooms in my house. If a couple of inspectors come to investigate that fire, they will both have to use the other room."

Delighted, I moved in and unpacked my two sheets. Guest rooms at an Indian school were by no means luxurious; they only appeared so in contrast to quarters furnished employees. I found board with an agency family. One day, while waiting for dinner, I picked up an old newspaper. The word "Indian" popped out at me, as it was ever to do from any printed page. I read that the Indian Bureau, because of the thousand dollars squandered at the cremation of Joseph Escalanti, had forbidden his tribe to burn personal effects of deceased Indians at funeral rites.

All my old rage and indignation at the injustice done the Indian swept over me. I threw the paper down with a sense of pollution from the mere reading of this futile sequel.

No inspector came to investigate either the cause of our fire or the inadequacy of available measures to control it. Had the fire started six hours later, when a hundred boys and many employees were asleep, it would have placed all of them in jeopardy of their lives. I was reminded of Miss Swinton; like measles, fires had no morals to investigate.

I had been at Yankton Agency for some time when Mr. Estep was transferred to a school in Idaho. His transfer was in line with an established rule of the Service. Any

employee, to obtain the promotion in salary he merited, must accept transfer to obtain it. The rule, to me, lacked wisdom—or even common sense. Mr. Estep had learned to know these Indians, to understand tribal conditions—rarely the same at any two agencies—and the Indians had learned to have confidence in his integrity. Now he must go to a strange tribe, again learn to understand and deal with a different set of problems.

Before he left Mr. Estep asked the matron and me if we would accept transfer to his new post if he could so arrange it. We both gladly consented. It was some months before the transfers came through and, meanwhile, I worked with the new superintendent, Mr. Walter Runke. He came from a Navajo reservation and must here learn to understand the Sioux, who have few of the tribal characteristics of the Navajos. In no other way could these two men obtain the promotion in salary which they had earned.

Mr. Runke was a young man with a wife and small children. We found him kind, sincere, and of unquestioned personal integrity. And of these two men of high integrity, I was later to see one removed from office by executive order, the other indicted for murder.

Again I left a reservation knowing little about Indians, but knowing well the paper work by which I had helped to defraud them of what was left of their ancient heritage. Of that work I had definite and unfavorable opinions—which I kept to myself. Insofar as my years of service permitted me to judge, the Indian Bureau had not the slightest interest in the views of field workers who watched at first hand the effect upon Indians of its varying and inept policies. It was interested only in their paper work and, of course, their morals.

Before I left Yankton a letter from Miss Smithers brought the glad tidings that Janus had been demoted and transferred as clerk to another agency. Miss Smithers wrote in a happy mood, saying that down on the Colorado River the Lord had moved in a mysterious way and had

performed a miracle. Heretofore that reservation had been spared the inevitable confusion and trouble that follow in the wake of missionaries of conflicting creeds. But recently a Protestant missionary had been assigned there. Janus received him coldly. Janus also had an Indian policeman severely flog a boy who persisted in his truancy. This boy had been lodged in the school jail till his bruises healed, and he was given no medical attention.

Somehow the new missionary heard of it. He secretly broke into the jail and photographed the boy's lacerated back. He sent the pictures and a report to the Bureau. Here was no controversial matter of morals but a concrete instance of brutality. The Bureau acted promptly. The sadism so long practiced at the school was ended.

At the risk of seeming ungrateful for this intricately hatched miracle, I wished that its ways had been less mysterious and its timing better. For two people in urgent need of help, it came too late.

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CHAPTER 21

IN IDAHO the train deposited me within three minutes' walk of Fort Hall Agency. The attractive grounds had many shade trees and little irrigation ditches lined one side of the narrow walks. For the first time familiar, friendly faces greeted me in a strange land. I realized what the welcome of friends could mean to a wayfarer. I was given a pleasant room in the Estep's vine-covered house. I was to see little of the school, as it was located some distance from the agency.

I had only a short time to learn new duties, to see a few Shoshone Indians, when I was rushed to the hospital, in Pocatello. I did not even consider availing myself of the services of the school physician. Those services were gratis, but all employees knew from experience they were also worthless for any ailment requiring even a mediocre degree of professional skill.

The hospital in Pocatello had been recently built and put in charge of a young, inexperienced physician not long out of medical college. Was it years of insanitary living conditions, alkaline water, insufficient diet, too many snowdrifts, that sent me to that hospital? Perhaps—perhaps none of these things. At any rate, a not difficult major operation was botched by the inexperienced physician who did not hesitate to perform it. The wound would not heal. At the end of three weeks, infection from that wound reached the veins of both legs. They swelled up into two elongated puffballs that bore no resemblance to the legs I had known as mine.

When pain permitted, I amused myself by making deep dents up and down the puffballs to see how long it took the dents to come out. It took a long time. After more weeks, when I left the hospital, I was wearing four-inch elastic bandages wound puttee-style around both legs from ankle to thigh. The physician told me I would have to wear them for five years. I was to wear them for nearly ten.

I wore them with the unreasoned optimism of youth. My long skirts hid them; my natural stupidity hid the realization that the robust health that had always been mine would be mine no more.

I paid the hospital charges, the nurse, the doctor. I even paid for the yards of bandages that, under the circumstances, seemed a bit odd. I returned to the agency with my savings wiped out. I was weak. Walking to the office one day, the strong Idaho wind blew me off the walk into the irrigation ditch, which did the bandages no good.

Field directives from the Bureau came to us in the form of circulars, of which there were several hundred. One day the mail brought a new circular and I heard the chief clerk, Mr. McCabe, utter an angry note of protest.

"Commissioner Valentine can't do that!"

I read the circular that forbade the wearing of religious garb in Indian schools. When the government took over many mission schools, those in which the sisters continued to teach were granted the right to allow them to wear the habit of their order. That right had not been hitherto questioned. Yet here was this prohibitive circular.

Mr. McCabe went to his typewriter and wrote several letters. And that evening Mr. Estep said:

"That circular is going to make trouble. The Commissioner is young and new to his job, but he should know better than to stir up religious dissension."

A few days later another circular came in canceling the former one. We knew pressure had been brought to bear on the Commissioner but no details reached the field. But at another agency I was to see the aftermath.

Some time later Mr. Estep handed me a letter from the Bureau. It asked if I would accept a promotional transfer to the Pima Agency in Arizona. The promotion was only the usual sixty-dollar yearly increase in salary. I had worked for three years at the same salary and five dollars per month more was the Bureau's idea of reward. The only way to obtain that reward was through transfer, and the fare from Idaho to Arizona would take that increase of salary for at least one year.

But that letter brought the call of the Arizona desert.

"It's hot down there," Mr. Estep warned me. "This is April and you will get there just in time for the heated season. You've been pretty sick, remember." I wasn't likely to forget—not with those bandages.

Foolishly I decided to go. But there was one feature of that promotion that the Bureau carefully refrained from mentioning. It did not tell me I would have to work in the mule corral.

When I bought my ticket for the journey I found I could not now afford a Pullman berth. At my journey's end the train came to a brief pause at the little desert way station of Casa Grande at two o'clock in the night. My trunk, which obligingly had come to match my own battered figure in that it was held together with a rope instead of bandages, landed with a thud on the platform. The town was in darkness. Only the warm, desert stars revealed the one wide sandy street beside the railway tracks, the outline of a few frame shacks on the farther side. The door of the shabby little station was locked. I knew there might be no hotel here, and my legs were demanding a prone position in no uncertain terms.

I crossed the sandy street, walked up and down the row of houses in the vain hunt for a hotel. Before one shack was a cot with a blanket on it. It had no occupant. It immediately got one.

I knew that cot might be anything but clean. In the morning I found it wasn't. But it had given me the blessed

comfort of straightening out my cramped legs. I used my coat for a pillow, but did not risk sleeping. I watched the friendly stars, the shadows of night fade in the early sunrise. Before the owner of the cot wakened to protest my unsanctioned use of it, I went over to the station. Later I got doughnuts and coffee at a makeshift little restaurant. There I cleaned my face as best I could with cold cream and powdered my tired nose.

The stage for the Pima Agency left at eight o'clock. Again I had a drive of twenty-five miles in an open wagon and again my legs dangled. I was glad for the step that helped me climb in over the wheel. Not now could I match the agility of that Crow Creek driver. The old driver let the lean horses take their own gait through the deep sand of the road that wound over this desert of greasewood, cholla, and saguaro cacti. The winds had swept the gleaming sands into rippling contours where occasional sun-bleached bones topped their crests like whitecaps.

Towards noon the road began to slope and the horses quickened their speed. The valley of the Gila River lay beyond, with the school and agency at Sacaton. We passed a small Indian village of adobe huts with thatched roofs, then a turn in the road brought us to the oasis of the school. To my surprise the driver stopped first at the gate of the large corral beyond the oasis and threw out the mail sack. In the shaded grounds of the school he stopped before a two-story, frame building.

"This is the employees' building. We are just in time for dinner."

The old driver had no difficulty putting my trunk on the porch but he met with some in helping me to get there. I was glad of the ten minutes before the dinner bell rang. By the time the employees began to converge on the mess hall, I was able to walk with them into the room. There I found four tables, each one seating ten people. A smiling woman came and identified herself as the matron—the act had already identified her by position—and she assigned

me a place at table. Dusty and travel-stained as I was, I could now enter a strange mess without feeling strange myself. All of these forty people had known positions, had, too, known characteristics.

I saw no man to fit into the niche of superintendent until a young, blond man under thirty entered. On his way to table he noted the stranger, came to introduce himself as Superintendent Graves, to shake hands cordially, to give me a humorous glance of appraisal. Once again I was told to take the afternoon to unpack, to report to the office in the morning. After dinner, not a good one, the matron led me up the outside stairway, around a screened porch with several black iron beds, to a corner room, one of four. I asked that first question at an Indian school: "Is there a bathroom?"

"No. Not in this building. The toilet is downstairs near the stairway."

From the door of my room—no guest room, this—I looked down upon the small oasis of green grass shaded by palm and pepper trees, a row of oleander trees in bloom, a rose trellis, a tennis court. Bandages or not, I promised myself to learn to play tennis. Buildings of the school surrounded the oasis, and beyond and around was the desert. For love of the desert I was more than willing to live without a bathroom, though I did not know how severely that love was to be tested. I filled the familiar enamel pitcher with hot water in the mess kitchen, then said some disparaging words to the slop bucket as I bathed in the washbowl.

After breakfast the following morning, Mr. Graves waited for me. He laughed. "I'm not being gallant. You might have some trouble finding the office. There was a small adobe office here on the grounds. It was old—all these buildings are old. Fifty years, anyway. That office didn't look safe to me. I gave it a little shove and it fell down."

I looked to see if he was joking. He wasn't. We left the

shaded oasis, crossed the wide expanse of sand to the corral. "You know how these schools are, not an extra room on the place. There is one guest room in my house, but 'The Pot' said it had to be kept for visiting inspectors."

We entered the corral. "The only available room for an office is this." He unlocked a door. "It was the harness room."

We entered a room some eighteen by twenty feet. Two windows opened into the corral. The thin, board walls still held the nails from which the mule harnesses had been removed. Four desks and some filing cabinets reminded me that this was a government office. It, or the harness room, had been made by boarding up one of the open, roofed partitions that lined all four sides of the corral. In the others were several mule teams, wagons, farm implements—and flies. I knew Mr. Graves was watching my reaction to this palatial Federal office. I was the first woman clerk at Sacaton, too.

"Think you can stick it?" I resented that question. I could stick it if he could.

"Which desk is mine?" He grinned.

"I've asked for a new office building, of course. But even if I get it, it won't be ready for use this summer."

A dark, middle-aged man entered. Mr. Graves introduced him by a long, foreign-sounding name we afterward abbreviated to Lovey. Lovey was chief clerk. Plainly he was also a man with a grievance. He was affronted by the indignity of his surroundings, by the youth and inexperience of his superior in office, and by this fresh insult of a woman clerk. He gave me a curt nod—but no curter than my own in return. I was to work with Lovey for some years. I found him of the not uncommon breed that somehow managed to fool the Conductor into letting him ride through life paying only half fare. I did my own work and a part of his.

Lovey was unlocking a drawer of his desk, collecting some papers. He then disappeared for the day. Mr. Graves

Photo by Jack Riddle

LOOKING WEST FROM THE TANK TOWER

A view of the corrals and barns at the Sacaton Agency in southern Arizona, 1913

Photo by Jack Riddle

INSIDE THE CORRAL AT SACATON

Showing the door into the harness room, where the office was located for a year.

became confidential. "I don't know what he does. He says he is charged with the property. As chief clerk he should handle the cash accounts, but he won't touch them. They are in a mess. The whole school and agency are in a mess. That's why I asked for an experienced clerk. You can handle the cash accounts, can't you?" I told him I could.

"Good. Perhaps I'd better tell you about the trouble here. Some months ago the former superintendent was charged with defrauding some Indians. He is to be tried in Phoenix soon. The inspector who handled the investigation —I call him 'The Pot' because he called all the kettles black—turned the place upside down. Employees who took the superintendent's part were transferred. The chief clerk was transferred—that's why Lovey is here. You take the place of another clerk who was transferred. And I'm new. I know next to nothing about the work here or about Indians."

"You mean this is your first executive position in the Service?"

"Executive or any other kind. I'm a sociologist, by inclination, out of Hull House. Commissioner Valentine wanted to improve the field conditions, bring in new blood. He came to Hull House to find men trained to deal with backward people. He——"

I interrupted. "Indians are not backward, not in the sense we use that term for white people. They're primitives, not degraded whites."

"Well, I've been trained to help the underprivileged, and Indians are certainly that. Anyway, the Commissioner sent me here on a temporary appointment of six months. Meanwhile, if I can't pass the examination for superintendent, I'll be through. Finished. And in the three months I've been here all my time has been taken up with just routine work. I haven't begun to know these Pima Indians. Lovey was sent here under involuntary transfer. It made him sore. I think that's why he won't touch the cash accounts. You see, when the former superintendent

was fired, the principal teacher was in charge for two or three months. He drew the salary checks. I don't think he did anything else. As I said, the cash accounts are in a mess, and overdue."

I was feeling doubts of this young man's ability. As superintendent, he should have told Lovey to get those cash accounts in shape—or else. As if reading my thoughts, Mr. Graves said: "I couldn't come here to a work I knew nothing about and start giving orders right and left. I had to learn my way around first. And the man who might have helped me—he's the other clerk by the way—is in Washington. His name is Herbert Marten."

"What's he doing in Washington?"

"He's helping The Pot cook up evidence against the former superintendent. He kicked up the fuss in the first place. He and The Pot are pals. He should be here. You're going to have more than your share of the office work. Marten will be back for the trial. The Pot, too."

"You can forget the cash accounts, Mr. Graves. That is, if the files have been kept up."

"That's another point. They haven't been. There are some recent letters from the Bureau that need action. I've searched the files and the matters to which the letters refer are not in them."

"Do the letters refer to matters that came up during the time the principal teacher was in charge?"

"Yes. I asked him about them. He said he knew nothing about them."

A few days later, when I had sorted out my new associates, I joined the principal teacher and his slatternly wife on their way to quarters after supper. His shirt was filthy, he wore no tie, the laces of his shoes were unfastened. The wife was pregnant. I displayed the affability and pleasant manners I was far from feeling.

"It must have been difficult for you, being placed in charge here on such short notice. Strange duties are always confusing at first."

"They just about worked my sugar boy to death," said Mrs. Sugar Boy.

"And I never got one extra penny for it. All that extra work. Then, after I showed 'em I'd make a good superintendent, they went and sent in a man who never even saw an Indian school. I think I'll resign, just to show 'em." Resign! Not if I knew the type. I should. I had seen it in this work often enough.

"Oh, Sugar Boy, don't talk so. Remember your little wifie. Sick I am every morning, too."

"Did you find the office work too heavy to keep up with Mr. Marten away?"

"The office work don't matter. It's running the school that counts. They don't need three clerks here. One could manage if he's any good. Like I did."

"We have several official letters calling for action on matters during your time. The matters they refer to are not in the files. I thought perhaps you could tell me about them. You have such a good grasp of conditions here." He swelled visibly.

"You bet I have. Better than the new man. Let him find out things for himself."

"You see it's like this. The Bureau holds you responsible for the work during the time you were in charge. We have written the Bureau that matters for which you were responsible have been removed from the files. You probably will hear from the Commissioner about it." I waited to let it sink in. "Of course, the letter won't be mailed until tomorrow."

"Oh, Sugar Boy—they may investigate you! I knew something dreadful would happen. A new man who doesn't know a thing, and the baby coming."

"Perhaps you took the papers home with you, to work nights," I suggested.

"That's just what I did do. Worked nights."

I smothered a ribald retort to say: "May I come in with you and get the papers?"

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Sugar Boy. "I know just where they are. They're in that big box in the corner."

With them I entered an untidy room. The windows were shut, the bed unmade, clothes flung on chairs and floor. I looked at the two worthless, young people, at the woman's condition—and chuckled inwardly. A Puritan instinct had prompted the thought: there should be a law against it.

Sugar Boy handed me a large cardboard box. In it I found the missing papers for the two months of his incumbency. The box was heavy. The wife asked anxiously: "That letter to the Bureau, it won't be sent now, will it? They worked him so hard. He just forgot about them."

I left with the box, my conscience not troubling me. We had written no letter to the Bureau, but there would have been such a letter had the ruse not worked.

That night I reached certain conclusions. I credited Mr. Graves with sincerity and good will, with an earnest desire to master a work new to him. But I debited him with lack of foresight. Why, when faced with the need of office room, did he not move the furniture of that sacrosanct guest room into the harness room in the corral and the office desks and files into the guest room? Had he done so, when The Pot returned he could have gravely conducted the inspector to his room in the mule corral.

Knowing inspectors, I would be willing to wager that the ensuing howl to the Bureau would have given us a new office building in the shortest possible time.

CHAPTER 22

ON A HOT DAY in late June, before school closed for summer vacation, I had an errand to the school laundry. The corral office had been unbearably hot, but here I gasped for breath. The laundry was a long, narrow room, at one end the machinery, in the center a large stove with racks around its middle on which the sadirons were heated by the coal fire burning briskly inside. At the other end were the stationary ironing boards and mangles. The room was filled with steam from the hot suds, mangles, and ironing boards—boards beside which stood some twenty girls from twelve to eighteen years of age. In a temperature of around 120 degrees, these girls ironed clothing four hours daily six days a week. They were importuned by the laundress who was herself driven by the necessity to "git all that work done."

I knew these girls were consistently overworked, knew they were always hungry. Simply, they did not get enough to eat. We all knew it; most of us resented it, were powerless—or too cowardly—to try to do anything about it. Ambivalent emotions are poor bedfellows. We were torn between the stark necessity to earn a living and our feelings of resentment at the shameful conditions under which we earned it. We were accessories after the fact to the Indian Bureau's inhumanity.

At this school the pupils' insufficient diet was supplemented by vegetables from the school garden, a garden in which the pupils also did the work. But though the school was many years old and located in a climate where tropical

fruits could be grown in abundance, there was not one fruit tree of any kind.

On my way back to the corral I met one of the mule teams on its way to work. Those mules were well fed. At all agencies I had noted and approved the ample feed ration for work animals. When an undernourished girl succumbed to tuberculosis, which happened frequently, she was sent home to die. It was easy to replace her, but a mule cost money.

The time necessary to bring the office work up to date also brought midsummer heat. The office was locked at night, though one vigorous kick could have crashed its thin board walls, and it held the heat of the previous day. As mule harnesses had no need for a toilet, there was none. By ten in the morning the thermometer which Mr. Graves had tacked up, to learn, as he said, what his boiling point was, stood at 110 degrees, at 118 degrees by four o'clock. There were no fans as the school had no electric current. There were only the swarms of corral flies, smells, and heat. One day that thermometer reached 124 degrees.

Daily Lovey took some papers to his far cooler quarters in the superintendent's adobe house. Unless duty took him elsewhere, Mr. Graves sweated it out in the office. Under my long skirts and elastic bandages my legs itched unbearably and I could not scratch them. When a human being is deprived of the right to scratch when he itches, that being has reached the ultima Thule of human deprivation.

On such a day I left the office at five o'clock to walk across the stretch of burning sand, against the glare of which I had learned to make my way with closed eyes. I climbed the stairs to my hot room in another frame building that day or night knew no respite from the heat. There was neither tub nor shower to cool my tortured flesh. And the self-reliance that had brought me this far, the hard core of physical endurance that was all I had to rely upon to maintain myself, suddenly melted and I felt resolution

trickle from me. I could not cope with the deterioration of my stubborn will.

For the first time since I entered the Indian Service, I cried, and I could not stop crying. Later I realized that I had cried about a lot of things that might have been wept over at the time they happened, but weren't. I was more a liquid than a solid when I happened to notice Aurelius sweltering among the few books I had given him for company.

"It's all very well for you to preach the stoical life, Marcus. You probably knew heat and smells in your day. But I bet you never had to wear elastic bandages up and down your Spartan legs."

I was late to the unsuitable supper of beef and greasy gravy. Knife and fork were hot to the touch, butter was a golden mess of pottage to be dipped out with a spoon. That night I sprinkled the sheet over the heated mattress on a bed whose iron frame was too hot to touch, sprinkled my gown in hopes the dampness might let me sleep. There could be no sleep. Heat was a tangible pressure against unwilling flesh. There was no whimper of coolness, no aborted breeze but must pass stillborn before the travailing earth could give it birth.

The following afternoon the current of disintegration again engulfed me. It must be met privately. I left my desk, crossed the burning sands. In the oasis, as I passed the adobe house that was the superintendent's, and in which Lovey and his wife had quarters, I blindly obeyed a sudden impulse. Mr. Graves was in Phoenix to take his civil service examination and was not expected back until the morrow. I entered his half of the house. In the darkened hall I was greeted by the only hint of coolness known here in summer —the coolness to be found within thick adobe walls.

Sitting on the bare floor I unwound those yards of bandages and scratched. I rolled up the bandages for a pad under my head. And I relaxed.

I awoke in the dark. I did not know where I was. The

bed seemed a bit harder than usual. Awareness returned. I picked up the bandages and crept out of the house. The oasis was dark but there was a faint glow in the east. In employees' quarters there was no one to detect me, the three other people being away on vacation. In my room I struck a match to look at my watch. It was nearly four o'clock. I had slept for thirteen hours on that bare floor. But I laughed as I undressed, for I was rested and refreshed and the core of endurance had had time to solidify. It was only the flesh, of which I had asked too much, that had failed me. I was learning that the spirit of man is stronger and more enduring than the flesh.

From my bed on the screened porch, watching the miracle of a desert sunrise, I heard the sound of hoofs, the creak of wagon wheels. I knew it was Mr. Graves, who had driven those many desert miles from Phoenix at night to avoid the blazing sun. Again I laughed, thinking of the investigation The Pot had missed. Had Mr. Graves arrived earlier, had he stumbled over my prone figure and awakened Lovey, had I been seen creeping out of the superintendent's house at four in the morning—what couldn't The Pot have made of that. I had been saved by a team of mules too tired to be hastened. And as I laughed, I pondered the nature of laughter.

