

Sheba Blake Publishing

AN APACHE PRINCESS

Charles King



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Charles King asserts the moral right to be identified as the author of this work.

Sheba Blake Publishing Corp.

2288 Crossrail Dr

Atlanta, GA 30349

support@shebablake.com

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One

The Meeting By the Waters



Under the willows at the edge of the pool a young girl sat daydreaming, though the day was nearly done. All in the valley was wrapped in shadow, though the cliffs and turrets across the stream were resplendent in a radiance of slanting sunshine. Not a cloud tempered the fierce glare of the arching heavens or softened the sharp outline of neighboring peak or distant mountain chain. Not a whisper of breeze stirred the drooping foliage along the sandy shores or ruffled the liquid mirror surface. Not a sound, save drowsy hum of beetle or soft murmur of rippling waters, among the pebbly shallows below, broke the vast silence of the scene. The snow cap, gleaming at the northern horizon, lay one hundred miles away and looked but an easy one-day march. The black upheavals of the Matitzal, barring the southward valley, stood sullen and frowning along the Verde, jealous of the westward range that threw their rugged gorges into early shade. Above and below the still and placid pool and but a few miles distant, the pine-fringed, rocky hillsides came shouldering close to the stream, but fell away, forming a deep, semicircular basin toward the west, at the hub of which stood bolt-upright a tall, snowy flagstaff, its shred of bunting hanging limp and lifeless from the peak, and in

the dull, dirt-colored buildings of adobe, ranged in rigid lines about the dull brown, flat-topped *mesa*, a thousand yards up stream above the pool, drowsed a little band of martial exiles, stationed here to keep the peace 'twixt scattered settlers and swarthy, swarming Apaches. The fort was their soldier home; the solitary girl a soldier's daughter.

She could hardly have been eighteen. Her long, slim figure, in its clinging riding habit, betrayed, despite roundness and supple grace, a certain immaturity. Her hands and feet were long and slender. Her sun-tanned cheek and neck were soft and rounded. Her mouth was delicately chiseled and the lips were pink as the heart of a Bridesmaid rose, but, being firmly closed, told no tale of the teeth within, without a peep at which one knew not whether the beauty of the sweet young face was really made or marred. Eyes, eyebrows, lashes, and a wealth of tumbling tresses of rich golden brown were all superb, but who could tell what might be the picture when she opened those pretty, curving lips to speak or smile? Speak she did not, even to the greyhounds stretched sprawling in the warm sands at her feet. Smile she could not, for the young heart was sore troubled.

Back in the thick of the willows she had left her pony, blinking lazily and switching his long tail to rid his flanks of humming insects, but never mustering energy enough to stamp a hoof or strain a thread of his horsehair *riata*. Both the long, lean, sprawling hounds lolled their red, dripping tongues and panted in the sullen heat. Even the girl herself, nervous at first and switching with her dainty whip at the crumbling sands and pacing restlessly to and fro, had yielded gradually to the drooping influences of the hour and, seated on a rock, had buried her chin in the palm of her hand, and, with eyes no longer vagrant and searching, had drifted away into maiden dreamland.

Full thirty minutes had she been there waiting for something, or somebody, and it, or he, had not appeared.

Yet somebody else was there and close at hand. The shadow of the westward heights had gradually risen to the crest of the rocky cliffs across the stream. A soft, prolonged call of distant trumpet summoned homeward, for the coming night, the scattered herds and herd guards of the post, and, rising with a sigh of disappointment, the girl turned toward her now impatient pony when her ear caught the sound of a smothered hand-clap, and, whirling about in swift hope and surprise, her face once more darkened at sight of an Indian girl, Apache unquestionably, crouching in the leafy covert of the opposite willows and pointing silently down stream. For a moment, without love or fear in the eyes of either, the white girl and the brown gazed at each other across the intervening water mirror and spoke no word. Then, slowly, the former approached the brink, looked in the direction indicated by the little dingy index and saw nothing to warrant the recall. Moreover, she was annoyed to think that all this time, perhaps, the Indian girl had been lurking in that sheltering grove and stealthily watching her. Once more she turned away, this time with a toss of her head that sent the russet-brown tresses tumbling about her slim back and shoulders, and at once the hand-clap was repeated, low, but imperative, and Tonto, the biggest of the two big hounds, uplifted one ear and growled a challenge.