It is the catharsis of the mind, clearing it of transitory ills, of real or imagined hardships. There was so much laughter lurking in the dark corners of the soul that superstition had usurped, waiting for us to release it with gusto. It was contemporary laughter at ourselves that was needed, not chuckles in retrospect at the foibles of others that time had exposed. Always there have been cruelty and ignobility in our laughter at others. I wondered if man's salvation might not depend upon his learning to laugh at himself. Perhaps he was only now wearing his first pair of mental long pants; perhaps he must reach his intellectual white tie and tails before he learned that genuine humor came from the infinite and senselessly incongruous elements in

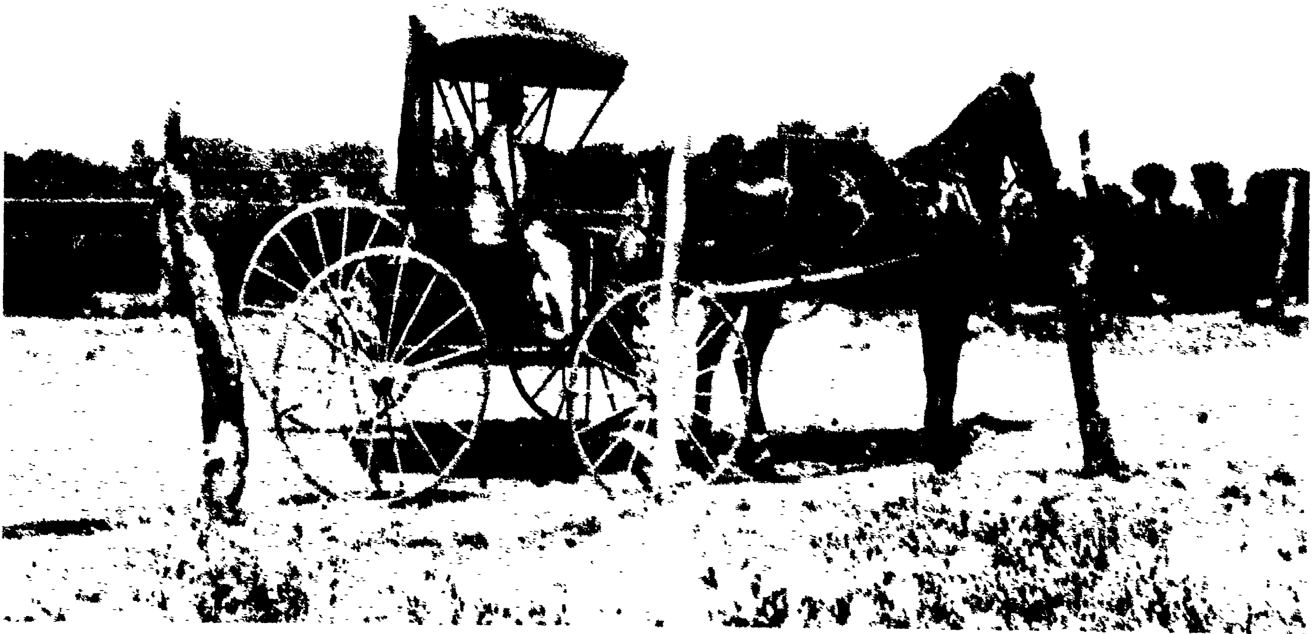

Photo by Jack Riddle

MRS. HOFFMAN AND HER FAMOUS HORSE AND BUGGY, IN 1913

She was field matron at Sacaton Agency, headquarters of the Pima Indian Reservation in Arizona

Photo by Jack Riddle

Superintendent's Cottage and Guest House, Sacaton Agency

life, learned to appraise himself and his beliefs and his values in the light of those ludicrous elements.

In the gelded life of the Indian Service, laughter was the only disbursable wealth we knew. It was a miserly coinage minted in pennies and dimes, worth, at most, a smile or a grin. Only occasionally did a half dollar turn up to spend itself in brief, extravagant mirth. Rarely, indeed, did our sordid circumstances cast up a dollar jest, like manna from some lewd and jubilant deity moved to pity our joyless stringency. But we knew no golden eagles of laughter. They would not be expendable within sight and sound of ailing, overworked, and hungry children.

Rest and laughter restored me. The glaring crimson fabric of summer gave place to the velvet beauty of October. I learned to play a fairly poor game of tennis. Afterward my legs cramped horribly. Next day I played again. By the following summer my blood had thinned and I did not mind the heat so much. I learned to sleep on a canvas cot with no heated mattress. Again I learned to love a desert country.

During the first summer the trial of the former superintendent was held in Phoenix. He was acquitted. The Pot and Herbert Marten returned to the school, two completely disgruntled men. I disliked and distrusted The Pot from the moment his small, ferreting eyes made me feel he was mentally undressing me. I wanted to ask him if he was visualizing bandages. I did a little re-dressing of my own. I took the swarthy, fat little man out of his tailored, tropical suit and put him into a soiled white coat with a dirty towel over his arm. Thus garbed, he seemed designed by nature to stand behind a chair in a fourth-rate barbershop. I almost expected him to say: "I can recommend this lotion for that thin place."

Instead, The Pot said rudely: "Take a letter."

"I'm not a stenographer."

"Can't you even type a letter from dictation?"

"No."

I could, if dictation was slow; but I would write no letter for this man whose contemptible methods had made me many hours of overtime work in that torrid office. Shortly afterward The Pot received orders to investigate a large, nonreservation school in the East. He left for greener pastures. Of his work there I was afterward to hear.

Herbert Marten I liked. He was a carelessly dressed man of about forty, his left arm nearly useless from paralysis. I found him possessed of a rebellious spirit that drove him to defend any unjustly treated person. He had the kind heart that accompanies such a spirit. He was of English birth. He told me he ran away from home at the age of fourteen to ship as cook on a tramp freighter. In the desert his profanity had a curiously nautical flavor. I listened to him curse, softly, since profanity was forbidden, because he had been asked to falsify the latest annual report to the Bureau.

In this report, items listed as on hand in the preceding report formed the basis from which to subtract expended items of the following year. Always there were items expended with no vouchers to cover them. Herbert had laboriously inventoried the property actually on hand, and so reported it. The Bureau had returned the report for correction.

"I can correct it only by falsifying the amounts on hand. If that is what the goddamblasted Bureau wants, that's what it gets." The important paper work must be made to conform regardless of the inventory.

When Mr. Graves received his grades from his civil service examination he found he had failed the paper on experience. Unwisely Commissioner Valentine appointed him for yet another term of six months. No sooner had he done so than the enemies that circular had made him brought charges against him before the Secretary of the Interior—charges of making illegal appointments, at Pima and elsewhere. Those charges were true. As commissioner he had no legal right to make the second appointment. He

was permitted to resign, broken in health from worry and public accusation. He died shortly afterward.

Mr. Graves was promptly removed from office.

As if to compensate him for his aborted summer on the torrid desert, before he left a young Indian dropped one of our rare half-dollar coins of laughter in the office. He entered the corral full of wrath and seeking a place to vent it.

"When an Indian plants wheat, he gets wheat. When he plants corn, he gets corn. But when he plants Indian, he gets half-breed. How come?"

CHAPTER 23

IN 1540 CORONADO led an expedition from Mexico in search of the fabulous Seven Cities of Cibola. He found, instead, only the Zuñi pueblos in what is now New Mexico. Passing this way he found the Pima Indians living along the Gila River and draining its waters through their prehistoric irrigation ditches to supply moisture to their crops of corn, beans, cotton, and melons. The scrivener of the party reported the Indians as friendly and generous in supplying them with food. He also reported their climate as very hot and the Indians as evil-smelling. Here, too, the party found the ruins of aboriginal buildings of sun-dried mud which were named Casa Grande, after similar ruins in Chihuahua. Within the crumbling walls of these ruins Coronado's priests said Mass in 1540. The Indians of that day could tell nothing of the origin of the ruins, saying only that they had been built by men long vanished.

Since 1540, and for untold centuries before, the Pima Indians lived a communal life. During the gold rush of 1848 seekers after wealth, if they got safely through the Apache country, here found food and help. In time the Pima Indians found themselves wards of the government, deprived of the waters of the Gila, their river of life in a desert land. They had an inalienable right of priority to the Gila flow—a right the Bureau failed to maintain when white settlers began diverting the water above the reservation. Year after year the flow in the Gila diminished, and the crops of the Indians failed. Now, these once proudly independent, friendly Pimas, who from prehistoric times

had wrested an ample livelihood from their soil, were reduced to near starvation. There is a historical fact that can be given in support of their former industry and the amplitude of its results. During the Civil War the Union Army purchased from the Pima Indians between one and two million pounds of wheat and large quantities of forage.

Now in the warehouse I helped issue to sick, hungry, and aged men and women a few beans, mice-soiled flour, and stinking, rancid bacon, our largess to the victims of the Indian Bureau's stewardship.

Now the Bureau, coming along to unlock the barn after the horse had nearly starved to death, was engaged in promoting a few irrigation wells to pump water for a small acreage. On this belated venture Herbert Marten vented his second-best profanity, maintaining that there was little water left to pump. But the cost of the wells had been made a charge against the Indians.

Next Herbert exercised his choicest profanity on the Bureau's proposed project to build a diversion dam across the Gila at a point three miles from the agency to bring water to another part of the reservation. For with that dam the Bureau also proposed to build a bridge for white traffic, the cost of both dam and bridge to be charged against the Indians who were given no voice in the matter. I thought Herbert was wasting his lurid language. Time proved he wasn't. He did not live to see that bridge built with the Bureau's connivance. It was a wonderful bridge, over two thousand feet in length, and its cost, $400,000, was made a charge against the Pimas at a time when they did not have money to make a crop—crops they tried to raise on land from which the whites had diverted the water. If an Indian wished to use that bridge to and from the agency, he must go six miles out of his way to do so. White people got their bridge; the Indians continued to ford the Gila as they had done for centuries.

More prophetic of future harm to the Pimas was the fact that they were now being allotted land in severalty.

Each man, woman, and child was allotted ten acres of their ancestral soil. Later they were given another ten acres that carried no water rights. The land that had been theirs for untold years was being made subject to the machinations of the Bureau, to the end that a part of it could be sold to white people. After allottment, it was estimated there would remain some 88,000 acres of "surplus" land. Here, too, land of deceased Indians could be sold under certain restrictions. The white camel was getting its head within the Pima tent.

To be sure, Congress wrote into the enabling act a provision that the surplus acres, after allotment, could be sold only with the consent of the tribe. Well, to my knowledge that clause can be, and has been, circumvented by the Bureau, which knows no age of consent for raping the Indian. Previously, an irrigation project had brought the water of the Colorado to the reservation of the Yuma Indians. They, too, were promptly allotted land in severalty. After allotment, one half of the reservation was declared surplus. There, too, a part of the cost of that project was made a reimbursable charge against the Indians. Surplus land was sold to whites at ten dollars per acre! The Indians rebelled, of course vainly. The Bureau again claimed that the tribal council had consented to the sale. The Indians maintained that the council acted without authority and had not represented the tribe as a whole. The Bureau said its purpose in selling the land was to pay the Indians' share of the cost of the project. At ten dollars per acre the proceeds paid only a part of that cost, the balance remaining a charge against the Yuma lands.

What was done at Yuma could be done at the Pima Agency. The Pimas loved their land. As a tribe they never would consent to its sale. But any people, as politicians know, can be divided into two camps of thought by the use of expert demagogery. Like the Sioux, a handful of whom sold their birthright for a mess of broken-treaty pottage and a massacre, the Pimas might also have their Esaus—

and the whites their land. Then, too, there was the cost of that wonderful bridge to be paid. How else could they pay for the white man's bridge except by selling those 88,000 surplus acres?

I came to understand Herbert Marten. He had a comprehensive knowledge of the wrongs done these Indians. He spoke their language. He resented keenly their present dependency after centuries of independence. More than many of us he appreciated the excellence of their folk product. The Pimas' pottery and beautifully woven baskets were excelled only by those of the Hopi craftsmen. Here, too, at a time when the Pimas desperately needed a source of income, no effort was made by the Bureau to help them find a market for their product. The Indians' own efforts were drastically limited by their isolation.

The Sacaton school had a small, inadequate, and poorly equipped hospital. In charge were a fairly competent nurse and the most incompetent doctor ever to have slipped through the civil service gate in search of a petty sinecure. Mr. Graves had entered the corral office one day, highly indignant but laughing. The matron had a sick girl in quarters and had reported the doctor to Mr. Graves for inability to treat her. He had summoned the doctor for a conference.

"Know what that old quack said? He said these children do not need doctoring, that they don't have much the matter with them."

The superintendent had laughed. "He said, 'I only need two medicines. One I call the opener, one I call the closer. Sometimes I give them the opener, sometimes the closer.' "

Some months later I had my own experience with that old quack. I had gone to Los Angeles for a delayed vacation. The city was having a mild epidemic of infantile paralysis. The quack wrote me—afterward I learned at Lovey's instigation—that I could not return to the school until I had spent two weeks away from Los Angeles to prove I was not harboring polio germs. I spent those two

weeks at Grand Canyon, on money I could not afford to squander. El Tovar was not worried about germs. On my return to the school, the old quack said:

"I'll have to fumigate all your clothes."

"I have some new clothes in my trunk. If you damage them, I'll hold you personally responsible." The quack said hastily:

"Take out your new clothes and I'll fumigate just your old ones." I wondered if polio germs could distinguish between new and old garments; or between clothes and their wearer, since the quack did not fumigate me.

Oh, no, these children did not have much the matter with them! There were around two hundred children in the school. They had been hungry from infancy due to the destitution of their parents. They entered school suffering from malnutrition and continued so to suffer. A large percentage of them had tuberculosis, incipient and active. Little or nothing was done for these children by way of rest periods and improved diet. Some of them had trachoma, though this dread eye disease was less common than among the Navajos. So long as they were able, these children worked half of each day and attended school the other half. When they were no longer able to work they were sent home to die, to spread infection among smaller children in the brush or adobe huts, huts without windows, with dirt floors, huts that knew no sanitation and which were never mentioned in our boastful medical journals.

Nothing was being done by the old quack to ameliorate the insanitary conditions among adult Indians. The tribe was being rapidly decimated from tuberculosis and semi-starvation. The Pimas had been Christianized for some years but, like the Bureau, missionaries brought no health program with them. I wondered why some of the American medical missionaries bound for China did not detour to work at home where their efforts were so urgently needed. Was it a case of distance lending enchantment, or was it the national tendency to see the need for improve-

Photo by Jack Riddle

BEFORE THE DOORWAY OF A TYPICAL INDIAN HOME
ON THE PIMA RESERVATION.

Photo by Jack Riddle

GIRLS' DORMITORY, SACATON AGENCY, 1913

ment in distant lands while we neglected similar conditions in our own back alleys?

A new and untried Commissioner of Indian Affairs had recently been appointed with the change in national administration. He was to direct the lives of some 300,000 Indians, split into 200 or more tribes, each with its geographical and tribal problems. He became the titular head of 270 reservation schools and 18 large nonreservation schools. He was to control the millions of dollars of tribal funds in the United States Treasury. He could continue the policies of his predecessors or he could wash them down the drain and formulate new policies of his own. His qualifications for his job were his value to his political party and the worth of the past services he had rendered it.

He didn't need to know anything about Indians.

He could appoint his own corps of field inspectors, petty party workers awarded the crumbs after the loaves had been distributed. These inspectors would come to pass judgment upon the work of field executives who may have had many years experience in the work. They would closely scrutinize our morals. More than one woman has learned that the morals of some inspectors would furnish a far more fertile field of endeavor. Nobody inspects the inspectors.

Where in this bureaucratic picture did the welfare of the Indian enter?

As a deterrent to the ossifying process inherent in this life, I bought five feet of books. The first volume I bored into contained the diary of John Woolman, the pious itinerant Quaker preacher of Colonial times. John wrote of his refusal to wear homespun clothes of other than the natural color of wool. No dyed pants for John. He maintained that, if the Lord intended men to wear clothes of a different hue, He would have made sheep bear wool of that color. I marveled at the divers ways men serve their God; wondered if, perchance, John did not really serve

some worldly instinct within himself, the instinct that goads men to seek some little eminence above their fellows by an aberrancy in appearance or conduct.

John went to London to attend a Quaker conference and was distressed because the English brethren looked down their noses at his uncouth garments. I hoped John was seasick both going and returning. I felt even a Quaker preacher should at times disgorge something besides piety. John did not mention courting the woman he married. In his diary he wasted little ink on her. I wished his wife had kept a diary. She might have told of some humanly interesting and not altogether pious acts, acts which John carefully omitted to write about. John would have regarded me as unregenerate. To show John what I thought of him, I put him back on the shelf and gave him Machiavelli for neighbor.

I took down Benjamin Franklin. I felt he would not so cavalierly dismiss from his autobiography the women he selected to fill it a bit more fully than was considered decorous at the time. Franklin, who had the lifelong habit of not failing his countrymen in times of crises, did not fail me. It would indeed be a dull world if only pious people wrote their memoirs.

Bacon tells us that reading maketh a full man. Since Englishwomen of the seventeenth century were given only the tidbits of learning left over from male banquets, Bacon might not have conceded that reading might also make a full woman, or at least one half full. But full of what? There were to be times when I was full of Whodunits, a fullness of which Bacon certainly would have disapproved.

A wise reader carefully selects his mental diet. On Indian reservations that diet was limited, and often nonexistent. I read anything and everything that chance and a limited purse sent my way. This sort of reading can cause mental indigestion. From such disorderly comestibles it was possible to evolve a philosophy of life, incomplete and lopsided. But is any individual's philosophy ever complete,

compact? There are too many loose ends left over from living that refuse to be tied around a neat, little package labeled "This Is What I Believe." Even when people believe they have all those loose ends nicely tied up in sanctified bowknots, that package often manages to tie on another label marked "Fragile. Handle With Care." And the hurrying years, the common carriers of life, are notorious for their disregard of that label.

There are times when the indiscriminate reader feels like a human participle that life has left dangling, with no antecedent noun to attach himself to. Through all the inadequate language of the ages men have shed their blood in search of that noun. Thinking they had found it, they shed their blood again to erase the diacritic marks other men had placed over it, that they might write their own; they will, by many portents, shed their blood again.

Was man mistaken in thinking that what he sought was a noun? Was not what he sought to be found in a phrase, a phrase long known to him and long rejected because it was not to his liking—the brotherhood of man?

More than many women, I have been alone. Yet I never knew real loneliness if I had a good book to read. Books have always been, not something outside my personal life, but an essential part of it and at times the only part worth living. From vacations—those vacations for which we saved all the year—I might return without some of the new clothes needed but never without a book or two, often unwisely chosen. A worthless book can flatten a purse as quickly as a worthy one, and reservation purses, even before flattening, never had that opulent, *enceinte* appearance so desirable in vacationing handbags.

I have floundered through several books completely beyond my ability to understand them. One such book was Bergson's *Creative Evolution*. I never learned exactly what Bergson was driving at, but for months that book served as mental gymnastics, a bar to chin my thoughts on. If I emerged from the ordeal nearly as ignorant as when

I began, at least a few intellectual muscles boasted a bulge they had not had before; they were a little better equipped to deal with the next pugilistic volume that challenged them.

Alone and in the dark, as he had lived, Herbert Marten died.

He had been ill with what he thought was a chest cold. It was undoubtedly pneumonia. He died during the night. The matron found his cold body when she called in the morning to attend him.

Never once had I heard this man laugh joyously. He lived in emotional darkness, his heart and mind tortured by wrongs done to others. Perhaps some early family injustice had invaded them to twist them cruelly. He so hated the inhumanity of man to man that, in attempting to redress instances of it, he himself had been led to acts of injustice by reason of the intensity of that hatred.

His funeral was held out of doors in the shade of the oasis. From every part of the reservation Indians came to pay him tribute. He had fought their battles against wrongs. One after one they came forward to speak of this man's kindness and help. They laid this alien, who was without kin and country, without even one white friend who fully understood him, to rest in their ancient soil.

I never saw another white man thus voluntarily honored by Indians.

CHAPTER 24

HATS. INDIAN Service hats. Hats that, through the years, I watched bobbing dejectedly back into the styleless abyss from which they never should have emerged. Tired hats. Sad hats. Discouraged hats. Sickly hats. Utilitarian hats. Homemade hats. Missionary hats, of all sad hats the saddest. Never a merely gay hat for a gay party. There were no gay parties. Never a merely frivolous hat for a frivolous occasion. There were no frivolous occasions.

I came to feel that one of the great needs of the Indian Service was a traveling evangelist in hats. An evangelist with a fiery zeal to rescue women from sinful headgear, to bring them the light of a new and becoming hat. Oddly enough, most women are far more skillful in saving their own souls than in making themselves a becoming hat. No woman should be expected to perform her duties well unless she has one joyous hat stored in her hatbox. If she has such a hat, she will provide a gala affair to which to wear it, and the Indian Service needed gala affairs.

Some years later, when living in Paris, I had an amusing experience with a perfectly good American hat. It was no Indian Service hat. I had bought it in New York and thought well of it. But after a short time in Paris that hat began to look odd. Not old or shabby. Just odd. I bought a new one. Feeling charitably inclined towards that perfectly good American hat, I decided to give it away.

Paris had no alleys. Trash and garbage cans were put in front on the pavement where ragpickers came to search them carefully before collection. I had noticed the two

ragged old crones, with shawls over their heads, who came early to search the cans before the apartment house. They had a hungry-looking dog hitched to a small cart to carry their sorry spoils. I had a kindly feeling for the two old women, for they first spread a bit of carpet on the cold cobblestones for the dog to lie on. Early one morning I went downstairs and put that perfectly good American hat on top of the trash can. From the upstairs window I watched for what I confidently expected would be transports of joy over the rare find.

The crones arrived. One spread the carpet, the other removed the cover from the trash can. She took out that perfectly good American hat. She inspected it from every angle. Then she burst into spasms of laughter. She put on the hat. The other crone burst into spasms of laughter. She snatched the hat, put it on. Shouts of laughter. Then the first crone seized it and—final indignity—put it on the dog. The old women teetered and bent with unholy mirth. No doubt the dog laughed, too. Then they tossed that perfectly good American hat into their cart. I was indignant.

Still, that hat did look odd.

In the sterile life of the Indian Service women become careless in their dress, neglectful of hair curlers, as women are prone to do when no admiring male eyes are turned in their direction. There are few such eyes on Indian reservations and the few are already turned elsewhere and firmly anchored. Any roving feminine eyes are promptly pounced upon by a U.S. Indian Inspector and are sent to do their roving elsewhere, usually outside the Service. This tends to create a composite picture of Indian Service women which fits rather neatly into Oscar Wilde's aphorism: "Her clothes looked as if designed in a rage and put on in a tempest." That tempest had long since blown away my black cotton stockings and high shoes. I bought my first pair of silk hose, black, opaque, with embroidered

green trellises up the sides and pink rosebuds climbing them. Skirts were daringly up to the ankles. The rosebuds stopped at the hem, as if waiting for skirts to go higher that they might climb farther. But silk hose were only for Sunday wear. For daily wear I had white lisle stockings and white canvas shoes in which I felt quite modish—and looked quite otherwise. Yet those white shoes and stockings put me in the small group of Indian Service women who spent too much money on clothes.

These women work long years on inadequate salaries on which they must deny themselves, not only of small luxuries, but of essentials. In no other way can they make some small provision for old age. No retirement pay awaits them when they are dismissed for age or ill-health. These underpaid old maids and widows are the vertebrae of the sprawling spinal column which unifies the field service. They are earnest, sincere women; barren, unloved women. They are the privates in the infantry of a bureaucratic army. To them falls the hand-to-hand fighting against odds. They suffer the casualties, receive the wounds. In no other way of American life are women so brazenly deprived of the right to privacy. A bit of malicious gossip directed against one of them brings an inspector to put her under oath to answer questions which completely ignore the right to personal privacy which is granted all other citizens. Refusal to answer means dismissal for insubordination; compliance frequently serves the same end.

For the Indian Bureau's hired hunters of the reputations of women all employees have a supreme contempt.

For one month out of twelve, the annual vacation with pay, these women are free to return to the world outside—the world we tend to forget. For thirty days they are released to live in the personal freedom other women enjoy as a right. It was from such a vacation in San Diego that two Pima teachers had returned in an indignant mood. In Balboa Park they had visited the Indian Museum, with its fine collection of Kiowan paintings and drawings. The

director had talked to them about their work. He then said to them: "I never cease to be surprised at how little Indian Service people know about Indians. They know less about Indians than any class of people I know."

The two women, with several years' experience in teaching Indian children, were naturally affronted. But I privately thought that director knew whereof he spoke. I had lived on reservations and had left them knowing little indeed about Indians. Like myself, these two teachers were given little or no opportunity to become familiar with reservation conditions. It was entirely possible they never had entered one of the miserable huts these Indians call home. A knowledge of their pupils' home environment was not considered necessary since their education aimed to make that environment unsuitable to them.

And this environment is also the despair of any Indian Service physician who takes his duties seriously—a point brought home to all of us when the doctor that Mr. Graves had called "that old quack" died suddenly of a heart ailment. I wondered if he had gotten his two medicines mixed and had taken the opener when he should have taken the closer. The young physician sent in to fill the quack's position was the first competent one I have seen in the Indian Service. He was horrified at the practices of Indian midwives, practices which the quack had seen no reason to change. He made every effort to induce expectant mothers to accept his services in confinement. The team of mules provided for him was getting far more exercise than formerly. But this young physician had no intention of remaining in the Service, which affords him no opportunity for future advancement. From his munificent salary of one hundred dollars per month he hoped to save enough to enter private practice with his rent paid for a few months in advance.

Many years before the Indian Bureau had found it necessary to lower the requirements of the civil service examination for Service physicians in order to get doctors

Photo by Jack Riddle

THE SCHOOL BUILDING AT SACATON

Photo by Jack Riddle

EMPLOYEES' QUARTERS AND MESS HALL

to enter it. This brought a small, safe salary within reach of the failures and the incompetents found in all professions. Many of them were the product of the medical diploma mills which ground out their quackish grist prior to 1904, when the American Medical Association took remedial steps against them. Once these men were in the Service it was difficult to remove them, impossible to replace them with capable men at the low salaries paid.

It is true these physicians faced great difficulties, caused by the inaccessibility of the reservations and the lack of transportation. They also were confronted with the extreme reluctance of the Indians to give over the rites of their medicine men. The end product was that all reservations were focal points of infection to adjacent white communities.

The monotony of reservation life drove an occasional employee to unwise expedients in an effort to relieve it. My expedient took the form of a wild Indian horse and a saddle. That wild horse liked neither me nor my divided skirt—a skirt nearly up to my knees and shockingly immodest. He had never been shod and I neglected to have his hoofs trimmed. Riding at a lope with a local swain, the horse stumbled over himself and threw me over his head. I picked myself up with no damage except to my pride. On New Year's Day, when the male employees arranged a competitive hunt over the reservation, I took my rifle and went rabbit hunting—a futile effort on land where the Indians were living in semistarvation. Without consulting that horse's taste for having a gun fired from his back, I took a shot at a buzzard on a fence post. At the moment it seemed to me as though the horse bucked in four directions at once. In no other way can I account for the fact that I was still in the saddle when he came down to earth. The buzzard, quite unharmed, had taken himself elsewhere.

Some ten miles from the agency I came across an agency horse and wagon tied to a fence, left there by some male

hunters out searching for game. In the wagon was a duck riddled with shot. There was no wild duck on that dry reservation and some Indian family lost a needed meal that day. I tied the duck to a mesquite tree, head down, and shot it through the head with my .22 rifle. I took it back to the agency with me and presented it as my share in the day's hunt. The black looks I received from two disgruntled males did not bother me. They did not dare claim they had shot that duck—not with the superintendent present. That superintendent did not need to call my bluff. He knew very well that it would be a dead duck that I could shoot through the head with a .22 rifle.

That superintendent was Mr. Frank A. Thackery, who now succeeded Mr. Graves. He was well and favorably known throughout the Service as a proven friend of the Indian. An agriculturist, he understood the Pimas' special needs. What could now be done to redress their wrongs, he would do. His efforts, as always in this work, would be restricted by directives from the Bureau which he must put into effect whether or not he approved of them.

And, quite naturally, he expedited the completion of the new office building into which we now moved, leaving, without regrets, the corral to its rightful occupants, the mules.

I received a letter from a friend at the Carlisle Indian School, the school to which The Pot had been sent. There, too, the superintendent had been charged with fraud. Not he, but his chief clerk, was found guilty and sentenced to a short prison term and the superintendent was removed from office, as his predecessor had been a few years before. No other employees at Carlisle had been involved, but The Pot proceeded to play his favorite indoor game of investigating their morals. My friend was a pretty young girl. At the school were many students of mixed blood, more white than Indian, some of whom were attending college in town and playing football on Pop Warner's famous

team. My friend had been well acquainted with them, had danced with them at the weekly dances, had flirted mildly with them. The Pot charged this girl with immoral conduct. He had no foundation whatever for that charge, which precipitated an action he had not foreseen. Her father, through his senator, invaded the Commissioner's office to demand a withdrawal of the charge—or else. The Commissioner hastily apologized, tacitly admitting the falsity of the accusation.

For many years Carlisle had been most successful in training older students from many tribes. Its prestige and fame were generally known. For an Indian to say that he was a graduate of Carlisle was, in the Indian Service, equivalent to a degree from Harvard. More was expected of these graduates and, in many cases, those expectations were fulfilled.

Carlisle never recovered from The Pot's indoor sport. He left its large corps of employees torn by strife and suspicion. He left it to decline in prestige and efficiency, soon to be closed and returned to the War Department to become again an army barracks, as it had been in Revolutionary times. The closing of Carlisle deprived qualified Indian youth of the opportunity to receive an education equivalent to that given in white high schools. The Pot, and the Commissioner he served, were chiefly responsible for this deprivation—two men bound by their oath to protect and advance Indian welfare.

I lit my oil lamp one hot evening to sit down with old and loved companions. In a friend's room these companions greeted me from her meager shelf of books. I asked permission to take Mr. Pickwick home with me. Opening the book at random, I found I had joined the hunting party. I walked beside Sam Weller as he trundled Mr. Pickwick in the barrow towards the lunch basket awaiting the hunters. When Sam opened the basket and took out the "weal" pie, I hoped, with him, that the pie was not made of kittens. I watched Sam take out the cold tongue.

"Tongue; well that's a wery good thing when it an't a woman's." The knuckle of cold ham. Slices of cold beef. And, very carefully, the cold punch.

As of old, I was absorbed utterly. I lived in an older and happier world. The abrupt return to my own world left me shattered and trembling. I was standing in the far corner of the room, eyes glued to the page, my hand groping for the door behind which stood my mother's doughnut jar. There was no door, no doughnut jar. There was only the bare wall back of my groping fingers. Unknowingly, Mr. Pickwick had led me across the deep abyss between a girl of thirteen and a woman of over thirty.

I took Mr. Pickwick back to my chair. What had happened?

For the first time I realized that Dickens always had made that girl hungry. His people were forever eating. When Sam began to unpack one of the many food hampers that followed in Mr. Pickwick's wake, that girl would rise from the windowseat in the big, sunny kitchen, would cross the room with eyes on her book, would open a door and reach for a doughnut. She returned with the doughnut, a cookie or two, and, if lucky, the leftover piece of apple pie.

When Mr. Pickwick ate his ham knuckle, she ate her doughnut. When he ate sliced beef, she ate cookies. Here, for once, there was no apple tart for him. When he ate his weal pie, she ate apple pie with a comforting feeling of assurance, knowing there were no kittens baked in it. She never could share his cold punch. She wished she could, for Dickens also made her thirsty. His people were forever drinking.

I took up the book from my lap. But the words blurred. For the first time Mr. Pickwick had failed me. The famished life of the Indian Service was no place for him. I left him snoring in his barrow, sadly overcome by too much cold punch. On the porch, my own barrow offered me the same solace of a temporary forgetfulness.

CHAPTER 25

ONE UNSEASONABLY hot day in spring I looked up from my heaped desk to glance at Lovey across the room. He was smoking one of his seven daily cigars allotted to office hours, his feet on top of his desk, his hands idle, except as they manipulated the cigar. A part of the work on my desk should have been on his. I thought of the long, hot summer ahead.

Suddenly I knew I had had enough.

I have ever come slowly to a boil but when I do, something usually happens, generally to me. Without waiting to cool, I wrote my letter of resignation, effective in thirty days as required, and put that letter on the superintendent's desk. That letter gave no reason for resigning. I was to learn that from such minor rebellions surprisingly pleasant events may ensue.

One month later, in San Francisco, I bought, among other things, the first gay coat I had ever owned. These dun-colored garments had recently begun to appear in bright colors. That coat was light blue and in it I sailed for New York via Panama and four weeks of unalloyed joy, or as unalloyed as joy is permitted to be. The first day out was surprisingly cold after the desert heat. I went on deck wearing that coat, comfortable in the knowledge it was becoming. I carried a copy of *The English Review,* whose cover was the same shade of blue. I had been taking Mr. Harrison's erudite magazine for some time and had brought along the latest unread copy.

Not unnaturally that English magazine caught the eye

of the only Englishman among the few passengers, few because the ship carried far more cargo than people. He was tall and good-looking enough for a man around forty. He was traveling alone. He lost no time in seeking an introduction. On that first day out he told me he was not married. Thirty days later, when we reached New York, I thought I knew why. But his solicitude over the cost of the trip did not affect his gallantry or lead him to take his pleasures sadly.

The ship made long stops at various Central American ports to discharge and take on cargo. At one small port there were no docking facilities. Freight went ashore in local barges and passengers went ashore in half of an old barrel that must have looked unreliable even when it was whole. Four frayed ropes suspended that half barrel from a long overhead cable, and pulleys on ship and shore did the rest. It was supposed to carry only one passenger at a time, and a glance at the expanse of rough water below made this seem a reasonable precaution.

When it came my turn to climb into that barrel I found the Englishman beside me. The man at the pulley vainly objected. The close quarters proved not at all unpleasant, and those ropes must have been stronger than they looked. When we returned to the ship, we left another disapproving native at the shore pulley.

At the French hotel in Panama, relic of the defunct French canal company, passengers had five days before crossing the Isthmus by rail to Colon. Though we were in the tropics, at least one of these travelers found Panama cooler than the Arizona desert. There were no screens in the French windows of the hotel, yet there were no flies. Panama had been given a good American house cleaning. The Englishman and I explored the city, visited the old wall by moonlight. Shops were a delight. The embroidered fabrics and handmade lace were ridiculously low in price, yet they took too many of the dollars I had for the trip, and all this added to my feeling of uncertainty for the future.

We went up the Chagres River by motor launch to see the jungle display of monkeys and orchids. The Englishman remarked caustically that it was too bad that women who wear orchids couldn't see this close natural affinity between them and their own Darwinian ancestors. I wondered if, sometime, he had parted with his good shillings and been disappointed at the lack of favors bestowed in return.

And here one evening I had an experience which the Indian Service had not prepared me to meet with dignity. It was, of course, due entirely to my abysmal ignorance of local customs.

The Englishman had made his courteous excuses for the evening. I rather thought I knew the reason for his absence. About nine o'clock, from the balcony of my hotel room, I heard a band playing in the Plaza one block away. As I would have done at home, I walked alone to that well-lighted Plaza.

I did not know that here a woman who appears on the street in the evening without a male escort was fair game, or that native wolves hunted in packs. In the Plaza I found an empty bench and sat down to listen to the music—but not alone. An eager, dark-skinned man sat on either side of me. Three others grouped themselves in front. There was talk in understandable English of light-colored hair and its rarity.

I had been out with the Englishman every evening and no other man had paid the slightest attention to me. Now, in a short time, I seemed to have become highly attractive to five excited Panamanians. The surprising nature of that attraction dawned on me a bit slowly. I gave over listening to the music and started back to the hotel—but not alone. All five wolves went along with me. For one block I panted along with them in full cry. Only at the hotel entrance did they give up pursuit of this strange game who fled instead of bargaining.

On the Fourth of July, in the Caribbean, we encountered

a tropical hurricane that sent all passengers to their berths wishing they might die. My cabin was on the upper deck. I knew water was pouring in through the open porthole. It did no good to ring for the steward. He was either sick or busy—or both. Drowning seemed a pleasant way of dying compared to the way I was being disassembled. When I crawled out of the berth on the third day in the hope I might soon feel and look like a human being, my clothes were soaked and water stood an inch deep in my shoes. Few passengers ventured into the dining saloon till we were safely past Hatteras.

In New York I said good-by to the Englishman, relieved that I did not share the emotion he acknowledged with so much British reserve and caution. I felt it was only transitory. Two former love affairs of my own had made me wary of emotional involvement. One at eighteen had been productive of so deep a disillusionment that its memory had contributed much to my endurance of life at Crow Creek. It had aided and abetted my resolve never to ask for help, to achieve my own independence.

The man who thinks independence cannot be as dear to a woman as to himself needs to raise his sights on human nature. Otherwise he will continue to be surprised that his aim is so poor in hitting the mark of understanding the female of the species.

The second love affair at twenty-five, during a vacation which it happily prolonged for a time, had by mere chance taken the wrong turn and failed to find its way back. The emotional turmoil that resulted dented badly the fortitude with which I had hitherto managed to endure the Indian Service. It detoured me into one of those emotional wastelands of which life is so prodigal. Even books failed me—at least those with the invariably happy ending that publishers of that day thought the only emotional diet fit to be fed readers.

I turned to history. Oddly enough, I found it helpful. There is nothing in man's history to lead him to expect

permanency or any continuing condition of personal happiness. History is more a record of frustration than of progress toward a happier life. The progress is there, but it must be hunted through the ruins and chaos of wars and rebellions from which alone it seems able to emerge. And wars and rebellions do not contribute noticeably to man's happiness. Far too often his frustration, his loss of some desirable objective, has derived from mere chance, the lack of a nail in the horse's shoe.

And again life in the Indian Service helped me to be resigned to loneliness. Few people who walked there in companionship seemed any happier than I. The complete lack of marital glamour on Indian reservations had oddly compensating attributes for the small army of old maids and widows who witness it. They find it not difficult to see their workaday life at least as peaceful and not subject to male whims and demands. They sleep contentedly enough on their hard iron beds, not caring too greatly that those beds are only wide enough for one.

I went to Washington to ask for reinstatement.

I knew from experience the futility of asking assignment to some other branch of the Federal service. The Indian Service is looked upon with scorn by all other services and the executives of other departments take a dim view of the abilities of people who will work for the low salaries it pays. Later it was to take the dislocation of wartime to enable me to be assigned elsewhere.

My room at the Willard, compared with reservation quarters, seemed palatial. The following morning I sought the ivory tower. Writing "Sacaton Agency" on my card, I sent it in to Commissioner Sells by one of the lesser cherubim and waited. When I was admitted to the presence of this presiding deity, I found myself facing a man whose knowledge of affability seemed slight. I stated my case, which was simply that I had resigned from Sacaton and was seeking reinstatement elsewhere.

"Why did you resign your position at Sacaton?" I told him why.

"Superintendent Thackery should have seen that the office work was equally distributed."

"Mr. Commissioner, Mr. Thackery is not a desk superintendent. He is in the office only when necessary. He gets out among those Indians, helping them in many ways. He has had many duties on the reservation in connection with the allotment of land to the Pimas. He is one of the most capable men I have known in the field service."

"You should have taken this matter up with him."

Did I need to remind this man that subordinates who complain about their work are not looked upon with favor?

"If a man is sent to fill my place, he would be eligible for the chief clerkship. Probably he would be willing to do extra work in order to get it."

Neither did I need to remind him that no extra performance of duty would make a woman eligible for that position. At this time three women had been given higher executive field positions, but not as reward for having served a long apprenticeship. They had obtained those positions through political influence and in them they had proved inept, as many a party worker in this ivory tower had been. And in the field I had heard less flattering terms applied to the man who was now regarding me with a scowl.

"I will look up your record. Come back tomorrow at this time. Good morning."

That evening an old rebellion possessed me. On those efficiency reports from several superintendents, some of which I had not seen, I was now to be judged. In these reports, efficiency in work performed was only one item and in the office I had visited this day that work could be judged on its merits. Why should a woman be condemned if—I thought of Miss Swinton—her skirt placket gaped in the back at times? No man could possibly be capable

of knowing the complete perversity of a skirt placket. If the thing was expected to conceal an aperture, or to give the impression that a woman had been poured into her skirt with no visible means of exit, why place that placket in the back where only observers could detect the failure of its mission in life. Why expect a vertical opening to contend successfully with a spherical surface given to bulging. No woman could turn her back with assurance that an expanse of white petticoat was not showing down her beam. It was doubtless some man tired of looking at his wife's gaping placket who contrived the snaps that were to give women a feeling of security at weak points; but he did so at the time a woman's skirt placket had departed from her rear and moved around to the side where she could keep an eye on it.

And in a world where men have never displayed any great desire to get along with each other, why adversely judge a woman because she finds some people not to her liking. One superintendent who would have given me a last unfavorable report was Mr. Mason, a man slovenly in appearance and at times personally objectionable for need of a bath. Nobody reported him for lack of neatness or for inability to get along with people. No superintendent, except Mr. Estep, had known about those bandages. Had he known, he might have graded me only fair in health, a grade that might have meant dismissal. Now, my means of livelihood depended upon those reports and what the political appointee in the ivory tower thought of them.

For a woman without even one man in her personal life, I felt there were altogether too many men too unreasonably involved in it.

The following morning the Commissioner's knowledge of affability seemed profound. He was all smiles.

"Your reports are excellent. There are two vacancies I can offer you, both at a somewhat higher salary than you received at Sacaton. I think you have earned this promotion." I thanked him with sincerity, but a sincerity

with a mental reservation. He obviously believed he was doing me a favor. I believed he was only recognizing a right which I had earned.

Acceptance of one of those vacancies would take me back to the Arizona desert, but to a far more desirable location—the large nonreservation boarding school at Phoenix.

I had just enough money to buy my passage there.

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CHAPTER 26

THE LARGE nonreservations schools were the mecca toward which reservation workers spread their Navajo prayer rugs to offer up petitions that they might be among the few to make the pilgrimage there.

The city of Phoenix was built on ancient altars of the sun-god. Here man brought the only foe this deity feared —water. Wind-carved buttes still lifted turreted peaks to offer up the evening sacrifice. The sun-god had not learned mercy for the agelong tortured sands—sands that now mocked him with verdant fields. Date palms affronted him with pendant fruit. Orange groves taunted him with golden plenitude. Here in ceaseless conflict opposing forms of beauty battled endlessly.

But ever the brooding desert waited to recapture its own. Let the impounded water fail and the works of man would disappear. In the Phoenix school the conflict between nature and man had been transformed into human terms. The school struggled to thwart the racial instincts of Indian children, labored to divert their primitive blood into alien channels. The miracle wrought by water on the desert sands was to be duplicated by education, transforming the students into the white man's likeness.

Over them poured the water of a new culture, forcing a semblance of growth, hinting of roots growing firmly in reclaimed soil. But when the water no longer flowed, the growth faltered. Stronger than any other voice was the call of their own blood; more potent than all other needs was the need to live and mate with their own people.

And the long-neglected, insanitary reservation was the only home they knew.

Many pupils entered the school at the age of eight to remain for ten years. Tribal weaning was intensive. Parents, home, language grew dim in memory. Ten years transformed them into replicas of whites. But replicas deal with externals. Most of the pupils were full bloods. By implication they were told, "You are an Indian, but you must not live as an Indian. You must act like a white man, earn your living in the white man's way."

Rarely could the full blood do so. The deliberate aim of his education had been to unfit him for the only environment open to him—the reservation. There little of what he had been taught could be of use to him. At the school boys were taught various trades, most of which were already outmoded. Of these trades he was taught only a smattering. He could not compete successfully with white skilled labor. If he was to join the ranks of unskilled labor, ten years in an expensive boarding school were not necessary to fit him to do so. Unless he could be fitted into a position in the field service, and he rarely was, he must return to the reservation. There was no other place for him. Maladjusted, he returned to the poverty and insanitary conditions from which he had sprung.

At this school I was given the responsible job of which I had dreamed—accounting for and disbursing the large appropriation necessary to maintain an institution of nine hundred pupils, and a small sanitorium for tubercular children, the latter under the able direction of Dr. Jacob Breid. Here I had the satisfaction of dealing with numerals that could be marshaled in parade, commanded to assume correct positions, maneuvered into sums of proven accuracy, but which could not go back to the blanket.

One day a pretty girl of twenty-one came to my desk to take the oath of office as the new domestic science teacher. I knew that girl was thinking: Are there no young people here? When she had sworn to uphold the

Constitution with her pies and cakes and gone on her way to do so, I realized fully for the first time that my own youth had fled. To that girl I was old. I thought of the many squandered years on reservations, years squandered in vain activities to gain a barren livelihood.

Resolutely I put the thought from me. I locked it up in that secret chamber of the mind where we all hide the knowledge of our own futility. I left it to the moth and rust and forgot it in anger.

I received a letter from the Bureau that dotted my personal firmament with forged thumbmarks. The Bureau's curt letter told me that a voucher from the Leupp Indian School, covering issuance to Indians of government property, had allegedly been thumbmarked by those Indians; that those marks had all been made by the same person; that I had witnessed those marks. I was ordered to report on the matter at once.

Years had passed since those marks were made. The accounts covering them would have been cleared by the Bureau within a year. Meanwhile, where had those forged marks been wandering? Through what subterranean labyrinth had they sauntered before some official eye had discovered their unholy origin?

I wrote an angry letter exposing conditions at Leupp, caught myself up, destroyed it. An unsolicited recital might be construed as insubordination; that cloud no larger than an inspector's hand ever hovered over us. I wanted to be directed to make that report. I wrote a curt reply. I could not identify the specific voucher since the Bureau had not done so; I had witnessed many similar vouchers before I discovered that Superintendent Mason had forged the marks to at least one of them; I had not witnessed that one; I had not reported the matter because of conditions at the school; if the Bureau now wanted a report of those conditions, it would be given upon request.

That request came promptly. I was informed that my failure to report the forgery "was tantamount to aiding

and abetting fraud upon the government." I was ordered to report at once.

"Aiding and abetting a fraud upon the government!" I was so angry I sizzled under the bandages. I would fight that charge at all costs. Rage lent courage to my report. It was a full report and for every charge of ignorance and injustice I made against Mr. Mason I referred the Bureau to its own records. I had not reported the forgery because the Bureau's acceptance of the superintendent's untrue charges against an Indian employee had made me doubt that any remedial action would be taken. As a subordinate I had not interpreted my duty to include spying and reporting on my superior in office, since the Bureau maintained a corps of inspectors for that purpose. I remained —with my imp of derision well in the ascendency—very respectfully yours.

But I did not remain entirely easy in my thoughts during the two weeks before a reply could be expected. When it came, it told me "that in view of conditions at Leupp, no further action against me would be taken at the time," but that I was to hold myself in readiness if further action should be found necessary. I had only a few weeks to ponder the unpleasant nature of that action before a young man entered the office to bring news of it. This man had recently been transferred to the Pima Agency from a Navajo outpost ninety miles from the railway.

"My wife and I had quite a time driving ninety miles with a mule team. We ran into a dust storm that wiped out the road. We got lost twice and the mules nearly played out on us. We had to make camp four nights. Of all the Godforsaken country!"

"I spent three years on another part of the Navajo reserve."

"You know what it's like, then. We never saw a living thing on that drive, not even an Indian, till near the end of it when we met Mason, the new superintendent, driving in. And was I glad we were driving out!"

"Mr. Mason! Was he being transferred to another Navajo agency?"

"Yes. Some trouble at Leupp, I don't know just what. Anyway, Mason got transferred."

Again I asked myself a question: If my failure to report those forged thumbmarks was tantamount to aiding and abetting a fraud upon the government, what was the action of the Bureau tantamount to when it kept in an executive position, entrusted with Federal funds, a man its own records proved a forger?

I rather thought I would hear no more about those thumbmarks. I never did.

For some time I had been aware of a mental unease that had nothing to do with thumbmarks. It was as if some burden had been placed upon my conscience, some message from that burden trying to break through to reach my conscious thought. I did not know what it was. I lived fairly comfortably with my conscience as a rule, removing by contrition the burdens I placed upon it from time to time. To the John Woolmans of the world, my conscience would seem a puny, unregenerate thing. But if I were to awaken some morning with a conscience like John's, I would take immediate steps before breakfast to get rid of it.