“What do you want?” questioned the white girl, across the estranging waters.

For answer the brown girl placed her left forefinger on her lips, and again distinctly pointed to a little clump of willows a dozen rods below, but on the westward side.

“Do you mean—someone’s coming?” queried the first.

“Sh-sh-sh!” answered the second softly, then pointed again, and pointed eagerly.

The soldier’s daughter glanced about her, uncertainly, a moment, then slowly, cautiously made her way along the sandy brink in the direction indicated, gathering the folds of her long skirt in her gauntleted hand and stepping lightly in her slender moccasins. A moment or two, and she had reached the edge of a dense little copse and peered cautiously within. The Indian girl was right. Somebody lay there, apparently asleep, and the fair young intruder recoiled in obvious confusion, if not dismay. For a moment she stood with fluttering heart and parting lips that now permitted reassuring glimpse of pearly white teeth. For a moment she seemed on the verge of panicky retreat, but little by little regained courage and self-poise. What was there to fear in a sleeping soldier anyhow? She knew who it was at a glance. She could, if she would, whisper his name. Indeed, she had been whispering it many a time, day and night, these last two weeks until—until certain things about him had come to her ears that made her shrink in spite of herself from this handsome, petted young soldier, this Adonis of her father’s troop, Neil Blakely, lieutenant of cavalry.

“The Bugologist,” they called him in cardroom circles at the “store,” where men were fiercely intolerant of other pursuits than poker, for which pastime Mr. Blakely had no use whatever—no more use than had its votaries for him. He was a dreamy sort of fellow, with big blue eyes and a fair skin that were in themselves sufficient to stir the rancor of born frontiersmen, and they of Arizona in the days of old were an exaggeration of the type in general circulation on the Plains. He was something of a dandy in dress, another thing they loathed; something of a purist in speech, which was affectation unpardonable; something of a dissenter as to drink, appreciative of

“Cucumungo” and claret, but distrustful of whisky—another thing to call down scorn illimitable from the elect of the mining camps and packing “outfits.” But all these disqualifications might have been overlooked had the lieutenant displayed even a faint preference for poker. “The Lord loveth a cheerful giver—or loser” was the creed of the cardroom circle at the store, but beyond a casual or smiling peep at the game from the safe distance of the doorway, Mr. Blakely had vouchsafed no interest in affairs of that character. To the profane disgust of Bill Hyde, chief packer, and the malevolent, if veiled, criticism of certain “sporty” fellow soldiers, Blakely preferred to spend his leisure hours riding up and down the valley, with a butterfly net over his shoulders and a japanned tin box slung at his back, searching for specimens that were scarce as the Scriptures among his commentators.

Even on this hot October afternoon he had started on his entomological work, but, finding little encouragement and resting a while in the shade, he had dozed away on a sandy couch, his head on his arms, his broad-brimmed hat over his face, his shapely legs outstretched in lazy, luxurious enjoyment, his tall and slender form, arrayed in cool white blouse and trousers, really a goodly thing to behold. This day, too, he must have come afoot, but his net and box lay there beside him, and his hunt had been without profit, for both were apparently empty. Possibly he had devoted but little time to netting insects. Possibly he had thought to encounter bigger game. If so his zest in the sport must have been but languid, since he had so soon yielded to the drowsy influences of the day. There was resentment in the heart of the girl as this occurred to her, even though it would have angered her the more had anyone suggested she had come in hope of seeing or speaking with him.

And yet, down in the bottom of her heart, she knew that just such a hope had held her there even to the hour of recall. She knew that, since

opportunities for meeting him within the garrison were limited, she had deliberately chosen to ride alone, and farther than she had ever ridden alone before, in hope of meeting him without. She knew that in the pursuit of his winged prey he never sought the open *mesa* or the ravines and gorges of the foothills. Only along the stream were they—and he—to be found. Only along the stream, therefore, had she this day ridden and, failing to see aught of him, had dismounted to think in quiet by the pool, so she told herself, but incidentally to wait and watch for him; and now she had found him, neither watching nor waiting, but in placid unconcern and slumber.