Writing a formal letter in connection with my work, I found I had unconsciously typed two words that did not belong in it. I could only stare at them. I had written a name—Joseph Escalanti. I tried to resolve this puzzle. I knew that message had broken through to me. I realized that for long I had denied the urge, ignored the impulse, to write the story of the Indian dead these many years. As I turned my thoughts backward I felt again the surge of anger at his needless, tragic death, felt the old rage at my inability to perform any act to right a wrong beyond help. And I realized that the injustice done the Indian had long lain dormant in my sluggish mind, slowly fomenting till the day I wrote his name without knowing I had written it.

I did not know how to write, though I had a local repu-

tation as a writer of sorts. Letters had always been a laborious task to me—and to their recipients. But after I learned to use a typewriter, letters became a pleasure. On a vacation spent in the North Woods on a visit to my parents, I found several of my hand-scrawled letters in my mother's dresser. Curious as to what I might have written, I tried to read one of them. Midway of the first page I got stuck. I could not read my own wretched writing. When I asked my mother how she managed, she said my letters gave her something to do during the long, winter evenings.

To a sick cousin I had written a series of typed letters about the Indian Service. She had found them amusing and thought they should be published. She had them published—in a book that nobody read. I was thrilled at seeing my name on the cover of that book, but I had no pride in its contents. I had read too many good books not to recognize the inanity of that one.

On Sunday I went to the vacant office and wrote the story of Joseph Escalanti. I had no thought other than to tell the whole truth. I did not know how to write. I had a lifelong love of words but I did not know how to use them. I was dismayed at the crudity of the story I put on paper for the first time—the story I was vainly to try to write for thirty years. I had no warning that when I put the first sheet of paper in my typewriter I had also put into my life a purpose and an objective hitherto undreamed of, had involved myself in uncounted hours of toil trying to reach that objective.

I put the story away and, I thought, forgot it.

I bought my first box of rouge and wondered if, in town, I would be taken for a fallen woman, and would not have been greatly concerned if I were. I wore crepe de Chine waists with a keen pleasure, conscious that at least a part of my body was released from its bondage of cloth—that absurd convention of an age that confused morality with yardage. I played tennis with legs half-bound, half-free. The bandages had been replaced with elastic stockings that

reached only to the knee. Even so, there could be few sillier sights in a senseless world than a woman bound up in whalebone and long skirts trying to chase a ball around a tennis court.

The magazine published at the Chilocco Indian School had announced that Miss Mary Swinton, seamstress at Crow Creek, had been retired for disability. She was no longer able "to git all that work done," and the government that had overworked and underpaid her for many years had replaced her with a younger woman who could.

What became of the Swintons in this niggardly and little-known branch of Federal service? No retirement pay awaited them to insure some measure of comfort for their old age. Was it the fault of these women that their aim became, not the welfare of Indian children, but seeing that those children got all the work done? The women but symbolized a bureau whose primary objective was to turn out its paper work.

To the many Swintons of the Indian Service, a vain but sincere tribute.

CHAPTER 27

IN SEPTEMBER Lucy returned from the short summer vacation. She entered the office on an errand for the matron.

"Did you have a pleasant vacation, Lucy?"

"Yes, ma'am."

Lucy was a Navajo. She had spent the summer helping to herd her parents' sheep. At night she had slept in a hogan or under the stars on a sheepskin. Her clothes exuded the familiar smell of sagebrush campfires. Her body may not have been washed since she left the school in late June. There was no water to waste on baths in a land where flocks might be yearly decimated for lack of it. Over in the girls' quarters there would be much bathing and searching of heads.

Lucy was nineteen. This was the last of her ten years in the school. She could read and write in the rudimentary fashion of a white child of eight years. She could do simple problems in arithmetic. She could sew very neatly. But she could not weave a salable blanket, the craft that might have given her a source of income when she returned to the reservation. In the domestic science department Lucy had been taught to cook on a gas range. On the reservation she would have only a campfire. She could make good bread, and layer cakes with icing.

Outwardly, Lucy was Christianized. Inwardly, she was as pagan as the land that bore her. She was a member of the matron's weekly Bible class. The matron was a devout, zealous spinster of some fifty years. She was actively con-

cerned with the welfare of her girls' souls. She had not hesitated to instruct them in her own narrow creed.

Like most Indian girls Lucy had far too much flabby, unhealthy flesh. No employee at the school who had contact with her in classroom and industrial department noticed that her flesh increased slowly, that she became a bit more shapeless. No employee could have suspected the conflict that must have raged in this Indian girl's mind, a mind hopelessly confused by the beliefs and customs of her own people and by the faith and moral precepts taught her at the school. Had any of us known of that conflict, we could not have learned of the terrible decision Lucy reached during those months.

On a warm April night Lucy locked herself in a bathroom in girls' quarters. Alone, without outcry, she gave birth to her child. She strangled it with a towel, wrapped the body in the towel and hid it in the carton that served her as a trunk in the room she shared with three other girls—girls who knew and had not told.

In the morning Lucy did not answer breakfast roll call. Seeking her, the matron found Lucy in her bed on the screened porch. Her sickly looks prompted the matron to send for the school physician. When the physician lifted a startled face from his brief examination, he asked:

"Where's the baby?"

In company with the horrified matron he searched the room and the carton gave up its secret.

"Lucy! You wicked, wicked girl! This must have begun on the reservation last summer. Why didn't you tell me?"

Only the girl's dark, unfathomable eyes replied, in denial and dread. Her eyes reflected the fear of what this matron had taught her.

"Why didn't you pray to God to keep you from temptation as I have taught you to do? Why didn't you tell me? Now we shall have to send you home."

Lucy muttered one word—"Married."

"Married! Who to?" Lucy did not answer. The physician intervened.

"Were you married at home, Lucy? By your own ceremony?"

"Yes, sir. Like my mother. She wanted it."

"But I've told you and told you that is not the right way, Lucy," said the matron. "You should have been married in church."

The physician again intervened. "That was all right, Lucy, being married your way. But it was very wrong to kill your baby. If you are married, why did you kill it?"

There was no answer.

"We shall have to send you home, and tell your parents. Will they punish you for killing your baby?"

"Yes, sir. Bad. But not like the matron."

"Lucy! I shouldn't have punished you. I should have prayed with you that God might forgive you."

The physician was insistent. "Tell me why you killed the baby, Lucy."

Lucy's eyes lifted to the matron. "So she wouldn't know. She say it is a sin, to marry so. Her God will burn me forever if He finds out. Now she will tattle to her God and He will burn me."

CHAPTER 28

IN THE MORE than half a century of effort to Americanize the Indian, our Indian schools had never had a defined curriculum. A new course of study was introduced in 1915. Teachers had a curious problem tossed to them by the Bureau, for this course of study boasted that it paralleled the work of white high schools.

Phoenix drew its students mainly from the full-blooded tribes of the Southwest. Back of these students were centuries of instruction received only by visual and oral methods. Their ancestors had bequeathed them neither aptitude nor capacity for receiving enlightenment from a printed or written language. Their ability to profit mentally from reading was strictly limited. Many centuries of experience in modes of thought expressed in written language are back of white children. Yet this new course of study required Indian Service teachers to achieve with children of a primitive race the same results as those obtained in white schools.

Over half a century of futile effort to force Indian children beyond their natural capacities was now absurdly climaxed.

This course of study was to be put into effect in all Indian schools. But tribes vary greatly and no standard method of education could be used successfully, even if based on a recognition of the needs and capacities of primitive children. Many modifications would be necessary to meet the different aptitudes of dissimilar tribes.

Perusal of that course of study could cause only amaze-

ment that the Bureau, even now, had so little understanding of the people entrusted to its care. Teachers of the fourth grade were told that their pupils "shall be able to read current events and magazines and to pass judgment on what they read with regard to the beauty of the thought expressed, its truth, and its rhythm!" Teachers of the same grade must teach and correct use of troublesome words like "shall and will, effect and affect!"

There are thousands of white adults who could not meet these fourth-grade requirements for Indian children. Only recently the superintendent had asked me to type a personal letter he had written in longhand. In that letter there occurred the misuse of one of those four words. The teacher of the fourth grade was a spinster with many years of experience in this work. She had recently come to me with tears in her faded eyes. It was her turn to submit a paper on some phase of the work for discussion at the monthly conference of teachers.

"I can't do it. I can't ask one of the other teachers to write it for me. Won't you write it for me? Please."

"You can write it if you try, Miss Gould."

"No, I can't. I'm not good at putting my thoughts into writing. I don't know anything about this work outside my own classroom."

"What subject are you to write about?"

"The problem of the returned student. I don't know anything about what our students do on the reservation when they go home. I've never been on a reservation. How can I know what their problems are?"

I promised to write the paper for her. I welcomed the chance to vent a little of my increasing disapproval of this work. Were Miss Gould asked to read a good educational magazine and pass judgment on the beauty of the thought expressed, its truth and its rhythm, what would happen? I consigned the course of study to the pit and returned to the numerals of which miracles were not expected, but only accuracy and understanding of the nature of figures.

From the forcible feeding of the niceties of English to these children, pegged down like Strasbourg geese for fattening, could come no intellectual *pâté de foie gras,* but a severe case of racial indigestion.

Of late there had been much happy discussion of the long-delayed Federal Retirement Law then being considered in Washington. I thought of the many elderly women I had known who had been retired with no provision for their future except the small savings from inadequate salaries. For them this law would come too late.

By the Bureau's low standard, this school was ably managed. Its large corps of employees were as competent as any to be found in the Service. Nonreservation schools were the Bureau's show windows where the lay figures were attractively uniformed. The shoddy goods on the reservation shelves were vastly different, but the window-shoppers did not know, or knowing, did not care.

I emptied my purse to buy a used car to go on picnics on the desert.

I learned to drive that car without killing anyone, but there was one Phoenician who will always believe he had a near miss. He took refuge behind a convenient lamppost when a woman brazen enough to drive a car seemed headed for the sidewalk. It was a big Case touring car with oversized tires and it was distinctly not streamlined. Unlike a horse that turns as a unit, that car turned its front legs when directed and its hind legs when it saw fit.

And I never put that car in the garage without feeling I should give it some oats.

CHAPTER 29

MY FORMER superintendent at Yankton Agency, Mr. Walter Runke, had been indicted for murder!

I recalled the young man I had known—sincere, of personal integrity, and a true friend of the Indian. I knew the charge was false. Not until I was given access to his files did I fully understand the enormity of the accusation. Because this charge, and the events preceding it, depict accurately the difficulties of field executives in dealing with directives from the Bureau, they are given here in detail.

In 1914 Mr. Runke had been promoted and transferred to the Western Navajo Agency at Tuba City in north central Arizona. I have before me the letter from Commissioner Cato Sells instructing Mr. Runke in his new duties. This letter is an excellent example of the spacious, uninformed, apostolic dicta from the ivory tower to its far better informed field executives. I quote it verbatim:

Department of the Interior,
Office of Indian Affairs,
Washington, May 19, 1914.

My dear Mr. Runke:

Steps are being taken to carry out your transfer to the position of Superintendent of the Western Navajo Reservation, Arizona, and with reference to your new appointment I wish to invite your attention to some of the responsibilities which you will assume in connection therewith.

It is my ambition that my administration shall show real and substantial advancement of the American Indians. I appreciate that to accomplish this I must have effective, energetic and enthusiastic aid

WALTER RUNKE DURING HIS EARLY YEARS IN THE INDIAN SERVICE
He was superintendent of the Western Navajo Agency at Tuba City, in north central Arizona. He now lives in Flagstaff.

Superintendent Runke Setting Out on a Long Drive to Inspect His Nearly Roadless Reservation

from my field representatives. I expect you to do your part in accomplishing the advancement of the Indians which I have in mind. With your experience it should only be necessary for me to emphasize a few of the important things which should receive your especial attention.

It is my belief that the greatest menace to the Indian is whisky. The Navajo Indian, living so far away from the railroad and the saloons of the white man, has not been serious [*sic*] affected by this curse, and I wish to impress upon you the fact that it is your first duty to save the Indians from further knowledge of liquor.

Real marriages according to law and Christian principles have not lately been introduced at Western Navajo. The adoption by these Indians of proper marital relations is of the utmost importance.

The health conditions should receive your careful attention. Trachoma is prevalent and steps should be taken to eradicate it. Do what you can to aid the bright sunshine of Arizona in rendering more sanitary the homes of these Indians. Remember it is much easier to prevent the development of disease than to stamp it out after it has gained a foothold.

Get as many children into school as practicable. Watch your returned students and see if you cannot make them a means of developing the home life of the Indians rather than permitting the Indians at home to pull them back to the old way of living.

The industrial hope of the Western Navajo Indians is stock-raising. I believe you have a tremendous field in which you can not only increase the herds of cattle and sheep but can improve the breed. Get away from your office. Get out among the Indians. Get your employees out among them. Learn to understand your Indians. We must develop and improve the stock-raising industry here. This is vital to the Indians and I must hold you responsible for making real advancement for them.

See that your employees render full and efficient services under their several appointments and report promptly all unnecessary positions that may be abolished.

I appreciate that there will be difficulties in your new position, but I am confident that with your experience you will overcome them and achieve real and substantial progress for the Indians for whom you will be responsible.

Sincerely yours,
(Signed) Cato Sells
Commissioner.

Let us look at this land of promise where Mr. Runke was directed to work his miracles. Western Navajo consisted of

a wild, eroded, semidesert area of 750,000 acres. Here lived eight thousand nomadic Indians who must move from hogan to hogan, from camp to camp, to find grazing for their flocks (the Navajos at this agency had no herds of cattle—those the Commissioner wanted improved.) Mr. Runke had no motor vehicle of any kind. On the reservation there were few roads over which such a vehicle could be driven. There was one unimproved wagon road to Flagstaff, eighty miles away. To cover this area of 750,000 acres Mr. Runke had one or more mule teams.

Mr. Runke was told to keep the Indians from further knowledge of whisky—knowledge they had had from Spanish times. Many miles south of the agency at Tuba City was the Santa Fe Railroad with its scattering of wide-open towns. Could Mr. Runke, nearly one hundred miles away, prevent them from riding there to buy the whisky white men were willing to sell them illicitly? He had not one enforcement officer to help him supervise illicit sales to Indians.

Mr. Runke was admonished to introduce Christian marriage.

It is a proven fact that Navajos are more moral in their sex relationships than white people. Among them there is less promiscuity and there are fewer divorces than among us, in proportion to numbers. Their customs regulating marriage were in force before ever a Christian marriage was performed in the Northern Hemisphere. These customs are more uniform than are our own varying state laws. Like these state laws the Navajo custom provides for divorce for causes like our own—infidelity, failure to provide, and cruel treatment. But the Navajos have no Reno. More than other tribes the Navajos recognize the rights of their woman. It is the woman who takes the initiative in divorce proceedings, usually after seeking the advice of her clan.

Navajos are wards of the Federal government. If a Navajo is married by the Church or by the justice of the

peace, he cannot obtain a divorce in any state—even if he has the money to pay for it. The state will tell him, "You are a ward of the Federal government. Go to it for your divorce." And no provision is made for divorce under any Federal law. Once so married, he stays married. Has the Commissioner lifted up his voice to condemn the divorce laws of his own state of Texas, which grants divorces for five causes, saying, in effect, "There shall be no divorce"?

The Navajo is highly religious—superstitious, if you like. His beliefs are woven into the details of daily life, even, as with the Hopis, to the time and method of planting his corn. Interference with his beliefs results in an astonishing interference with everyday acts. This the Indian keenly resents.

The Navajos practice polygamy as do many people of many countries. Their males are able to live amicably with more than one woman—which seems to argue something, if only the wives' capacity to endure.

Mr. Runke was directed to take steps to eradicate trachoma.

At the agency there was one physician and one practical nurse. In 1914 trachoma was little understood, its treatment being still in the exploratory stage. At the low salary paid that physician, was it reasonable to expect him to be a specialist in a disease rare among white people? This physician, too, had only a mule team for transportation. In the Commissioner's letter there was no promise that a clinic would be established as the first necessary step to eradicate an already prevalent disease. The Indians preferred to take their inflamed eyes to their medicine men. How could the physician get in touch with his patients, how persuade them to yield to his treatment—a treatment of which he could have known little?

Mr. Runke was directed to get the children into the boarding school at Tuba City.

Implicit in the Commissioner's letter was his acceptance of the inept and erroneous policy of Indian education, a

policy that destroyed family life, disregarded the human right, recognized by all men, of parents in their own children. It was a policy that ignored the necessity of building upon what was good and fitting in the tribal way of life. Instead, it attempted to destroy what the Indians already had.

Mr. Runke was to increase and improve the flocks of these Indians and build up their herds of nonexistent cows.

Had the Commissioner ever ridden over this eroded land that was slowly dying after a century of overgrazing? Did he offer any program, however inadequate, for erosion control and soil conservation? Had he seen the half-famished flocks of sheep and goats he wished increased—the increase that was to be the symbol of Mr. Runke's success as an executive? How was Mr. Runke to improve the breed? There was no promise of even one pedigreed ram in the Commissioner's letter. Neither was there mention of the one great potential source of income for these Navajos, nor did the Commissioner direct Mr. Runke to encourage its development. These people possessed a natural, inborn capacity to produce incomparable rugs and the finest silver and turquoise jewelry. Yet, as late as 1914, the Indian Bureau had not even considered these Indians worthy of encouragement or had it proposed any steps to help them market their products.

Was Mr. Runke to be given additional and skilled men to implement his efforts? No, he was directed to report all unnecessary positions that they might be abolished.

Instead, for his earnest attempts to carry out the Commissioner's spacious instructions, Mr. Runke found himself charged with murder.

At the time the Western Navajo Agency was established it offered new homes to the crowded population of the Eastern Navajo Agency in New Mexico. With the peaceful Indians there also came a small band of renegade Navajos who were the descendants of the band that had evaded capture by the army at the time the Navajos were subdued.

Tuba City, Western Navajo Agency, at the Time Superintendent Walter Runke was Charged with Murder

The small group of buildings in the foreground accent the immensity of the surrounding desert

A Western Navajo Trading Post at Moenkopi, a Hopi Village Near Tuba City, Arizona

These outlaws established themselves at Navajo Mountain, an almost inaccessible part of the reservation, and for many years preyed alike on their own tribe and on any whites who ventured near them. They declared and maintained their independence of the agent at Tuba City, sixty-five miles distant.

Included in this band of outlaws was Tattytin.

Tattytin weighed 202 pounds on the trader's scales. Habitually he went armed, as many Navajos did. From reports sent the Bureau by Mr. Runke and his predecessors, it was obvious that this Indian was insane. He was given to violent rages followed by fits of weeping and, he claimed, pains in his head. For years he had terrorized the law-abiding Navajos and all women went in fear of him. He had been repeatedly reported for theft, and more than once for rape. When a former agent tried to get one of his daughters into the school, Tattytin had gouged out one of her eyes with a piece of baling wire, saying:

"I'll fix her so she can't go to school."

When Tattytin went shopping at the nearest trading post, the trader had a loaded shotgun within easy reach under the counter—just in case. At the time of Mr. Runke's appointment, no official effort had been made to confine this Indian.

Western Navajo had the usual Indian police force to aid in law enforcement. These men were paid a small sum monthly. One of their duties was to bring to the school the pupils whose parents did not voluntarily see that they came. At Western Navajo the police had not only failed to perform this duty but, on the several occasions when Mr. Runke had sent them to Navajo Mountain to bring in Tattytin, had returned without him. Tattytin said he was too sick to ride his horse.

The Indian police were failing to get the children into school. To accomplish this, Mr. Runke asked the Bureau to establish the position of truant officer. This was done and a young white man, Ashley Wilson, was appointed.

He had a ranch adjacent to the reservation, was on friendly terms with the Navajos, and spoke their language. Stationed at Marsh Pass was the white agency farmer, David Robertson. These two men also found themselves charged with murder.

Because the Indian police also failed to bring Tattytin to the agency to be tried before the Indian court for his offenses against other Indians—Indians who wanted the outlaw punished for his crimes—Mr. Runke sent Ashley Wilson and David Robertson to Navajo Mountain to bring in the Indian. They secured him with considerable difficulty and handcuffed him. On their way back to the agency they were met at the trading post by some thirty armed and hostile Indians and a gun fight was avoided only when the white men accepted Tattytin's sworn word that he would come voluntarily to the agency and bring with him another daughter who had not returned to school. The men came back empty-handed. Neither Tattytin nor his daughter appeared at the agency.

Again Mr. Runke sent Ashley Wilson to bring Tattytin in. This time Wilson was accompanied by Edward Nash, a white worker on Wilson's ranch. They located Tattytin only after a long search, as the Indian had moved to a distant hogan.

Again the Indian claimed to be too sick to ride his horse. The white men told him they would return and bring the agency doctor to give him medicine if he would promise to stay where he now was so the doctor could find him. Again they returned to the agency without the Indian. They reported they could see no visible symptoms of sickness in the Indian.

Meanwhile, friendly Indians came to the agency to report that the hostile band at Navajo Mountain was threatening to ride to Tuba City and burn the agency. These Indians keenly resented having white men sent to arrest Tattytin instead of the Indian police, who were afraid.

The crisis had to be met. Mr. Runke acted within his authority when he deputized Robertson, Wilson, and Nash, in writing, to go to Navajo Mountain to secure Tattytin. These men were armed. Mr. Runke and the physician were to accompany them with the mule team. They were unarmed. The deputized men were to ride their horses to Navajo Mountain, secure the Indian, and bring him to the trading post, beyond which the mule team could not go for lack of a road. There Mr. Runke and the physician would meet them.

In deputizing the white men in writing, Mr. Runke used a phrase which later was to be twisted in a legal sense to support the charge that the killing of Tattytin was premeditated. In view of the many times the Indian had evaded arrest by claiming he was too sick to ride his horse, Mr. Runke instructed the deputized men "to bring him in on a stretcher if necessary." The stretcher being the mule team which was sent along for that purpose, if the Indian should be found unable to ride his horse.

This party of five left Tuba City the morning of January 25, the three mounted men riding ahead. At that elevation of six thousand feet it was bitterly cold. Snow began falling early in the day and obliterated the road. Night found the mule team completely lost. Mr. Runke and the physician made cold camp for the night. The mounted men made better progress. They found the camp deserted where Tattytin had promised to await the doctor's arrival. They made camp there for the night. They had only one feed for their horses that had carried them many long miles that day.

Next morning—it was still snowing—they searched the hogans in the vicinity, covering some miles in doing so. The search ended when they entered a hogan to find Tattytin, two male Indians, one deaf and nearly blind, the other accompanied by his three wives and two children. Wives and children fled at sight of the white men. Wilson was the first to push aside the blanket at the entrance. "All

right, boys," he called. "The search is over." Wilson shook hands with Tattytin and the other two Indians, as did Robertson when he entered. Nash remained at the door.

Tattytin had drawn his blanket around him when Wilson entered, but not before Wilson saw that he was wearing his gun. In English, Wilson said, "He's got his gun on. I saw it under his blanket. We've got to get it."

Robertson seized the Indian by his right arm, Wilson by his left. Wilson made a vain attempt to secure Tattytin's gun, saying in Navajo, "Tattytin, you've got a gun. We want it."

Two hundred pounds of angry, demented Indian went into action. Easily he threw off Wilson's hold and struck him a savage blow in the stomach that sent him sprawling on the dirt floor. With his left hand the Indian pulled his gun. Wilson regained his feet and advanced. Tattytin placed the muzzle of his gun against Wilson's chest and fired. Wilson did not draw his gun until the Indian had drawn his.

Wilson's life had been saved by a bit of red calico! (His life was soon to be lost on a battlefield in France.)

The Navajos, when riding, tie their guns to the holster to keep them from working loose. Taken by surprise, Tattytin was wearing his gun with the butt wrapped in a bit of cloth in such a manner that the hammer was retarded by the cloth tangled in front of and between the hammer and cartridge.

With the Indian's gun still pointed at him, Wilson fired, inflicting a flesh wound in the Indian's right shoulder. During the struggle Robertson's hold on Tattytin's right arm became loosened and the Indian was working frantically to remove the cloth. Wilson's second shot hit him in the back one inch above the lower border of the ribs because, in the struggle, Robertson had turned the Indian partially around. Neither shot stopped Tattytin. He had wrested his right arm free, whirled, and had Wilson covered at a distance of two feet when Wilson again fired, this

time to kill. It had all been a matter of seconds, during which Nash remained by the door.

Surrounded by hostile Indians, the three white men stood not upon the order of their going. Wilson took the Indian's gun, an examination of which showed that the cloth had worked loose to where the next shot would have been effective. There were three cartridges, one under the hammer.

The Indian had not been killed in his own village. Had he been, more than the one Indian would have followed the white men. This one later testified that he followed them "to kill or be killed." In his attempt to cut them off, he forced his horse through an impassible ravine, exhausted it, and had to give up the chase.

The search by these men for the lost mule team, their finding it, and the return to the agency is an odyssey in itself, which here must be omitted. Horses and mules played out on the long drive to the agency, reached at three o'clock in the morning. During that drive they rode in constant fear of ambush.

The agency was isolated by the deep snow. For a week no one could get through to Flagstaff, eighty miles distant. There was no telephone line, no way for Mr. Runke to report the matter to the Bureau. Meanwhile, friendly Indians rode in to warn the men at the agency that a band from Navajo Mountain was riding in to burn the buildings. The handful of men at the agency armed themselves as best they could. The women went about their work—and prayed.

Only one man at the agency showed the white feather. He was not an agency employee but was engaged at Tuba City in supervising the construction of a bridge. He had his own car, the only one available. He decided not to await the arrival of Tattytin's avengers. He succeeded in getting within eighteen miles of Flagstaff, where his car broke down. He walked eight miles, spent the night at a ranch house, and walked into Flagstaff the following morn-

ing. Here he burned up the wires to Washington. He wired the Indian Bureau that the Navajos were rising, that the agency might already have been burned, that Flagstaff might be attacked!

Headlines ran like a rash in the nation's press. There was an uprising of the Navajo tribe—the Hopi tribe—the Zuni tribe! Meanwhile, a friendly Navajo reported to Mr. Runke that a small band had indeed ridden in from Navajo Mountain and were camped for the night a short distance from the agency. For a night attack? No doubt they were an angry bunch of armed outlaws, but outlaws who knew well that they did not have the support of their tribe, from which they were outcasts.

A little diplomacy seemed indicated. Mr. Runke knew these Indians were hungry. He sent to their camp an ample supply of food from the agency, including plenty of sugar! That they rode next morning with unusually full stomachs may have been partially responsible for their entering the agency grounds riding single file—among the Navajos a sign of friendly approach. Mr. Runke, his right hand on the revolver concealed in his coat pocket, walked out alone to meet them.

"*Ha-ah-la-ni, Sickas?*" How are you, brother?

They returned the greeting, shaking hands all around.

"What do you want, my friend?"

"I have a sick child. I want medicine."

He got the medicine—from a physician also with a gun in his pocket. They did some shopping at the store—then rode peaceably away toward Navajo Mountain. So far as they were concerned the shooting was over. For Mr. Runke and his deputized men it had only begun.

The Bureau sent in its investigators. Did the Bureau inform these men of the reports in its files that proved Tattytin guilty of many criminal acts over a period of years? Apparently not. Did these investigators avail themselves of similar reports in the agency files? Had they done so, would they have appeared before a grand jury in Pres-

cott with a charge of murder against Runke, Wilson, Robertson, and Nash?

I had worked with one of these investigators, had confidence in his integrity. I do not know his motive or how he justified his action. In this narrative I feel free to criticize only those among my fellow workers who failed in their duty to the Indians—a category which includes myself. But from having access to the records, I do know that much of the information possessed by all the investigators came from men from an adjoining reservation, men not directly concerned and who had no right to have their counsel heeded. I know, too, that if all details of the inimical action taken against Mr. Runke had been exposed, one of the most shameful examples of trouble caused on reservations by missionaries of conflicting creeds would have been brought into the open.

On the evidence of these investigators the four men were indicted for murder. As accessory before the fact, Mr. Runke was admitted to bail. The deputized men in jail were without funds. To defend their lives and his own, Mr. Runke exhausted his savings of sixteen years in the Bureau's service. Did those blameless years avail him anything? Did the Bureau come forward with its proof of Tattytin's criminal record, his undoubted insanity? Did it help Mr. Runke to defend his life?

The answer is no.

When Mr. Runke petitioned the Bureau to call him to Washington to present his case in person, Commissioner Sells refused. When Mr. Runke asked that a legal representative from the Bureau be sent to help present his interests, the Bureau sent, not a legal representative, but The Pot. At the trial of the three deputized men in Federal court in Prescott, The Pot, as the Bureau's representative, worked in behalf of and testified for the prosecution!

At the trial the two male Indians present in the hogan when Tattytin was killed were called upon to testify. The Indian with the three wives testified that Tattytin had no

gun and that only one shot had been fired. The nearly blind old Indian said he had seen and heard little of the fight. Other testimony brought to light the extreme resentment of the outlaws at Navajo Mountain against Mr. Runke for employing white men, first to get their children into school and later to try to arrest Tattytin. His Indian police, fearful of these outlaws, had failed to do these two things. Maintaining law and order on his reservation is the paramount duty of all superintendents. Acting within his authority in attempting to fulfill this duty, Mr. Runke found himself charged with murder.

The verdict—"Not guilty."

Later, in final refutation of the unwarranted charge, an act of Congress reimbursed Mr. Runke for the funds spent in defending the lives of four guiltless men against the Bureau's efforts to send them to the gallows.

CHAPTER 30

THERE HAVE been several horses in my life. There would have been more could I have so arranged it. But it was not until I reached an Indian reservation that I saw a mule. Someone should write a roundelay about Indian Service mules. I was thankful that at least they got enough to eat.

Early in my Indian Service experience I managed to attend the grand circuit races. A vivid memory is one of Dan Patch, driven by Ed Geers. No perceptive person could look at that horse, beauty and rhythm incarnate, without realizing that nature had cast man in a far less beautiful mold. The sheer pride a horse can know is purer than any we mortals may feel, or at least any we deserve to feel. And a starved, broken-down horse is only one of the many monuments man erects to his own brutality.

The Indian Service was the last Federal department to be motorized. Long after cars replaced horses on our highways, mules remained our chief means of reservation transport. It seems fitting that the promise which radically changed my way of life was asked and given when riding behind a team of old Indian Service mules. I had ridden so many long reservation miles behind slow-gaited mules, ridden in many moods: of apprehension, of enforced contentment, even of mild pleasure. This final ride was the only joyous one.

The man who asked for that promise was forty-seven. The woman who gave it was nine years younger. We had

driven the car to Camelback Mountain for a Saturday afternoon picnic. On the way back we ran out of gas and accepted a ride from the driver of the school mule team. Since it is difficult to make mules consonant with romance, well—there was a floppy-brimmed, flower-trimmed hat worn on that picnic that was to be mutually treasured through thirteen years of marriage—a marriage delayed partly from circumstances, partly from a serious illness, until 1918.

I had been at Phoenix for several years with no increase in salary. Reluctantly I asked for a transfer. The promotional transfer assigned me to Osage Agency, Pawhuska, Oklahoma. In nearly fourteen years I had climbed that shaky ladder from fifty dollars to ninety dollars a month. In another fifteen years I might hope for a salary which would permit some small provision for old age. But such a hope and skirts were incompatible. That hope could find lodgment only in male trousers. Even there it felt faint.

I sold the used car for nearly what I had paid for it, to a blowzy female in a magenta shirtwaist. Somehow I felt I had been faithless to that car. When I left Pima I had sold my horse for ten dollars more than I paid for him, but I sold considerably more horse than I bought.

From Phoenix I took with me three stories of Joseph Escalanti, each written to quiet the mental unease which overtook me from time to time. In no other way could I cast that burden from me—the burden I did not want and could not understand. Why had it been placed upon me?

The history of the Osage Indians is one more example of time coming along to upset a stolen applecart.

In 1803 President Jefferson paid Napoleon $15,000,000 for the province of Louisiana. During my first year at Osage, a small segment of that province paid the Osage Indians $17,000,000 in oil and gas revenues. At the time

One of the Better Roads of the Reservation
In the Navajo Mountain Area of northern Arizona

The Main Street of Western Navajo Agency
When Walter Runke was in charge as superintendent

of purchase the Osages had lived within the province, where they had fought with the French against the British. With other tribes, their migration westward was caused by the westward trend of white exploration. In 1825 they ceded by treaty their "Title, rights and interest to land in Missouri, Arkansas, and further West." In return the Osages were given, also by treaty, a reservation in Kansas. The Indians who sold the island of Manhattan for twenty-four dollars had a better sense of land values!

Following the Civil War white settlers moved into Kansas where they looked enviously at Osage land. Presently Congress authorized the sale of the Osage land, some five million acres, and the expenditure of a part or all of the proceeds for the purchase of a new reservation in Indian Territory. It was to be purchased from the Cherokees, whose holdings at that time were large.

But the proud Cherokees demurred. They did not want the blanket Osages for close neighbors. The land eventually sold the Osages was well to the northward and the Cherokees considered it of little value. For some twenty years the Osages lived in poverty. Then in 1896 oil was discovered on the land the Cherokees had sold as well-nigh worthless. In my first year at Pawhuska, the financial transactions handled in the agency office aggregated $35,963,317. No doubt the Cherokees were disconsolately pondering the irony of fate.

Under the Osage Act of June 28, 1906, each man, woman, and child was allotted about 657 acres. Of these, 160 acres were inalienable and nontaxable for twenty-five years. Allottees could sell their surplus land after receiving a certificate of competency from the Secretary of the Interior. The Osage allotment roll contained 2,229 names. These names belong to the richest people, per capita, on earth. The roll was the Osage social register, their carefully guarded Tables of Stone. It was their law and their profits. To these 2,229 Indians and their heirs were reserved all oil, gas, and mineral rights for a period of twenty-five

years. Revenues from these rights were shared equally by all allottees, irrespective of age or sex.

The annual income of an Osage was approximately $10,000. A family of two, with two minor children, thus received an annual income of $40,000. This did not include funds received as heirs of deceased relatives. Here the Indian problem was being rapidly, and singularly, solved, the solvent a flood of liquid gold and white blood. Of 546 full bloods, 100 were married to whites. Of 630 Indians of mixed blood, 600 had married white people. Since the discovery of oil some 40 per cent of the full bloods have died of dissipation. And of the original reservation, white people owned 425,000 acres.

The credit of Indians still classified as incompetent was good. Bills for their purchases at local stores were sent to the agency, where it was my duty to pay them. In one month an Indian woman spent $1,279 for food and clothing. Another spent $743 in twenty-four days for similar purposes. A man and wife spent $1,084 in one month, another couple $1,336 in the same period. The list could be extended *ad nauseam*. My voucher covering such expenditures for a period of three months totaled slightly over one million dollars.

In the able, honest hands of Superintendent J. George Wright, the sources of Osage wealth were wisely conserved. There was none of the exploitation that had made Oklahoma notorious for its despoliation of other oil-enriched tribes. But the Bureau had no program for social and educational advancement of the Osages. They were free to set their moccasined feet on the broad road to extinction via gluttony and new automobiles. They were having a wonderful time on the way.

In this work the only way to forget Indians for a time was to be too ill to remember them. By this method I forgot the Osages for three months. The results of the surgical botchery of nearly ten years before finally caught

up with me after tagging unpleasantly in the rear. When a competent surgeon got his first look at my mutilated belly, he was startled into an unprofessional exclamation:

"Who in hell butchered you like that!"

"I've forgotten his name, but I've always thought he used a tomahawk."

I did not go down into the valley of shadow. I climbed. I climbed the hill from whence cometh my help. Part of the time I knew I was in a hospital room watching the surgeon add a new gadget to his complicated surgical handiwork. Part of the time I climbed that steep hill at the top of which there would be no more pain. At first, as I climbed, I carried memories of friends, of books, of the desert. I held desperately to thoughts of the man I loved and hoped to live to marry. But as I climbed, strength left me, and memories faded. I climbed in a vacuum of pain. Nothing remained but pain and the promise of release from it at the top of the hill.

At times I knew the kind hands of the nurse were helping me, knew she was saying, "Please try to drink this." But I could not drink it. At times the hill I climbed was crowned with the desert's purple and gold, at times with the green of irrigated fields. When I neared the top of the hill I was wading through snow to my waist. I could not breathe for pain. I knew the nurse was helping me through the drifts, felt the prick of the needle. I reached the hilltop where stood a frozen water tank with scaling red paint. Then I knew I was in a hospital room with the nurse saying, "You must take this. You must."

I learned I had been climbing that hill for two weeks.

My imp of derision jogged my elbow that now was all bone and no flesh. I was too weak to speak. The nurse had left the temperature chart on the bedside table, thinking I was too sick to notice it. I managed to write a ribald limerick on the back of that chart and gave it to the surgeon to read. The limerick dealt with the various gadgets added unto me and the surprisingly large number

of indignities to which the human body can be subjected.

The surgeon read with difficulty. Then he grinned.

"Decided to get well, have you? You'd better. You're not ready to die."

Weeks later, when I paid the surgeon, nurse, and hospital fees, I found my savings of years were not enough and they cried out for more. To satisfy them, I went back to work at Osage for nearly a year. But because of the operation I could leave off the elastic stockings. And high time, too. A husband was just around the corner, and behind him hobbled narrow, short skirts unpredictable in the length and scope of their revelations.

The emancipation of feminine legs had its ludicrous aftermath. An alarmed member of Congress, as reported by a delighted press, rose to argue vigorously the immediate need of legislation to prohibit the wearing by women of clothes that aroused the passions of men. Somehow his speech led readers to envision dire happenings on the streets of Washington if Congress adjourned for the day and girl clerks in short skirts reached the streets at the same time. One could only wonder how so poorly seasoned a man ever reached the halls of Congress, how much of his timid, prurient adolescent curiosity had been frustrated by long skirts. Or was he merely envious of a generation of young men given visual proof, not only of what milady's legs looked like, but how much of her figure was flesh and how much artfully rounded cotton wool?

There were equally alarmed churchmen who thundered virtuously against the sacrilege of women being devout with their knees showing. The net result of this chorus from legislative halls and pulpits was that women cut another inch off their skirts. If church and state had been content to leave well enough alone, the world might have been spared the sight of so many knobby knees. Both had had time to learn that the only certainty they possessed about women was her unpredictability.

Man has altered his earth and skies and seas. Give him

time enough and he will have all the unpredictable rivers dammed and controlled, all the wastelands growing vegetables, all the people allocated to their respective vines and fig trees and guarded by predictions of the weather. Women remain about the only thing whose conduct he cannot predict by any logic known to him. An excellent state of affairs, too. Were women as predictable in their reactions to circumstances as are men, life would be the weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable existence a poet lamented. In a world which man seems bent on regimenting before he blows it to hell, the illogical element provided by women may well become the only salt to savor the tasteless dish man's logic had cooked up.

And we were at war.

CHAPTER 31

IT WAS ironical that in the spring of 1918, when I was about to leave the Indian Service, an action of mine at Phoenix should result in a highly unpleasant episode at Osage. Shortly before leaving Phoenix I had had the temerity, privately, to report to the superintendent the offensive speech and conduct of one of our Service gods, Inspector X. This middle-aged, petty politician had recently been appointed by the Bureau as one of its hired hunters of the reputations of women. He had chosen Phoenix as his first hunting ground. I had been introduced to this minor deity at breakfast one Sunday morning. A little later I was driving into town to church. I overtook the Inspector walking along the road and offered him a lift. Never did any good intention of mine turn itself into so colossal a paving brick. That intention was concerned with the new threat to girl students.

Inspector X began at once to tell me in great detail of his current love affair with a friend of his wife, an affair he had reluctantly interrupted to accept this appointment. He said he was reconciled to accepting it only because it gave him opportunity to learn at first hand the sexual attractions of Indian girls. He hoped to find some girls at our schools who had learned to do something besides knit. He commented truthfully and disparagingly on the large number of widows and old maids at Phoenix, a kind of game too old to attract his favorable attentions. And doubtless he believed he was paying me the highest possible compliment when he found me worthy of the bestowal of

his attentions and his roving hands began exploring the situation.

I drove for one block with my left hand, using the other to fend him off. Any woman who has found herself in this situation knows that one defensive feminine hand is inadequate against two offensive male paws. I stopped at a crossing and, lying, told him I had to turn there to reach the church. He got out reluctantly, using my leg for leverage.

I pulled down my skirt and went to church, doubtless the angriest person who ever listened to a sermon without hearing a word of it. But I did decide upon my course of action. Did the Bureau know what kind of a wolf it had loosed in the fold it took great pains to maintain in a one-sided, unnatural purity? If it didn't, it soon would.

On Monday morning I made my report privately to the superintendent. He was genuinely incensed. He did not tell me what action, if any, he would take. I knew well the risk I incurred in making that report. I also knew I had put the superintendent in an unpleasant position. He was a man of many years' experience and had come up from the ranks to his present high office. Yet he, too, must walk warily before this minor political overlord.

Now, on another Sunday morning at Osage, I was called to the phone in my quarters in town. There had been no room at the school for me. A cold, unfriendly voice identified itself as belonging to Inspector X.

"I'm on my way to Washington from Phoenix. I've stopped here to interview you. Where can I see you?"

I managed to ask: "You wish to see me officially?"

"Certainly, and at once."

"I'll be in the office in the morning, Inspector."

"I'm taking the evening train. I'll see you now."

I would not see this man alone, or without witnesses at the interview. I said I would meet him in front of the local hotel. On my way there, I remembered that it was on another Sunday morning that a good intention of mine

had gone astray. I did not intend that another should go to keep it company.

The Inspector was waiting for me. Without preamble, he said: "You reported me to the superintendent at Phoenix for using indecent language to you?"

"I certainly did."

"And he reported it to the Bureau. I've been waiting——"

I interrupted. "What did the Bureau do?"

"Nothing. Those men in the Bureau are not a bunch of eunuchs like you field people. I've been waiting to get that man. I can't get him for inefficiency. But I've had him watched. Now I think I can get him. Trouble is, those people back there are afraid to talk. They must know, but they deny it. You worked there for a long time, so you must know about it."

"About what?"

"The immoral relations between that superintendent and Miss ———" He named the middle-aged, highly respectable head matron at that school.

I had apprehended trouble for myself from the interview, but certainly nothing like this. "That's absurd, Inspector. That woman is incapable of——"

"Don't think you can have me reported to the Bureau and get away with it. I can't get you for inefficiency either. But I can get *you*. Trouble is, I need your testimony. I'm going to put you under oath and take your affidavit. If you'll tell me what you know about those two people, I'll overlook your part in it. Come in the hotel. Tell me what you know. And make it good."

I thought of that matron whose reputation was firmly based on a rigidly moral foundation. With other women at the school, I had mildly resented her efforts to impose her rigid views on others. I knew from birth she had been a sour baby, that an illicit love affair was beyond her range of conduct. That superintendent had supported this woman both in her views and in her management of the

Estelle Aubrey Brown
The photograph was taken about a year before she left the Indian Service in June, 1918.

girls in her charge. I knew the superintendent to be a man who was devoted to his wife and family. Furthermore, I did not believe any man would jeopardize position and reputation merely to indulge himself in an affair with an unattractive spinster capsuled in sectarianism.

And I was being asked to help Inspector X get his man—with a woman thrown in for good measure!

The boiling point was reached quickly. Angry words poured out with no conscious effort on my part, born of years of contempt for officials who used the methods this man was using.

"I know you are a misbegotten cur!"

I left him standing on the sidewalk with his mouth open. I knew when he closed it, it would be upon the determination to drive me out of the Service, disgraced. (On my way back to quarters, I made a mental apology to all dogs. Even in applying to Inspector X the word for a worthless canine, I had slandered them.)

I was not greatly perturbed, however. For I was leaving the Indian Service. In two weeks I would be beyond the Inspector's clutches—or so I thought.

Inspector X did not then get his man. That was to come later. He met with no trouble at all in getting me. He spread throughout the field service the canard that my long, severe illness in the hospital had been caused by an abortion.

CHAPTER 32

I STEPPED down from the shaky ladder I had climbed for sixteen years. Of the money I had earned in those years, there remained in my purse a sum less than the seventy-five dollars I had borrowed to enter the Indian Service.

I took with me seven crude stories of Joseph Escalanti and a determination to learn to write so that I might tell his story acceptably. I did not understand the urge that drove me. Telling that story would rectify no old wrongs, would prevent no new ones. I thought I was leaving the Indian Service forever. I was never to leave it. For with those seven stories I took with me a hound of heaven that was to bay at my heels through all the years to come. "I fled him, down the arches of the years."

In addition to the hound of heaven and an anemic purse I took with me from the Indian Service my own indictment of it as I had watched it operate for the sixteen years prior to 1918. In that indictment I pulled no punches. In it I needed beefsteak for my own blackened eyes.

In my indictment what was meant by the Indian Bureau? Certainly not the few scores of clerks who handled its voluminous and self-propagated paper work. Few of those clerks ever saw an Indian reservation and their knowledge of Indians was even less than my own. That indictment covered only the commissioners, assistant commissioners, and the minor Bureau of Indian Affairs executives who formulated and enforced the inept, unin-

telligent, and frequently dishonest policies by which the American Indian had been systematically exploited.

I charged the Bureau with betrayal of the trust reposed in it by the American people, a people dedicated to human equality, the right to a voice in their own government, to social and religious freedom. These rights, which we claim for ourselves, we owe to all minority groups within our borders. The Bureau denied the Indians these rights.

I charged the Bureau with crass ignorance. A knowledge of Indian and reservation problems had never been considered a requisite for the commissionership. Commissioners had been politicians, some small, some smaller, rewarded for party activities. Reservation conditions as late as 1918 proved these men to have been men without vision, without understanding of the human and racial problems implicit in their task. Lacking vision, they felt no need to delegate that task to informed and knowledgeable assistants. They dealt with a primitive people, yet they saw no need to employ anthropologists and ethnologists to help these people to adjust themselves to the alien civilization which had submerged them. The Bureau had been entrusted with the education of thousands of Indian children, but it employed no skilled educators. They were men without vision who thought they could perform a task requiring precision tools and skilled labor with gadgets from the five-and-dime.

I charged the Bureau with theft. It is possible that a mistaken altruism may have motivated the original policy of allotting land in severalty to Indians, with its corollary of fee patents and future sale. That policy early proved detrimental to Indian welfare, but in 1918 it was being continued as politically expedient since it was profitable to land-hungry whites.

There was a theft of monies from the United States Treasury. Without consent of the tribal owners, funds were used to build dams, bridges, and small irrigation projects which were far more beneficial to whites than to

the Indians. Congress is without power to appropriate public funds for the support of sectarian schools. The Bureau could—and did. Many thousands of dollars of tribal funds were turned over to various church organizations for maintenance of sectarian schools. Adult Indians, to whom these funds belonged, went hungry. They were living ever on the hunger level of existence, living on dog meat and offal from the kitchens of those sectarian schools. Many of them may have been partially or totally blinded from trachoma. Others suffered from tuberculosis in all its forms. They became sick with the diseases to which half-famished, unclean flesh is heir. But their funds in the Treasury, in many cases derived from the enforced sale of their surplus land, were not used to combat their physical ills.