One reason why they met so seldom in garrison was that her father did not like him in the least. The captain was a veteran soldier, self-taught and widely honored, risen from the ranks. The lieutenant was a man of gentle breeding and of college education, a soldier by choice, or caprice, yet quite able at any time to quit the service and live a life of ease, for he had, they said, abundant means of his own. He had been first lieutenant of that troop at least five years, not five months of which had he served on duty with it. First one general, then another, had needed him as aide-de-camp, and when, on his own application, he had been relieved from staff duty to enable him to accompany his regiment to this then distant and inhospitable land, he had little more than reached Camp Sandy when he was sent by the department commander to investigate some irregularity at the Apache reservation up the valley, and then, all unsoliciting, he had been placed in charge pending the coming of a new agent to replace the impeached one going home under guard, and the captain said things about his subaltern's always seeking "fancy duty" that were natural, yet unjust—things that reached Mr. Blakely in exaggerated form, and that angered him against his senior to the extent of open rupture. Then Blakely took the mountain fever at the agency, thereby still further delaying his return to troop

duty, and then began another complication, for the contract doctor, though skillful in his treatment, was less assiduous in nursing than were the wife of the newly arrived agent and her young companion Lola, daughter of the agency interpreter and his Apache-Yuma wife.

When well enough to attempt light duty again, the lieutenant had rejoined at Sandy, and, almost the first face to greet him on his arrival was one he had never seen before and never forgot thereafter—the sweet, laughing, winsome face of Angela Wren, his captain's only child.

The regiment had marched into Arizona overland, few of the wives and daughters with it. Angela, motherless since her seventh year, was at school in the distant East, together with the daughters of the colonel then commanding the regiment. They were older; were "finishing" that summer, and had amazed that distinguished officer by demanding to be allowed to join him with their mother. When they left the school Angela could stand it no longer. She both telegraphed and wrote, begging piteously to be permitted to accompany them on the long journey by way of San Francisco, and so it had finally been settled. The colonel's household were now at regimental headquarters up at Prescott, and Angela was quite happy at Camp Sandy. She had been there barely four weeks when Neil Blakely, pale, fragile-looking, and still far from strong, went to report for duty at his captain's quarters and was met at the threshold by his captain's daughter.

Expecting a girl friend, Kate Sanders, from "down the row," she had rushed to welcome her, and well-nigh precipitated herself upon a stranger in the natty undress uniform of the cavalry. Her instant blush was something beautiful to see. Blakely said the proper things to restore tranquillity; smilingly asked for her father, his captain; and, while waiting for that warrior to finish shaving and come down to receive him, was entertained by Miss Wren in the little

army parlor. Looking into her wondrous eyes and happy, blushing face, he forgot that there was rancor between his troop commander and himself, until the captain's stiff, unbending greeting reminded him. Thoughtless people at the post, however, were laughing over the situation a week thereafter. Neil Blakely, a squire of dames in San Francisco and other cities when serving on staff duty, a society "swell" and clubman, had obviously become deeply interested in this blithe young army girl, without a cent to her name—with nothing but her beauty, native grace, and sweet, sunshiny nature to commend her. And everyone hitherto had said Neil Blakely would never marry in the army.

And there was one woman at Sandy who saw the symptoms with jealous and jaundiced eyes—Clarice, wife of the major then commanding the little "four-company" garrison. Other women took much to heart the fact that Major Plume had cordially invited Blakely, on his return from the agency, to be their guest until he could get settled in his own quarters. The Plumes had rooms to spare—and no children. The major was twelve years older than his wife, but women said it often looked the other way. Mrs. Plume had aged very rapidly after his sojourn on recruiting duty in St. Louis. Frontier commissariat and cooking played hob with her digestion, said the major. Frontier winds and water dealt havoc to her complexion, said the women. But both complexion and digestion seemed to "take a brace," as irreverent youth expressed it, when Neil Blakely came to Sandy and the major's roof. True, he stayed but six and thirty hours and then moved into his own domicile—quarters No. 7—after moving out a most reluctant junior. Major Plume and Mrs. Plume had expected him, they were so kind as to say, to choose a vacant half set, excellent for bachelor purposes, under the roof that sheltered Captain Wren, Captain Wren's maiden sister and housekeeper, and Angela, the captain's daughter.