So brazen had been the Bureau's legally contrived theft of land, water rights, timber and mineral rights, that small groups of white people banded together to thwart, or try to thwart, these acts of despoliation. Two such organizations were the Indians' Rights Association and the American Indian Defense Association—names which pointed the need of the Indian for protection against various acts of his guardian. Some measure of success had attended the efforts of these two groups. More often their efforts were aborted by pressure groups in the Bureau and in Congress.

I charged the Bureau with wholesale kidnaping.

Its inept and largely ineffectual system of Indian education was based on kidnaping, the separation for long periods of young children from their parents. Aside from its inhumanity, this system failed to recognize the fact that the family must furnish the foundation of any successful structure of racial betterment.

I charged the Bureau with being accessory to the death of many Indian children. For years the Bureau had posed as a humane agency of succor, of training for citizenship. On every reservation it maintained industrial boarding

schools. A number of men served as commissioners during those years. What manner of men were they? Were they themselves fathers? Did they ask what kind and how much food they could have given their own children on the sum they asked Congress to appropriate to feed an Indian child daily, a child required to perform hard labor half of each day? None of us in the field service ever knew what that sum was. The Bureau kept its shameful secret well. Field workers knew only that the sum was inadequate. I held these commissioners responsible for every undernourished and overworked boy and girl I watched sicken in their schools, later to be sent home to die in the squalor of their reservation homes. For these men alone held the remedy, but they did not see that it was applied. The Indian has always had friends in Congress as well as enemies. There can be little doubt that remedial action would have been taken by Congress had the Bureau demonstrated the need for it.

My indictment included many of the missionaries I had seen on reservations. These workers, and I readily grant they were sincere and earnest, had hitched the doctrinal cart before the mystical horse. They tended to despise the Indian's own code of ethics, the religious beliefs and ceremonials, to which he had the same rights as the missionaries had to theirs. They sought to destroy the Indian's faith and impose their own. The vitiating factor in missionary work had been sectarianism. The schism between Protestant and Catholic workers on the same reservation had frequently been deeper than the gulf between them and the Indians. On the whole, Catholic workers had been the more successful, as they were willing to erect a Christian structure on the Indians' pagan cornerstone.

And in my indictment of the Indian Service I included myself.

I entered the Service believing implicitly in the Bureau's wise and honorable aims. Disillusionment came slowly. I

was one of a poorly educated, untrained group of people. I learned that dissent meant loss of a means of livelihood. But I saw something of the destitution and disease on reservations. I saw sick, hungry, and overworked children. And I did nothing. I was cowardly and acquiescent.

> They that have done this deed are honorable.
> What private griefs they have, alas, I know not,
> What made them do it; they are wise and honorable,
> And will, no doubt, with reasons answer you. . . .
>
> So are they all, all honorable men——

CHAPTER 33

OF THE PLANS Harry and I had made for our future, my secret plan to try to learn to write was the only one not to be abruptly discarded for thirteen months. Two days before our marriage I received his telegram: "Army wants me immediate service overseas what about it."

Two men, one in the uniform of a major in the Medical Corps, had met on F Street in Washington. In spite of an intervening period of twenty years, they recognized each other. After greetings, Major Allen said: "I remember you planned to stay in the army after that mess in Cuba in '98. Did you?" Harry told him he had stayed for twelve years and had been assigned to duty in the Philippines and in Panama.

"Then why in hell aren't you in uniform now, Brown?"

"I'm too old. They wouldn't have me."

"They'll grab you, for what I want of you. I'm in charge of a medical unit being sent overseas to man one of our base hospitals. I have doctors enough but I can't find men with army experience for the managerial end. Come on down to headquarters with me."

"Wait a minute! I'm due to get married day after tomorrow."

"Are you sure? You're too old to make definite prophecies about matrimony."

Harry had no trouble passing his medical. A few days later he showed up in uniform, slim and straight, and sporting two shoulder bars and his Spanish War ribbons.

He was booted and spurred. To me those spurs were so much excess equipment but the cherished traditions of the army were not to be ignored merely because spurs served no useful purpose around a hospital. From my experiences in hospitals I thought those spurs should be fashioned as little bedpans.

We had two weeks in Allentown before that hospital unit sailed on the *Leviathan* the midnight of July 4, 1918, leaving me to pick up the pieces of a new life and see what I could make of them. I learned the new life had taught me new meanings of that word "alone," none of them now of any use.

In the time that necessarily elapsed before our marriage, Harry's daily letters had been intimate and satisfying. He had a tied tongue but a facile pen. But when he came to write with the censor looking over his shoulder, his letters also became tongue-tied. The letters I received from France had all the emotional content of a hospital laundry list.

Those letters were hard to take.

It was no time for idleness. Clerical workers were needed in Washington and when I asked for reinstatement I was assigned to the Geological Survey at an entrance salary appreciably higher than the last salary in the Indian Service. When I reported for duty in the Interior Building I found myself walking past the Indian Bureau.

On February 10, 1919, the Senate defeated by one vote the Woman's Suffrage Amendment. On that day I witnessed one of the daily happenings before the White House. In late afternoons, when the streets were filled with clerks, the militant suffragettes emerged from their headquarters and marched to the White House to voice their demands for the vote. Their speakers never said more than a few words, for when they began their march the Black Maria left police headquarters for the same destination.

And on this day these militant women were accompanied by a frail little old lady in old-fashioned black clothes. She

looked, and probably was, somebody's highly respectable grandmother.

The Black Maria stopped so close to me I could have touched it. The back doors opened, the steps were let down, and several bored policemen spewed out. Ignoring the war workers, they seized the women with placards. The women who resisted vocally or by actions got rough treatment. They were hustled into the Black Maria with scant ceremony. They took arrest philosophically. They had been arrested before, would, when they served their sentence, be arrested again.

That is, all except the little old woman in black. She had no former experience to help her. She had only the burning conviction that had brought her this far toward what must have always been to her the acme of personal disgrace—public arrest. She stood holding her small banner aloft with one cotton-gloved hand, using the other to wipe away the tears that streamed down her wrinkled face. A policeman, young enough to be her grandson, went up to her. He put his arm around her bent shoulders and said kindly:

"Come on, Grandma. You don't need to be afraid. We'll take good care of you."

His arm around her, he helped her up the steps. She still carried her banner. The doors slammed. Black Maria was taking Grandma to jail for daring to walk peaceably the streets of Washington carrying a placard with the words, "Votes for Women."

And within the White House was the austere, idealistic man who had conscripted American youth, who had given them a ringing slogan for which to fight and die on the battlefields of France. But in a world made safe for democracy, this man saw no need to give half the people of his own country their rights and duties in American democracy.

I walked away from that ignoble scene carrying a deep sense of shame. The circumstances of my life had pro-

hibited even the thought of participating in public movements. I was among the many who seethed in spirit and did nothing. I knew that little old woman in black was worth a dozen of such as I. The disparate figures of the woman who wept and the austere man in the White House came to symbolize to me the conflict so long and so bitterly waged—and so soon forgotten.

Because I found evenings too long, I signed up for one of those half-crazy, half-literary courses to which Washington is addicted. I did this because of my determination to learn to write the story of Joseph Escalanti. From the course, the crazy half, I received enough encouragement to decide to go to Columbia during the summer and study the technique of short-story writing under Dr. Blanche Colton Williams.

A friend and I found an apartment on Morningside Drive. We had six weeks to learn the traffic rules that regulate the transportation of words, learn how to put words together to say what you mean, and to keep them out of those combinations at which editors frown. There were far more editorial red lights than green. Many green lights pointed to lucrative but shabby side streets which we did not wish to explore. The broad boulevard of romance, where a green light always burned, was not suited to my purpose. I wanted to write of a way of life unknown to romance, and here a red light confronted me. For it was a way in which neither editors nor publishers were interested. Thirty years ago short stories tended to accent, not the dregs, but the foam of living.

I selected the boulevard for the three stories that had to be submitted in the course. Dr. Williams sent me down to Carl Brandt with one of them. When he sold it to—of all places—the *Ladies Home Journal,* I was transported into that deceptive and transitory heaven that receives amateur writers only to spew them out in a spate of rejection slips.

Confidently I wrote the story of Joseph Escalanti. Dr.

Williams highly disapproved of it and Carl Brandt told me to stick to romance.

In our study of short stories my friend and I had observed a male characteristic in the frankly sensuous stories then beginning to appear in magazines—that making love made a man hungry, or at least it did at the irregular hours it was made in those stories. In our arguments over this interesting point, I had maintained that it was all just a coincidence, as men were always hungry, or, anyway, always ready to eat.

One afternoon in late August I was called to the phone—to hear the voice I had not heard in thirteen months. I had thought its owner still in Germany with the army of occupation. Harry was on his way to Morningside Drive.

I told the glad tidings to my friend. She went to the closet to get her hat, gloves, and handbag. "I'll be back in two hours," she grinned. "Is that long enough to welcome the hero as heroes expect to be welcomed?"

I never asked her how she spent those two hours. Of the two of us, she probably had a dull time.

He was lean and tanned. En route home he had lost the cherished dignity that his letters had so carefully preserved. When my friend returned, he began looking at his wrist watch.

"I wasn't given leave. I took it. It's a long way back to camp and I'll be late for mess. You haven't the makings of some ham sandwiches around anywhere, have you?"

My friend and I looked at each other—and burst into laughter. Harry looked more than a little surprised since he saw nothing amusing about a ham sandwich. We had no makings, as we ate at cafeterias. When Harry left, sandwichless, he had regained most of his dignity. Later, when I told him the cause of our laughter, he was a bit stuffy about it. My imp of derision was to receive a good many cuffs, all of them merited, before I learned not to laugh at things my husband considered seemly for himself.

A few days later, from Fort Bliss, where Harry had

gone to be mustered out, I received a telegram: "Do you want to go to Montenegro."

The American Red Cross had refused to accept me for overseas duty during the war because of the rule that wives of officers were ineligible. Whatever might be back of that puzzling telegram, I knew Harry was planning to take me abroad now. But why Montenegro? Like many Americans, I had indulged in dreams of travel in distant countries, but I had not cherished any great desire to meet the Montenegrins. I wired Harry: "When do we start."

His following letter said that the American Red Cross was seeking, among officers being mustered out, a few men to serve overseas in charge of commissions to various European countries. He was to head a commission to this Balkan nation. We sailed on the French Line in October. Harry wore his uniform with ARC insignia; I wore clothes I had purchased in New York—including that perfectly good American hat. I thought well of everything except the shoes. For wear in a country whose name suggested darkness and mountains, Harry had suggested that I buy a pair of what he called "common-sense" shoes. They had the first broad low heels I had ever worn. The two corns those shoes promptly caused were a painful reminder that a woman foolish enough to let a man select her shoes for her deserved to have corns.

In Paris, when Harry reported to ARC headquarters in Rue de Chevreuse, nothing was known there about a commission to Montenegro or his assignment to it. Our natural surprise was later to be tempered by other curious happenings. But when we both were assigned duty in Paris we were entirely reconciled at not meeting the Montenegrins.

Paris in the fall and winter of 1919-20 was rainy, gloomy, and cold. Coal was scarce or nonexistent. We shivered in our endless rounds of museum trotting. No polar region could have been and looked more solidly frozen than the unheated Louvre, more frigid than its

statuary. The Venus de Milo seemed a small iceberg with parts sheared off, the amatory groups icicled. On Sundays we went to the races at beautiful Longchamp, where at least one American saw her first steeplechase and the parade of the mannequins.

When my story was published in the *Ladies Home Journal*, the rumor spread among our Red Cross associates that I wrote stories and my husband illustrated them. The story had been illustrated by William Brown. That rumor found little favor with the husband in question. He was at some pains to make it clear that he was no artist, but an accountant. Of a certainty William Brown would have made it even clearer that he was no accountant, but an artist.

Does any American lover of good coffee ever learn really to like *café au lait* when it tastes of chicory? In the cold of that winter in a war-stricken Paris, not even the *café au lait* could maintain its customary lukewarmness. It was doubtless this unappetizing breakfast beverage that, after six months of trying to drink it, led Harry to say one day:

"What do you think about taking an apartment? Give up your work for a while and let's have some home cooking and decent coffee."

Home cooking! By a woman who had not done more than look into Indian Service kitchens, for lo, these many years? And certainly no husband would approve of the "home cooking" learned in those kitchens.

"Where did you get the idea that I know how to cook?" Did he think I had learned in agency offices, or in a mule corral?

"Can't you?" He looked genuinely astonished and worried.

"Back in Tertiary times I could, a little. What are you hungry for most?"

"Hot biscuits for breakfast with decent coffee. And pie."

I had never made hot biscuits. In the North Woods

biscuits were made with raised bread dough and never eaten at breakfast. Could I even make a pie?

"I haven't any recipes or a cookbook."

"I'll get you a cookbook at Brentano's."

"For heaven's sake don't get me a French cookbook."

We found a pleasant furnished apartment on Boulevard Edgar Quinet. On my first day alone in it, wondering if any other woman from Indian reservations ever had to learn to cook for a new husband in Paris, I tackled the problem of hot biscuits. The recipe in the American cookbook would, I thought, make enough biscuits for ten people. Dividing the ingredients into four parts, I made the first batch. In Paris that winter there was milk only for children and invalids. Powdered milk from the army stores had to serve. There was no biscuit cutter in a French kitchen and a wine glass had to serve a purpose for which it was not intended. When I took those sad-looking lumps out of the oven, I gave them one look and threw them into the garbage. The second batch went to keep them company in their misery. The third batch looked enough like biscuits that I split one and tasted it. When Harry came home for lunch with his mouth watering, the ones I placed before him were edible if eaten with plenty of honey. There was no butter in Paris that winter.

From those blessed army stores that came to the rescue of Americans who longed for their native food, Harry brought home several cans of cherries and good American coffee. No woman bequeathed a double dose of frugal ancestors ever liked the idea of throwing away a whole cherry pie. I really labored over that pie. There was no rolling pin. Since they also serve that only stand and wait, I used an empty wine bottle—a bit awkwardly.

I made doughnuts, another adjunct of the breakfast table that Harry had mentioned. They came out plump and golden and I saluted them. There was maple sirup at the army stores, but I never knew where Harry found the waffle iron. He came home one day with a long-handled

iron thing with a small compartment at one end that, with exercise of great patience over a gas flame, could be persuaded to bring forth one small waffle.

But it was the coffee, that strong, clear, hot coffee to which Americans owe some part of their sense of well-being, that we enjoyed most.

When we rented the apartment for six months, we promised the former tenant that we would continue to employ her *femme de ménage*, who came in twice weekly to clean. This elderly peasant woman construed my inability to understand much of anything she said to natural American stupidity. My culinary efforts served to strengthen her belief that all foreigners, particularly Americans, were crazy. She saw no merit in multiplying a French cherry tart by twelve, putting a crust over the top of the monster, and calling it a pie. She regarded hot biscuits as some sort of illegitimate offspring of two erring *croissants* which should not be allowed inside a respectable French apartment.

One day I offered her a doughnut, warm, golden, and nicely coated with sugar. She accepted it gingerly. In late afternoon when she had gone, I found that doughnut neatly laid out in a dish on the kitchen table. It was minus one small bite. But all the sugar had been licked off. That sugar was the only part of the doughnut she really trusted. I rather thought that if I had searched diligently I would have found that missing bite.

I had not thought a reservation hound of heaven would find its way to Paris. But one day I again felt the urge to write the story I could not write. Instead, I wrote three articles dealing with reservation life. I sent them to Carl Brandt, who sold them to *Sunset*. When those articles were published, the lenient editor pronounced them "fit to rank with the best in the literature of the American Indians' sordid tragedy." They were not. They did not lack sympathy, but they had been written in a mood too lightheartedly Parisian.

Except as an occasional treat, the Crillon and Cafe de la Paix were not for us. We had found a cafe greatly to our liking and in it one evening I earned a hundred francs. Not even in the Indian Service had I earned money so unpleasantly. Harry looked up from the menu to say:

"There are snails tonight. I bet you can't eat a dozen of them." He should have known better.

"How much will you bet?"

"A hundred francs."

"Will you order them for me, please?" I had no idea what letters combined themselves on a French menu to tell an American they meant snails.

When those snails were set before me, I learned that they were cooked in their shells. With them came a crooked little wooden fork with which to pry them out. When I got the first horrible little creature out into the open, it looked exactly like a wrinkle from an old shoe and fully as edible. It lay on the plate as if it might squirm back into its shell any minute. I summoned a few dour Scotch ancestors who would have eaten any food they had paid good money for, even without a bonus, and gulped that nasty-looking little thing down with—I do not expect to be forgiven—wine.

Carefully putting to one side each shell relieved of its contents, I ate those snails. I did not enjoy them, but I did enjoy the surprised, nauseated look on my husband's face as he watched francs and snails disappear. He should have known better.

"You owe me 108 francs, 33 1/3 centimes."

Some perverted Gallic gesture of generosity had given me thirteen of the horrible little things. Harry took a hundred-franc note from his billfold and passed it across the table.

"You don't get paid for that thirteenth snail. You must have eaten that one because you liked it."

When we left Paris at the end of fourteen months I had to give back that hundred francs. I had bet Harry that

PATSY—AGE FIFTEEN YEARS
From an oil painting

sum that in a year in Paris, among the old peasant women who sold fruit and flowers from pushcarts on many streets of the city, I would find one woman without an incipient mustache of long hairs on her chin. I should have known better.

There are many reasons for loving Paris. Many people have written about those reasons. For myself, I only know that in 1937, when the ship on which I had cruised around the world made its last stop at a French port before sailing for home waters, I did not go ashore. I did not want to walk the loved soil of France—alone.

Shortly after our return to Washington Harry came home one day and said: "Let's go and buy a cat." To a person to whom childhood had given the unpleasant task of drowning an endless and inexhaustable supply of kittens, the word "buy" seemed inappropriate. To have bought a cat would raise grave doubts of the buyer's sanity.

"Where?"

"A woman on Maryland Avenue is advertising Persian kittens for sale."

On our way over we decided on a yellow male. Among some forty little cats there were no males, yellow or otherwise. We returned with a three-months-old blue Persian kitten loaded with fleas.

"She is housebroke to use newspapers," the woman told us. She said nothing about fleas, probably thinking we would discover them for ourselves. Harry brought home a special kind of flea comb, the use of which kept me busy for a week. We named the purring kitten Patsy.

Patsy purred with fleas, purred scratching the doors of the buffet when she learned they opened to places she wanted to explore, purred scratching holes in the arms of upholstered chairs. When I put lace runners over the holes, she scratched off the runners. She climbed the curtains, bringing pole and curtains down with her. No bed could be made securely enough to keep her from

crawling between the sheets and tearing small triangular holes in them.

Patsy refused to eat anything but finely cut beefsteak. If I left any fat in that steak, she turned up her Persian nose at it. And she insisted that her newspaper be spread on the bathroom floor.

For many years Patsy purred and clawed her destructive way through life, and to both of us she was a joy, an unmitigated nuisance, and beyond price.

In the Paris edition of the *Herald Tribune* I had read of the social activities in Washington of the League of American Pen Women. Naïvely I had thought of this organization as comprised of geniuses and to it I presented my credentials in fear and trembling. I found no geniuses but I did find a delightful group of women to whose warm friendliness I owe much. If the Pen Women stressed their social activities, were inclined to rate names above achievement, it was only natural in a city where social and political rank transcends individual merit. It was only natural that each first lady should be invited to become a Pen Woman. Gracious, charming Grace Coolidge declined for the sensible reason that she was not a writer. Because Mrs. Harding accepted her invitation with alacrity I was given the opportunity to meet that famous black velvet band. During the Biennial Convention Mrs. Harding entertained the Pen Women at a White House tea. The black velvet band with its customary jewel served to call attention to the neck it was worn to conceal—but the little cakes were delicious.

Of the many social activities of the Pen Women, the most popular was the Authors' Breakfast, held during their Biennial Convention in April. The first breakfast I attended was made hilarious by Gertrude Atherton.

Several hundred people were seated at small tables in the main dining room of the Willard. The speakers and guests of honor occupied one side of a long, gaily decorated table. Among the noted speakers, aside from Mrs. Atherton,

were Fanny Hurst, Edwin Markham, and Lizette Wentworth Reese.

After the lunch that masqueraded as breakfast, small tables were removed and people seated themselves expectantly around the speakers' table. The chairman introduced Gertrude Atherton. Her sensational novel, *Black Oxen,* had been recently published. This book dealt with a subject then receiving much attention in Europe, but in America it was looked upon as being a bit improper for public discussion—artificial rejuvenescence. There had been the inevitable rumor that the author of *Black Oxen* had herself benefited from European methods of rejuvenation. She was then about sixty-five years old and as she stood before us with her fair skin and pale-gold hair, her youthful appearance gave some substance to that rumor.

Mrs. Atherton approached her subject with a frankness that some found embarrassing and many found hilarious, particularly the members of the press who were present. She was clinical in describing European methods of restoring to men their lost virility, methods that even added the minor miracle of growing hair on their bald heads. She then tackled the American method of using goat glands. When she said flatly that "one goat was enough for ten men" there was a stunned silence for a moment, then tumultuous laughter.

In April of 1933, surprised to find myself there, I was to sit at the speakers' table at another Authors' Breakfast. The first speaker was Eleanor Roosevelt. The hundreds of women who applauded her brief talk on educational reform could not know that she was here taking the first public step to meet the most shameful barrage of a pitiless publicity ever directed against an American woman. She was to walk through the sham and animus of a savage political conflict, and to walk without hypocrisy or bitterness.

CHAPTER 34

IN 1923 I OPENED the morning paper to have another unsavory bit of scurrility tossed in my face like a spitball from the past. Mr. Evan W. Estep, my friend of many years, had been removed from office by executive order of President Harding. Never before had a humble Indian agent been thus publicly pilloried. The charge—misuse of Federal funds.

My two futile and indignant interviews with Commissioner Charles H. Burke only served to make me more angry. Later I was given access to Mr. Estep's files. The matter is related here, not in any justification of a man whose long life of probity is its own justification, but because it uncovers a stinking Indian Service cesspool.

On the return to normalcy in 1921 the Budget Bureau blew the trumpet for economy. To all Federal departments went its order to stop their old practice of making last-minute expenditures at the close of the fiscal year in order to avoid turning unused sums back into the Treasury. Through the Secretary of the Interior, the Indian Bureau received this order. The Bureau issued its own Order No. 82 directing superintendents in the field to comply.

The Budget Bureau's order for other economies hit the Indian Service squarely in the half-empty stomachs of Indian children. The Secretary of the Interior (O what a "Fall" was there, my countrymen!) could safely economize on Indians who have no votes. Beginning on July 1, 1921, all Indian schools had their appropriations for food and clothing cut 25 per cent! Thousands of under-

nourished children were made to study and work on a diet 25 per cent below the former inhumane dietary standard. That standard, the daily cost of which was at this time still a dark bureaucratic secret.

At San Juan Navajo Agency, in New Mexico, Mr. Estep had 330 children in two schools. A part of them remained in school during the summer, necessitating the spreading of inadequate food supplies over a twelve-month period instead of nine months. By June, 1922, his warehouse was empty of food and clothing, his pupils without shoes, their clothes in rags. Of the food available for them one does not like to think. During this year a superintendent on an adjacent reservation (the same reservation whose workers gave adverse testimony against Mr. Runke when he was charged with murder!) spent several thousand dollars beyond his appropriation without the authority of the Bureau—an act that made him liable to civil action under his bond. No action was taken. The Bureau called him to Washington (Mr. Runke was denied this favor) and adjusted matters by taking from other superintendents' funds sufficient to cover his deficit. From Mr. Estep was taken $1,500 of his meager appropriation, an action without precedent in Indian Service annals.

Superintendents must husband their annual funds since the nature of the work brings unforeseen emergencies. Storms may isolate parts of the reservation, destroy crops, decimate herds, making aid to some Indians imperative. Epidemics are not unusual. Always such aid is inadequate. When the end of the fiscal year approaches on June 30, superintendents then feel they can safely expend the small sums remaining to their credit.

These sums can be expended only with the written authority of the Bureau.

Early June of 1922 found Mr. Estep with the magnificent sum of five hundred dollars available for food and clothing for 330 hungry, ragged children. He also had the sum of three hundred dollars for reservation needs. *Mr.*

Estep asked for and received from the Bureau authority to spend these sums.

In May the Bureau wrote Mr. Estep calling attention to these sums and suggested he use them to buy Black Leaf 40 —the cryptic name for the mixture used to dip Navajo sheep. Here the Bureau disregarded its own orders from the Budget Bureau and its Order No. 82 to superintendents. It can be safely assumed that similar letters went to every field executive. Certainly it seems a bit illogical to think the Bureau made one exception from a tender regard for Navajo sheep.

Early in June Mr. Estep went to San Francisco on agency business. To his chief clerk he entrusted the authorized purchase of food, clothing, and agricultural tools. In San Francisco he received a telegram from this clerk asking permission to use part of the money to repair an old truck. He wired the clerk as follows:

> Do not spend money on International truck. Use all money Support of Indians in New Mexico on agricultural implements and go strong on subsistence and clothing. Do not let any funds lapse in any fund.

These instructions were carried out. Field executives are entitled to reimbursement for personal expenses when traveling on official business. When the quarterly accounts were sent to the Bureau in July they contained a voucher covering reimbursement to Mr. Estep of personal funds expended on his trip to San Francisco. To that voucher was attached a copy of the telegram.

I have made out innumerable similar vouchers, carefully counting the number of words to see the sum charged was correct. If the amount claimed was for fifteen words and the telegram contained only thirteen words, the voucher would be disapproved by the Bureau and returned for correction. In the Bureau I know Mr. Estep's telegram was read and its words counted when his accounts were examined. No exception was taken. In due time the

accounts were approved and, so far as the Bureau was concerned, closed.

In June of the following year Mr. Estep received the appended letter, which I quote verbatim:

Office of Indian Affairs,
Washington, D.C.
June 2, 1923

Mr. Evan W. Estep,
Supt. San Juan School.
Sir:

It has recently come to the attention of the Department that on June 16, 1922, you telegraphed from San Francisco to one of your assistants at the school as follows:

> "Do not spend money on International truck. Use all money Support of Indians in New Mexico on agricultural implements and go strong on subsistence and clothing. Do not let any funds lapse in any fund."

The instructions contained in the foregoing telegram plainly had reference to appropriated funds of the fiscal year 1922 which, unless obligated on or before June 30, would have ceased to be available for expenditure. The apparent intent of these instructions, therefore, was to prevent any of the 1922 appropriations allotted to the San Juan Indian jurisdiction remaining unexpended on June 30. Your instructions "do not let any funds lapse in any fund" shows plainly your desire and determination to disregard the instructions of the Department regarding the necessity for exercising strict economy in the expenditure of funds appropriated for the year, particularly as emphasized in Order No. 82 of June 30, 1921. Your action warrants your separation from the Service unless there are some extenuating circumstances. Consideration will be given any statement you may care to make in writing showing why such action should not be taken, if forwarded within five days from receipt of this letter.

Respectfully,

Approved: June 2, 1923.

(Signed) Chas. H. Burke,
Commissioner.

(Signed) Hubert Work,
Secretary.

[Mr. Fall and his little black bag had disappeared from the scene.]

Extenuating circumstances! In Mr. Estep's files was the Bureau's voluntary suggestion he spend that magnificent sum of eight hundred dollars for sheep dip. In his files was the Bureau's formal authority for him to expend that sum for food, clothing, and implements. All too plainly the letter showed the Bureau had stepped out from under, declined to take responsibility for its own disregard of the Budget Bureau's order and its own Order No. 82, had decided to make Mr. Estep its public whipping boy. Himself a man of probity, Mr. Estep was for a time unable to grasp the full scope of the Bureau's perfidy.

What had happened in the year since the Bureau read and approved that telegram, approved the purchases made in compliance with its own authorization? In its wandering through that bureaucratic labyrinth had that telegram perhaps encountered those forged thumbmarks before it encountered the eyes that scrutinized it carefully? Eyes of the Watchdog of the Treasury? From Watchdog to Budget Bureau to President to Secretary of the Interior to Commissioner of Indian Affairs went the word—off with his head. Here was a man to be publicly pilloried in the Federal stocks of economy. Of the nature of the economy then being secretly practiced the world was presently to learn.

Mr. Estep's letter containing the extenuating circumstances reminded the Bureau it had formally approved the expenditures for which he was being removed from office. Aside from the urgent need for food and clothing, Mr. Estep painted a graphic picture of reservation conditions. For some years his appropriation for improvement of those conditions had been four dollars yearly per Indian. It covered digging and maintaining irrigation ditches to water land suitable for farming, dipping vats, agricultural implements, seeds, wagons, and many small items. An irrigation ditch to water 350 acres had taken three years to build because of lack of funds. He had been unable to buy seeds or fruit trees for the land it irrigated. He had no

wagons or mowing machines to issue Indians in return for labor, the Indians paying traders from $180 to $230 for them. In the six years Mr. Estep had been at San Juan he had doubled the acreage in cultivation, thereby doubling the Indians' need for farm implements, but the funds to purchase them remained at four dollars per Indian. More important still, his children had been hungry.

His letter was, of course, futile. It was of no avail that he could and did point to nineteen years of unblemished service.

Later, when the shouting and the tumult died, the Bureau washed its dirty hands by quietly—very quietly—reinstating Mr. Estep in office. His reinstatement did not make the front page of the Washington papers. Pilloried throughout the service, no statement reached the field as to the nature of Mr. Estep's supposedly heinous offense. Few field people ever learned that his offense was spending, under written authority of the Bureau, three hundred dollars for farm implements and five hundred dollars to feed and clothe the children in his charge—children reduced to rags and famine by the administration's peculiar sense of economy.

Mr. Estep's sole offense was the insertion in that telegram of nine words, "Do not let any funds lapse in any fund." Since he had the Bureau's authority to spend these sums, the possible misconstruction of the words in higher government circles did not occur to him, as it might well have occurred to a superintendent with less confidence in the Bureau's code of official ethics.

CHAPTER 35

WE HAD BEEN IN Washington four years when the Veterans' Bureau offered Harry the position of business executive at its hospital at Whipple Barracks in Prescott. We began packing. Lovers of Arizona do not wait for a second call to return.

For Patsy we bought a traveling case that, with a coat thrown carelessly over it, could be carried into hotels without catty suggestiveness. In that case we put my seagoing wool scarf she had appropriated for her bed. At the end of the first day, when we opened that case in the hotel room, we were prepared for eventualities. There were none. Harry rushed out to buy a newspaper which he had no time to read. The following night it was the same. At the end of that leisurely drive, the wool shawl was immaculate. We felt we were the proud owners of the only cat ever to cross the American continent by day in a state of total continence.

En route, in Arizona, we stayed the night at the Leupp Indian School. We found it nearly marooned by floodwater and detoured around many acres of this experimental farm flooded into an impassable morass. Only one road to the school was open. So that floodwater couldn't be diverted! To my delight, we were given my old corner room, now made into a guest room. The hollowed mattress provided close quarters. We didn't mind, but, toward morning, I was awakened by Harry's uncomplimentary remarks about Indian Service beds.

Whipple Barracks was an army post before and during

the Apache wars. It had watched the few tents and shacks of that day grow into the delightful town of Prescott—a town that would like to forget the time when every other building on its main street had been a saloon. The others were gambling hells. At an altitude of slightly over one mile, Prescott's year-round climate was unsurpassed. Unsurpassed, too, were its vistas of wooded mountains, of purple buttes that once were Apache strongholds. We were to live here for six years, loving its visual elbowroom, its friendly people, and its endless bridge games.

I sat for long hours writing stories I knew would not be published; an occasional one I knew would be, and later I saw them in reputable magazines. Always my pleasure in these stories was lessened by my failure to write the one story that had led me to expend so many unproductive hours. One day I was made to realize that the reservation hound at my heels had pupped. There was a new, shrill little voice yapping at my heels. I did not know what it wanted, but I was not surprised to learn that the voice of conscience is a feminine voice. For it nags. It doesn't shout or use brute force. It just nags at you till you do what it wants you to do, just to get rid of it.

Were the voice of conscience masculine, it would be loud and peremptory before breakfast but would become pliant and conciliatory by bedtime.

As they had done once before, words appeared that did not belong in the story I was writing. "Turreted epic in stone." Again I tried to resolve words unconsciously written. For those four words could only mean the cathedral of Milan. I remembered the tinny little whistle of the train that carried Harry and me from Paris to the Riviera. We reached Milan at ten o'clock of a rainy evening. We passed through the station to the shed where stood rows of horse-drawn cabs. My first impression of that shed was that Italy, instead of Coney Island, erected bits of the Inferno as tourist bait. In the cavernous gloom those half-starved, galled horses seemed to have come from

some dark pit of Dante's vivid imagination. Protesting, I rode behind one of them to the hotel.

In morning sunshine we walked over to the cathedral, the beauty of which I have no words to express. Before it were other starved and beaten horses that had brought people to the cathedral to pray. I found it revolting that men and women thought it seemly to ride behind those abused animals to pray for the mercy for themselves that they denied to beasts.

In Rome Harry searched the cab stands to find a horse that looked as if it had eaten within the week. We drove out to the Protestant Cemetery to visit the grave of the man England drove from her soil with cruel ridicule. We went down to the corner of the cemetery where, before a nameless grave, I found my eyes misting. Not only for the young man who slept there, but for all men gifted with vision beyond their fellows; who, because of that vision, are destined to walk apart in loneliness of spirit. We read the words this young man, exiled and dying in an alien land, had asked to have engraved on this stone. And I hoped that prescience, some prophetic insight into the hearts and minds of men yet unborn, had given him a knowledge of the truth of those words. For the name of Keats is indeed writ in water—the water of life where all men with souls above a clod may slake their thirst for beauty.

Turreted epic in stone. Those words were not meant for prose. I began my poem with those four words. It was the only poem I ever assayed, written with remembered indignation. When it was published, the little yapping voice was silenced. I did not know why. That poem would not save one horse from the lash of a whip!

There was but one way in which I could rid myself of the reservation hound and that was by writing the story of the Indian Service. But I did not want to write that story. I was burdened with hopelessness. I had seen only a small part of the racial chaos resulting from a century of

dishonor in my country's treatment of the Indian. There was nothing I could do about it. I evaded the issue, realizing that I would have to include my own story with any account I might write of the Indian Service. How else could I write it?

But thinking about Indians brought to mind that old Roman on that Navajo reservation. I wrote his story and Carl Brandt sold it to Mr. Howland of *Century Magazine*. The day I received his generous check and letter saying he was featuring the story—as he later welcomed its sequel—Harry asked me for the first time: "How did you happen to go to Columbia that summer to try to learn to write?" I decided to ignore that "try."

For the first time I told him about the tragic happening on the Colorado, told him the whole truth about Joseph Escalanti. When I had finished, he said positively: "You had better give up trying to write that story. No editor would touch it."

Still, I knew I never would give over trying, and from time to time I worked on new versions, tried different methods. It was the goal to which all other stories were but steppingstones.

The modest checks I received were to me a cause for wonderment; to Harry they were the result of some sort of wordy legerdemain beyond his comprehension. He did not find it credible that I could put a sheet of paper in the typewriter and write something on it that editors would pay good money for. I knew he cherished private mental reservations concerning the sanity of those editors.

The year 1929 was to be an unhappy one for Americans. It may have been the shadow cast by impending depression, or only the kind of aberrant thoughts a housewife is apt to have when washing the breakfast dishes. Whatever it was, one morning, for the first time, I asked myself the question: What might my life have been had I stayed in the North Woods? And I felt the sudden urge to write of what that life might have been. That urge was born of an old resent-

ment against the smug assumption that a girl was not worth educating, that life offered no incentive for her to better her share in the world since no need for betterment was recognized.

I wiped my hands, leaving the dishes half washed. When Harry came home for lunch, no lunch was in sight. This had never happened before. He came to the room I proudly called my office. He grinned.

"What's cooking, besides no lunch?"

"A novel. Think I can write one?"

"If you are foolish enough to start one, you are stubborn enough to finish it. Do you expect to find a publisher for it?"

"No-o. But there must be any number of books whose authors are still surprised that they ever got published."

"Authors and readers both."

When he had gone back to his office, I remembered that "try." He was right. In wanting to learn something of the art of using words I had not been actuated by any intention to become a writer. I wanted only to write that one story. My failure to write it and my determination to do so had resulted in a number of unrelated stories and articles. I had sought only a tiny corner in the vast literary field and had somehow found myself turned loose in it with little reason for being there. Certainly I never felt I belonged in that field or was equipped to graze the literary grass with the rest of the herd.

And now, in attempting a novel, I had ventured into the midst of that herd. I could only expect to be trampled on. And I went to work knowing the expectation of being trampled on had aroused the stubbornness that all my life had rebelled against being pushed around.

An occasional lunch might be late, but never dinner. Patsy saw to that. She was fed her beefsteak twice daily. Her breakfast hour was also ours, but our dinner hour she found too late. Promptly at four-thirty Patsy came to tell me it was time for a cat to eat. She was a regular daily

reminder that it would also soon be time for a husband to eat.

In the months I worked on that novel I knew I was writing a somber story without frills and fripperies. I wrote of life in the North Woods as it was, not as it might or should be. Such a book could never be popular. When the novel was finished, I asked advice from a cultured friend whose judgment I valued highly. She suggested I send it to *The Atlantic Monthly*. I thought she was crazy.

On rare occasions I had taken advice from eminently sane people. I seldom found that advice of any particular use. But I respected this friend's matured views highly. If in this case her advice seemed to indicate a temporary insanity, at least it would be interesting to find out if such counsel might prove efficacious in an obviously deranged world.

I sent the manuscript to *The Atlantic*.

Its book editor, Edward Weeks, promised me a report on it. Before the report was received I had lost eight pounds and husband and cat had found me unfit to live with.

One day I was called to the town phone. A girl's voice said: "This is Western Union. Will you take a telegram, please?"

"Where's it from?"

"Boston."

"All right." I listened to Edward Weeks's unbelievable words: "Your novel *With Trailing Banners* is accepted with enthusiasm."

When I recovered sufficiently to rush to the post phone to call my skeptical husband, I knew from his voice as he congratulated me that literary legerdemain, for him, had reached the stratosphere.

When the book was published in the deep depression of 1930, people were spending their money, when they had any, for something to eat, not for a slice of literary unleavened bread. But Edward Weeks's letters continued to

be warmly encouraging. Many of us have the experience of knowing people only from their letters. Of the several I have known through this medium, he remains the most warmly regarded.

When friends read the book, usually without much enthusiasm, they identified me with its heroine. It did no good to remind them that I had left the North Woods in my mid-twenties; no good to point out that one cannot live simultaneously in the Adirondack foothills and on Indian reservations. Now that I here have written about myself, no doubt they will credit me with too vivid an imagination and believe I have just made it all up.

When I received a letter from the publishers of *Who's Who in America*, asking me to fill out its enclosed form as a preliminary to my inclusion in this biographical reference work, I looked at that form in dismay. I was asked to list the colleges I had attended and the degrees received. Among the academic degrees and caps and gowns which decorate this volume, I had no bit of sheepskin to hide my scholastic nakedness. How could a person with the equivalent of two years in high school venture into this esoteric company? On one line I wrote "Educated at Franklin Academy, Malone, New York," and left blank all the other never-to-be-filled lines.

But I felt that I really had earned the degree of Stubborn Fool, which my father had given me so many years before. It was not a degree likely to be recognized by the publishers of *Who's Who in America*.

CHAPTER 36

I SHOULD have known. I should have been prepared. I should have remembered the impermanence of any way of life, should not have anticipated a definite continuance of it.

My husband came home late for dinner one day to say calmly:

"The medicos have just pronounced me totally and permanently disabled."

At a veterans' hospital that phrase rings its own knell of finality. Not at once could I make those words mine. I had never known him to be ill even for a day. Because our pleasantly routined life called for making few domestic decisions, I had failed to notice he was losing the ability to make them. But in his work, which called for such decisions daily, the medical staff could not fail to notice.

"What is it, Harry?"

"Just a couple of long words. Hypertension. Arteriosclerosis."

I knew any display of emotion on my part would be unwelcome to this man who ever kept his own display of sentiment under control. And neither then nor later did he tell me what his reaction to that death sentence had been. But to neither of us was death something to be especially prepared for. If our lives, as we have lived them, have not prepared us to relinquish life, it is too late.

"It means we leave here at once. It means a low altitude. Where would you like to go?"

As if that mattered. Later we decided on San Diego.

It was midnight. I was alone in the pleasant house in Mission Hills that Harry had furnished in the hope it might be his home for several years. It was for only nine months.

The soft blues and rose of the rug were still lustrous. The colors of the silk draperies at the large oval window were unfaded. Before the fireplace the brass of the andirons gleamed in the lamplight. The blue velours of the armchair he had covered as an antidote for idleness had lost none of its richness. The flowers in the oil painting over the mantel were freshly bloomed. Nothing in this room had altered.

Only life had changed.

That day I had listened dry-eyed to the chaplain read the army burial service, to the bugler sound taps. Now I was alone. Patsy came to the door. She mewed plaintively, as she had done for the ten days since an ambulance had carried to the hospital the stricken man who no longer knew us. I called to her, but she went over to the vacant chair beside the reading lamp, smelled it, looked to me to solve this absence for her. Her fur was matted from days of neglect. I fetched her comb, but she would have none of it. She jumped on the vacant chair, scratched it as if searching might disclose the form she sought.

In the past two days there were so many things that must be done and only I to do them. There is solace in a weariness so complete that it brings temporary oblivion of sorrow. Later I would learn new meanings in that word "alone," the word I long knew casually. It was the word that I must again live with after thirteen years, and learn to know profoundly.

Ten nights ago we sat beside the reading lamp. He sat holding the evening paper, not reading it, not turning it. He had failed gradually in awareness, yet seemed unconscious of any change.

"It's ten o'clock, honey. Let's go to bed."

He rose slowly without speaking. We went down the

hall together. I left him standing beside the dresser, winding his watch. A few minutes later when I returned he was standing in the same place, still winding his watch. He did not speak when I helped him take off his clothes. In bed he made the last gesture of affection he was ever to make. From long habit he pulled my arm around his neck, rested his head on my shoulder.

"You're not feeling well tonight, honey?"

He seemed to go to a far place to find the last words he was ever to speak, to search for those words, to bring them back and say them with difficulty.

"I feel tired."

He did not answer when I spoke to him later. He seemed to sleep during the long night, but in the early dawn his eyes were open with no recognition of me. In a hot bath it took a long time to get the numbness from my arm so that I could dress and go to a neighbor to call the physician I had privately consulted against this time. Harry had felt no need for medical care during the past months. He had not had a telephone installed in the new house where we were the first tenants. We had no acquaintances in the city.

Daily I drove down to the Naval Hospital to sit beside the man who did not know I sat there. There was no pain. Of what was he thinking? Did his expressionless eyes follow movement near him from habit, without impulse from the brain this slow hemorrhage was destroying? On the morning of the day he died, I found the attendants had moved him to an isolated room where his stertorous breathing could not disturb others.

That barren little room, with only a bed, with iron bars across its one window, was a room set aside for death. And in this hospital solely for men, how many men and loves and hopes had met death there. How many of the loves and hopes of the living had there died with them.

The July night was hot. Doors and windows were open. I heard again the ring of the bell on the bicycle as it stopped

before the house. On the night of the day he died, that bell had sounded many times as the boy from Western Union brought me messages of affection and sympathy from our mutual friends. Weariness kept me in my chair when the boy came to the door. I called to him to come in.

"Isn't it late for you to be delivering telegrams?"

"Not this kind. And this is a cablegram."

After the boy had gone, I sat holding the unopened letter. Among the many telegrams I had sent there had been no cablegram. Three of my messages had been to friends of Harry, men I did not know. One was to a New York physician who had served with him in that army hospital in France. Their friendship, begun there, had continued through the years.

Messages from friends had moved me deeply. But they had not broken down the defenses I had built against this hour. I had been given a long time to build those defenses, a long time to hide my grief behind them. But life does not attack us frontally. It creeps around our flanks to break through at our weakest point—memories.

I opened the envelope, read that physician's words of sympathy, of regret for the loss of his friend. What the words of our mutual friends could not do, this stranger had done. Of all words, he had used the one word which could that night break down all barriers to grief and flood them away in tears.

Paris.

CHAPTER 37

THE WORD "alone" is the most selfish of words. If permitted, it would make a wasteland of the years to come. After weeks of vain effort to deal with that word, I put a sheet of paper in my typewriter and began the story I never wanted to write, the story of the Indian Service. I worked for many months on that story, for which considerable research was necessary in order to obtain statistics and factual data which, in the end, made that narrative as dull as dandruff. I had written one hundred thousand deadly dull words which were warranted to send any editor scurrying to his bore-proof shelter.

It sent Edward Weeks to his.

I do not think he has ever been quite the same man since. Even now of mornings he may approach his desk in fear that another Indian atrocity of mine may have crawled into a drawer overnight. Such things should not happen within the cathedral close of *The Atlantic*.

Later I tried again, this time using the form of fiction. I made no attempt to depict the Indian as a romantic figure; any such attempt would only serve to make him ridiculous. I put aside another unsuccessful story. During all the period spent on these manuscripts, Patsy came promptly at four-thirty to tell me it was time for a cat to eat. She kept much better time than the clock on the mantel.

But during the time I spent on those stories, the wrongs done the Indian had at last received official attention in Washington. By 1926 the national cesspool, euphemisti-

cally called the Indian Service, so stank to heaven that unpleasant odors from it reached the higher political echelons. Secretary of the Interior Hubert Work directed The Institute for Government Research (Brookings Institute) to investigate economic and social conditions on all Indian reservations and to report thereon with such recommendations for improving them as the Institute found necessary. The report was two years in the making and was submitted to Secretary Work in February, 1928.

This report constituted the most important step ever taken for the protection and advancement of the American Indian. Only a few of its findings and recommendations can be given here.

The survey staff of the Institute credited field superintendents with the few nuggets of gold its spade work brought to light. It was surprised "that the government is able to secure and retain such able men at the salaries paid." Of myself and my former contemporaries in the field it found "The Indian Service has been attempting to conduct its activities with a personnel inadequate in number and as a rule not possessed of qualifications requisite for efficient performance of their duties."

Of the Service physicians, as late as 1926 the staff said: "In some instances the physicians have been little better than the Indian medicine men." The staff found no adequate medical program!

But not until the survey staff entered the pupils' dining room of a reservation boarding school did its members really let their hair down. "The Survey Staff finds itself obliged to say frankly and unequivocally that provisions for care of Indian children are grossly inadequate. The diet is deficient in quality, quantity, and variety. Many children are below normal health."

Field workers had always known this to be true. Here, after many decades of careful concealment, was exposed the guilt of the Indian Bureau, the betrayal of its trust and

its enforced policy of semistarvation. The staff found that Indian children—children required to perform hard labor half of each day—"have been given food that cost *11c per day per child.*"

This ignominious little figure speaks in its own loud voice. Words are not needed to emphasize its shame or the odium resting on the men responsible for it. For the Bureau as I knew it, that eleven cents is a fitting epitaph.

The survey staff condemned the removal of young children from their parents. It pronounced the Bureau's enforced educational policy "largely ineffective." It found that the hard labor required of immature students "would in many States be prohibited by child labor laws." It condemned the allotting of Indian land in severalty and the subsequent sale of such land to white people.

The Institute's report was revolutionary, for it recommended the complete reversal of the former harmful and unintelligent policies so long enforced by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The report made it plain that its far-reaching reforms could be made effective only by increased appropriations. Since Congress did make increased funds available, it seems logical to believe that it would have granted these funds years before if the Bureau had presented a wise and specific program.

When the sorry history of the Indian is written in a future century, its writer will be remiss if he fails to credit President Hoover with being the first chief executive to heed the cry of hungry Indian children. After publication of the Institute's report, he asked Congress for an emergency appropriation of $1,100,000 to relieve the near famine in Indian boarding schools for the fiscal year 1930. For 1931, with approval of the Budget Bureau, President Hoover asked for an appropriation to make available for food the sum of thirty-seven cents per day per child. His request was sabotaged by the House Appropriations Committee, which reduced it to twenty-eight cents per day.

When President Hoover assumed his high office, many a political party worker was standing under the patronage tree with his mouth open, hoping the Indian plum would drop into it. But for his Commissioner of Indian Affairs he sought a humanitarian without party claims—and found him in Charles J. Rhoads, a Quaker and a retired banker. Mr. Rhoads assumed office saddled with a reactionary Indian Bureau. It was a Bureau that saw no need for reforms; a Bureau that, in 1924, had suppressed a critical report of its activities made by the American Red Cross. (In 1928 a Senate Indian Committee had to subpoena that report to obtain it.)

Commissioner Rhoads had no Hercules to clean out his Augean Stable in a day. Wrongs continued wrongs on their own momentum. Many of them required Congressional action to remedy. One such wrong was corrected when he asked Congress to remove from the Pima Indians that indefensible charge of $400,000 for a bridge that white men wanted. Congress did remove that charge. But during his four years in office Commissioner Rhoads, acting on the most urgent recommendations of the Brookings Institute, laid a firm foundation for his successor to build upon if he saw fit to do so. In itself this was a tremendous achievement.

And in the appointment of his successor Washington was to witness a political miracle. The man appointed was John Collier.

For ten years prior to his assumption of the Indian Commissionership, Mr. Collier had been executive secretary of the American Indian Defense Association, where he functioned as the sharpest thorn in the mortified flesh of the Bureau. He had exposed, and struggled to defeat, many acts of the Bureau by which Indians were defrauded of their rights and property. The Indian Committees in Congress knew him well for he appeared before them frequently to plead the cause of the Indians. He vainly tried to prevent the sabotage of President Hoover's request for

a humane food allowance for Indian children. With good reason the Indian Bureau had long regarded John Collier as its archenemy. By no flight of fancy could this man ever have envisioned himself as Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

But when President Roosevelt selected Mr. Ickes as his Secretary of the Interior, Mr. Ickes, himself an informed friend of the Indian, turned to the man whose proven interest in Indians, ability, integrity of character and humanitarianism had long been known to him, John Collier. He asked President Roosevelt to recommend to Congress his appointment as Indian Commissioner. And in that appointment, after nearly half a century of familiarity with the Indian Service, I saw the first *fully qualified* Commissioner ever to occupy that position.

But in that appointment the Indian Bureau saw only a Satanic hand. It had its own candidate for the position, an Assistant Commissioner whose fences were mended, his patronage wires humming in Congress. A reactionary, this man not only supported the old policies but was responsible for many of them. When the press announced that President Roosevelt had sent John Collier's name to Congress for approval, the Bureau stood on its several outraged heads and emitted loud cries of anguish. Executives throughout the field service, for future favors to be received, were told to wire Congress to block Mr. Collier's appointment.

In 1934 Congress acted upon the recommendations made by the Brookings Institute and passed the Indian Reorganization Act to implement them. The act passed the Senate without a dissenting vote and its proponents correctly pronounced it the greatest forward step ever taken with reference to Indian welfare.

And from 1934 to 1950 the enemies of the Indian in Congress never ceased their efforts to sabotage that act!

Briefly, this act aimed to protect the Indian in the land still his, to advance him economically by co-operative management of tribal resources, and to fit him for citizen-

ship by giving him a large measure of self-rule on his reservation. The Indian was to be treated as a human being instead of as an inferior serf.

Congress also established the Indian Arts and Crafts Board. Here, at last, was recognition of Ruskin's sane dictum: "The only way to help others is first to find out what they have been trying to do for themselves and then help them to do it better." Had this rule been made broadly effective during the past fifty years, the Indian problem might not today still be in process of solution.

Commissioner Collier in 1933 began his reforms where reforms should begin—at home. From the old Indian Bureau as I had known it, he evolved an able, honest, humane agency devoted solely to Indian welfare. During his twelve years in office he cleared away some of the chaos created by former inept and dishonest policies. This clearing was also accompanied by cries of anguish, individual and political, from white people who found themselves sadly inconvenienced in the ancient practice of fleecing the red man. He was adamant against pressure groups who wanted something the Indian owned, particularly his improved land. During his administration not one acre of allotted Indian land was sold to whites. But the land muddle created by the long-enforced policy of allotment and sale of Indian land was in many respects now well-nigh irremediable.

Mr. Collier believed in religious freedom for others as well as for himself. He upheld the Indians' right to their own beliefs and ceremonials. Sectarian missionaries protested. Wherever possible, the boarding schools were replaced by day schools and Indian education was adapted to practical needs and capacities through technical and mechanical training. On reservations such as that of the Navajos, with their immense distances, day schools were not feasible and the education of Navajo children is today a pressing problem. Teachers in the Service must now have a college degree and their salaries are commensurate.

There are few if any Miss Swintons and no pseudo kindergartners.

A more detailed account of the remedial measures introduced by Commissioner Collier during the first ten years of his administration is contained in Senate Report 310, of June, 1943, and some of this material is summarized in the following chapter.

In this narrative I have limited myself to personal experiences on reservations. One such experience enables me to tell a little, but only a little, of John Collier's first efforts to initiate the reforms which, in twelve years, were to bring unprecedented benefits to the Indians. The efforts I witnessed on one reservation were, in varying forms, being made effective on all reservations.

After committing those two Indian "atrocities," I tried, in company with many of my depression-stricken countrymen, to find a job. In 1933 I was given a six-months clerical position on a Navajo reservation in New Mexico. On my way there I learned how a reluctantly resurrected mourner from the Book of Lamentations would feel. This couldn't happen to me!

When I arrived at the agency, there was no room for me. For two of the six months I slept in the vacant boys' dormitory—vacant because of summer vacation—on an old familiar mattress hollowed by generations of little Indians who had not made that hollow quite wide enough for me. I could still sleep on anything, anywhere.

Of the many emergency appropriations made at this time, the Indian Bureau received its share. Many hundreds of hungry Navajos were put to work building temporary dams in arroyos to divert floodwater if and when it came, to excavating storage wells for water for the famished herds. Here was a small part of the greatest soil reclamation project the country had known, tossed to Commissioner Collier to carry out in six months with a small appropriation!

On the entire Navajo reservation, in three states, some

50,000 Indians were trying to keep alive on land so eroded and overgrazed that they and their herds were faced with starvation. On this dead and dying land they were grazing 1,500,000 sheep and 50,000 horses and cattle. The initial step must be a drastic reduction of these herds. When Mr. Collier ordered this reduction, when he removed herds from large areas to bring the land back to its former semi-desert productivity—if, indeed, this was now possible—the anger of the Indians was profound. Is this strange when we remember that for eight years Commissioner Sells had constantly urged them to increase their flocks?

Navajos love their horses and do not destroy them when they become old and useless. When Mr. Collier ordered the Indians to bring in these worn-out horses, as well as the most worthless of their starved sheep, the Navajos nearly went on the warpath. (The Indians were paid a small sum for every animal destroyed.) A degree of confusion and rebellion naturally accompanied this reversal of former policies. Local partisan politicians supported the Navajos in their disaffection in order to discredit the Commissioner and national administration. This was true on every reservation where the needed reforms worked to the disadvantage of interested white people. The incident is given as an example of the many times Mr. Collier had to work against the wishes of the Indians who were, eventually, to be benefited.

Later these same Navajos were the chief beneficiaries of the Indian Arts and Crafts Board. Under its provisions tribal weavers were given better wool and improved dyes. Markets for their rugs were opened in Chicago, New York, and other cities, and the selling price of their rugs soon doubled. This was also true of their beautiful silver and turquoise jewelry. And as soon as this jewelry became a profitable source of income to the Indians, white craftsmen began imitating it for the tourist winter trade in the Southwest!

As years passed, the owners of all the white toes Mr.

Collier stepped on carried their protests to Congress where they found sympathetic listeners. The subsequent acts of these listeners were to set that reservation hound baying at my heels, after it had been silent for several years.

Died August 13, 1939, in the
eighteenth year of her life—Patsy.

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CHAPTER 38

I HAVE SOMETIMES wondered if voices of conscience are given any choice as to the people they nag, or if they have any personal preference as to the things they nag people about. They seem such a motley crew, never knowing their own minds from one century to the next. In one age they produce an Inquisition based upon obedience to authority, in another a Declaration of Independence. Considering the nature of the people those voices try to prod into behaving themselves, the poor things must get very discouraged at times.

The voices of conscience that had nagged me for so long had been silent for some years, perhaps to go and nag at some more promising person. I had come to have grave doubts as to the origin of that reservation hound, had about decided that some careless stork had got its cargo mixed. But in June of 1943 that hound appeared, yelping on the sidewalk. It brought a Senate Report on Indian affairs.

That Report 310 had been purportedly signed by four Senators, two of them long known as professed friends of the Indian. The political dust storm that report kicked up brought to light a peculiar fact. It had been ghostwritten by an executive secretary of the Senate Indian Committee, allegedly without the knowledge of the Senators made to appear its sponsors. Also, without their knowledge, that report had been printed and released to the press.

That Report 310, abortive as it proved to be temporarily, was indeed ominous. It proved that again the old devastating wind was blowing over the reservations where

Indians now had many things the white man coveted. The recommendations of the report would make it possible for him to get them.

Report 310 would end an ancient shame in a final act of ignominy. It called for the immediate abolition of the Indian Bureau! In doing this it inadvertently listed many reforms introduced my Commissioner Collier.

The ghostwriter, in support of his sweeping recommendations to end the Bureau within one year, led out the sacred old cow of economy which he had bedecked from cud to udder with false statements and peculiarly contrived figures. Of all the sacred cows that are paraded in Washington from time to time, none had been so lavishly caparisoned as the one that four Senators hastened to announce had not come from their herd.

The bureau which Report 310 wanted abolished within one year was the *reformed, honest,* and *efficient* Bureau created by John Collier during the ten years he had then held office. With Congressional support, he had built the long-needed hospitals on reservations and staffed them adequately. He had introduced supervision over forests and grazing lands on reservations, making them a source of tribal income, and he had taken the necessary steps to conserve the soil and prevent the indiscriminate cutting of timber. He had recognized the right of the Indians to a louder voice in the management of tribal affairs and had placed in Tribal Councils, whose members were elected by the Indians, a large degree of responsibility for the maintenance of law and order. Where feasible he had replaced the old boarding schools with day schools, to the end that children of five years should not be forcibly taken from their parents. He had administered the Arts and Crafts program to the great advantage of the several tribes whose native culture gave the nation its outstanding ethnic products. He had introduced a system of education, approved by educators and anthropologists, to educate Indian youth according to their native capacities and future needs.

Students capable of a higher education were placed in white schools.

And Mr. Collier had not permitted one more acre of Indian land to pass into white ownership by the granting of fee patents.

Although Report 310 was abortive, it merits close examination. Since its issuance separate bills have been introduced into Congress to accomplish piecemeal what the report failed to accomplish *in toto*. As late as 1947 yet another bill was introduced, this time in the guise of patriotism, designed to permit white people legally to obtain Indian land. That bill also merits the attention to be given it later.

The writer of Report 310 asked for the abolition of the Indian Bureau on the grounds of economy. He quoted numerous statistics in support of the alleged economy. His statistics are here examined and refuted.

I obtained my statistics from authentic published Federal reports. I do not know from what dim abode of inaccurate shades the ghostwriter obtained his.

The Indian now has hospitals. The ghost wanted them turned over to the Public Health Service and made available to white people, to eliminate the cost of duplicate functions. In 1941, the patient-day cost of Indian hospitals was $3.56; patient-day cost of Public Health hospitals was $4.23. Economy?

"Turn Indian forests and grazing lands over to the National Forest Service." The Bureau's cost of administering these forests and lands is one-fourteenth as much per acre as the cost of similar administration in our national Forest Service. Economy?

"Transfer Indian probate and inheritance matters to the States." The entire cost of probating estates of restricted Indians is repaid into the U.S. Treasury from collected fees! On small estates the Bureau's fee is $20. In state courts the minimum charge is $40. Economy? Or a sop to the legal fraternity?

"Eliminate all Federal control of law and order over allotted Indians. Savings, $250,000 yearly." The Bureau was spending $157,000 yearly in maintaining such law and order! It is a fancy, unholy ghost who can save more than he possesses. If this function of the Bureau is eliminated, the Bureau of Internal Revenue, the United States Attorney General's office, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation would have to step in to take its place. They would not step in, bringing their services gratis. In 1941, the per capita cost for police for the general population was $3.12. Law and order for Indians per capita was sixty cents. Economy?

"Eliminate all day schools for Indian children on allotted land. Savings, $2,000,000 yearly." The total yearly cost of these day schools was $408,200! O economy, what mathematical sins are committed in thy name! And of that $408,200, little could be saved unless the Federal government ceased its practice of giving financial aid to the school districts of various states that extend educational facilities to Indian children.

"Abolish the Indian Arts and Crafts Board." Like that shameful little figure of eleven cents, this reactionary demand speaks for itself.

"Eliminate all specialists, anthropologists, educators, social workers, and planners. Savings, actual but indeterminate." In the past fifteen years the Indian Bureau had, as Miss Swinton would say, "got hold of some brains"—a commodity so lacking in my sixteen years of service that I had been forced to believe the Bureau functioned chiefly with its spleen. Since our ghostwriter would eliminate them, he seems not to like brains. This seems a bit odd. Usually a person must have private experience with an organ or function before he learns to dislike and distrust them. Also, there are implications. For instance, would our ghost eliminate brains from the Bureau of Standards and the Geological Survey? Brains cost money there, too.

But it is in the name of altruism that our ghostwriter makes his final, all-embracing demand. "Eliminate Federal trust over all individual Indian lands!" Why? "This will free the Indian owners to become responsible citizens . . . without the stigma that attaches to them." Here my imp's perpetually cocked eyebrow vanished completely northward.

The full-blooded Indians who sold their allotments of land did not become "responsible citizens without a stigma." They became homeless paupers. At the time this report was written, there were previously enacted laws which enabled the Secretary of the Interior to "turn loose" every adult Indian who had demonstrated his ability to manage his own affairs and to support himself and his family without further Federal supervision.

Were the Indian Bureau and Federal services to Indians to be abolished, state and local agencies would have to render the same public services to Indians that they now extend to white people. In 1941 the yearly per capita cost of all Federal services to Indians, including payment to the states for Indian children in white schools, was $69. Of this sum, $4.58 were reimbursed to the Treasury, making the per capita cost $64.42. In 1941 the yearly per capita cost of state and local government to whites, exclusive of the cost of debt retirement, was $78.41. Economy?

The removal of Federal trust over allotted Indians, not yet ready to assume the full duties and responsibilities of citizenship, would result in the loss of their land. The tragic experience of nearly fifty years makes it plain that without Federal trust the greater part of allotted land still in Indian possession would shortly belong to white people. Between 1888 and 1933, through the sale of so-called surplus land, the sale of inherited land, and the granting of fee patents to permit sale of individual allotments, 90,000,000 acres of the Indians' most valuable land were sold to white people!

Report 310 aimed to wash down the political drain our historical responsibility to the American Indian. By no means was it the last attempt to accomplish this aim.

CHAPTER 39

IN A TREASURED letter from Don Marquis, written shortly before his death, he says: "One day I was twenty-five years old and writing poetry. I left my typewriter and went to the drugstore to buy a package of cigarettes and when I got back I was fifty instead of twenty-five and I don't have the faintest idea what became of the other twenty-five years."

We think of our years as if we had sovereignty over them. We never have more than a squatter's rights. One day I was twenty-five and writing poetry—the formless poetry of visionary youth with its nebulous rhythms of hope, its strophes of rainbow dreams. I went out to buy a new frock and when I returned I saw in the mirror a woman of fifty wearing a dress she had no business wearing. Beyond fifty the years buzz by like winged insects in the night, leaving their stings of wrinkles, hollows where their larvae of sorrow and weariness have nested. Swiftly, one by one, the years dispossess us. With the cherished possessions of heart and mind around us, we are left to await life's final eviction.

After reading Report 310, I went to stand before a window. I did not see the yard with its nine palm trees inside the hedge or the terra cotta roofs beyond. I saw nothing with my conscious mind. And suddenly I was made to realize that this was only one of many windows; that, unconsciously, throughout my long life I had followed a pattern unrecognized till now. I realized that every time of sorrow and crisis encountered through the

years had been met and somehow dealt with standing before a window. There had been many windows in many places.

When my early way brought me to that Crow Creek office and I had quickly to search my mind for a Biblical verse, it was no accident that the verse was "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help." It was this help that, through the years, I was to seek when standing before a window. From every window I have turned away with some measure of the help I sought. I do not know the source of that help. It may be the marshaling of inner strength, the summoning of the reserves of fortitude. Or it may be a response from that spiritual dimension which the troubled heart of humanity has ever searched for, searched and found in many forms and symbols. I can only say I do not know.

Were I to write another story, using those many windows as the nucleus instead of the Indian Service, that story and this would not be recognizable as having been written about the same person. Are there any lives of which this would not be true? Each of us gives over with our last breath our own small contribution to the fathomless well of human experience those things that are never told.

I turned from the window with Report 310 in my hand and put a sheet of paper in my typewriter. I began a third narrative of the Indian Service, a narrative destined to be rewritten four times. As I wrote, the reservation hound, which had taken up permanent quarters in Washington, appeared frequently with copies of proposed legislation, all aimed to accomplish piecemeal what Report 310 had failed to achieve. These bills are too numerous to examine here in detail. One of them, Senate 1311, *directed* the Secretary of the Interior to issue fee patents to all Indian owners of allotted land. Here once more was the mangy old camel that already had eaten 90,000,000 acres of Indian land and this bill, if enacted, would complete the camel's

repast. Another bill, Senate 1218, called for repeal of the Indian Reorganization Act of June 18, 1934. This is the act which implemented the recommendations of the Brookings Institute, the act under which the betterment of the Indian has been carried out in the past and which was needed to insure the continued improvement of reservation conditions.

Because "age had wearied me and the years condemned," this narrative was long in the writing and, meanwhile, yet another bill was introduced into Congress which must here be examined in detail. The American people should know how certain members of Congress proposed to reward the large number of Indian boys who served in combat units during World War II.

In January, 1947, the House Indian subcommittee introduced Bill 1113—"To provide for removal of restrictions on property of Indians who serve in the armed forces." The bill proved to be merely redundant. In his report on the bill, Oscar L. Chapman, Under Secretary of the Interior, informed the framers of the bill that "sufficient authority of law *now exists* in all proper cases to effect the transfer of unrestricted title to allotted and inherited lands through issuance of patents in fee, removal of restrictions, or the issuance of certificates of competency." Bill 1113 was temporarily withdrawn. Its framers spent fifty-four days in devising a bill that would by-pass the authority of the Secretary of the Interior and reintroduced Bill 1113 as a bill now intended "To emancipate United States Indians in certain cases." We shall look into that word "emancipate" later. As amended, the bill passed the House and as of June, 1948, awaited action by the Senate. It failed of passage.

As passed by the House, the bill read: "Any Indian who is a citizen of the United States may . . . upon reaching the age of twenty-one, apply to any *Naturalization Court* for a writ of competency . . . if the writ is granted, the Secretary of the Interior *shall* take steps necessary to give the

applicant full ownership and control of the money and property held in trust for him by the Secretary."

What a field day our humorists missed here! All Indians are citizens. If one class of citizens can be brought before our naturalization courts to be examined as to their "moral and intellectual qualifications and ability to manage their own affairs," as the bill provides, why not other classes of citizens? Why not require all candidates for public office to obtain a writ of competency before they begin managing the affairs of millions of other citizens?

Bill 1113 was widely publicized as an "Emancipation Bill." In practice, how would it have rewarded the Indian boys who fought in the war in defense of the country that had often denied them the human rights which they helped to preserve for us? It set up a devious method by which these veterans could obtain their scrap of paper, a writ of competency. But once they had obtained it, the bill says unequivocally that "they shall no longer be entitled to share any of the benefits or gratuitous service extended to Indians by the Bureau of Indian Affairs."

We will take a suppositional case of two Indian veterans who return to the same reservation where both have an allotment of land on which they hope to make a living for themselves and their families. One of them is "emancipated" and has his scrap of paper. The other has kept his restricted status. The restricted Indian can send his small children to the school maintained by the Bureau. The emancipated Indian cannot send his children to this school; he has lost any right to this gratuitous service. In most cases a white school will not be available to him. His children will not be educated.

To these two veterans the health of their families will be of paramount importance. The restricted Indian, if ill, can go to the hospital maintained by the Bureau, as can his children. His wife, in childbirth, will be given medical care. For minor ailments he can call in the agency physician. The emancipated Indian loses his right to these

gratuitous medical services. He must seek the help of a nonreservation doctor. There are millions of white people who cannot afford to pay the inflated medical costs of today. Can this Indian afford to do so? Or will his family go without medical attention?

To farm their land, these men need farm implements. The restricted Indian is entitled to be given temporary work at the agency in order to pay for the needed implements which are purchased by the Bureau and sold to him at cost. This is a gratuitous service, so the emancipated Indian must go to white dealers and pay cash for his implements.

Few reservations have naturally arable land. We have herded the Indians on semiarid land where irrigation is essential. Many small irrigation projects have been completed as a gratuitous service to bring water to Indian land. The restricted Indian can use this water on his allotment. The emancipated Indian cannot.

The restricted Indian will not have to pay taxes on his allotment. The emancipated Indian must pay taxes, or have his land sold for nonpayment.

Which of these two young Indians has hope for the future?

What can the emancipated Indian do but sell his land? This is what the "Emancipation Bill," No. 1113, was designed to make him do. Will he "take his place as a responsible citizen without the stigma that attaches to him as a restricted Indian?" Or, in a highly competitive white community, will he and his family be forced into a life of hopeless degradation and poverty?

There is indeed a stigma attached to the relationship between us and the Indian, but it is not attached to him as an Indian. He is what his racial heritage has made him, as are we all. The stigma attaches to the white people whose insatiable greed makes it imperative that the Indian's property rights be protected and his human rights safeguarded.

As late as October, 1949, President Truman found it necessary to veto a long-needed, beneficent bill appropriating $88,500,000 for a ten-year rehabilitation program for the Navajo and Hopi Indians. Why? Section 9 of that bill would have removed some 70,000 Indians in Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah from Federal to state control! Of Section 9 the President said: "It was heavily freighted with possibilities of grave injury to the very people who are intended to be the beneficiaries of the bill." In over fifty years of ceaseless attempts by pressure groups to gain control and possession of Indian property, Section 9 was the latest. It will not be the last. We shall see future harmful measures presented in the old guise of alleged altruism, economy, and patriotism. The old cry, "Turn the Indian loose," will again reverberate in the halls of Congress. Listeners to that cry should ever keep in mind one fact—under existing legislation the Secretary of the Interior is empowered to "turn loose" every adult Indian who can prove his ability capably to manage his own affairs. No capable Indian is being kept in a restricted status unless he so chooses.

Early in this narrative it was said that, in our efforts to guide the divinity which shapes our ends, the hewing we do is as apt to produce a pile of frustrated little chips as a symmetrically rounded achievement. Insofar as the Indian is concerned, this narrative is the pile of frustrated chips hewn by the writer from many years of effort. They are of import only because they derive from the vastly important, tragically uprooted, cheated, corrupted, but also cherished pile of frustrated Indian chips hewn from a primitive race by the representatives of the people and the United States Indian Service.

If these chips serve to make for the Indian a few new friends who will join the small group of people who have long struggled to help and protect him, the Stubborn Fool will not have hewn in vain.