This set adjoined the major's big central house, its south windows looking into the major's north gallery. "It would be so neighborly and nice," said Mrs. Plume. Instead, however, Mr. Blakely stood upon his prerogative as a senior subaltern and "ranked out" Mr. and Mrs. Bridger and baby, and these otherwise gentle folk, evicted and aggrieved, knowing naught of Blakely from previous association, and seeing no reason why he should wish to be at the far end of the row instead of the middle, with his captain, where he properly belonged, deemed themselves the objects of wanton and capricious treatment at his hands, and resented it according to their opportunities. Bridger, being a soldier and subordinate, had to take it out in soliloquy and swear-words, but his impetuous little helpmate—being a woman, a wife and mother, set both wits and tongue to work, and heaven help the man when woman has both to turn upon him! In refusing the room and windows that looked full-face into those of Mrs. Plume, Blakely had nettled her. In selecting the quarters occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Bridger he had slightly inconvenienced and sorely vexed the latter. With no incumbrances whatever, with fine professional record, with personal traits and reputation to make him enviable, with comparative wealth and, as a rule, superlative health, Blakely started on his career as a subaltern at Sandy with three serious handicaps,—the disfavor of his captain, who knew and loved him little,—the prejudice of Mrs. Bridger, who knew and loved him not at all,—and the jealous pique of Mrs. Plume, who had known and loved him, possibly, too well.

There was little duty doing at Sandy at the time whereof we write. Men rose at dawn and sent the horses forth to graze all day in the foothills under heavy guard. It was too hot for drills, with the mercury sizzling at the hundred mark. Indian prisoners did the "police" work about the post; and men and women dozed and wilted in the shade until the late afternoon recall. Then

Sandy woke up and energetically stabled, drilled, paraded under arms at sunset, mounted guard immediately thereafter, dined in spotless white; then rode, drove, flirted, danced, gossiped, made mirth, melody, or monotonous plaint till nearly midnight; then slept until the dawn of another day.

Indians there were in the wilds of the Mogollon to the southeast, and, sometimes at rare intervals straying from the big reservation up the valley, they scared the scattered settlers of the Agua Fria and the Hassayampa; but Sandy rarely knew of them except as prisoners. Not a hostile shot had been fired in the surrounding mountains for at least six months, so nobody felt the least alarm, and many only languid interest, when the white-coated officers reported the result of sunset roll-call and inspection, and, saluting Major Plume, the captain of "C" Troop announced in tones he meant should be heard along the row: "Mr. Blakely, sir, is absent!"

Two

Scot Versus Saxon



Three women were seated at the moment on the front veranda of the major's quarters—Mrs. Plume, Miss Janet Wren, the captain's sister, and little Mrs. Bridger. The first named had been intently watching the officers as, after the dismissal of their companies at the barracks, they severally joined the post commander, who had been standing on the barren level of the parade, well out toward the flagstaff, his adjutant beside him. To her the abrupt announcement caused no surprise. She had seen that Mr. Blakely was not with his troop. The jeweled hands slightly twitched, but her voice had the requisite and conventional drawl as she turned to Miss Wren: "Chasing some new butterfly, I suppose, and got lost. A—what time did—Angela return?"

"Hours ago, I fancy. She was dressed when I returned from hospital. Sergeant Leary seems worse to-day."

"That was nearly six," dreamily persisted Mrs. Plume. "I happened to be at the side window." In the pursuit of knowledge Mrs. Plume adhered to the main issue and ignored the invalid sergeant, whose slow convalescence had stirred the sympathies of the captain's sister.

“Yes, it was nearly that when Angela dismounted,” softly said Mrs. Bridger. “I heard Punch galloping away to his stable.”

“Why, Mrs. Bridger, are you sure?” And the spinster of forty-five turned sharply on the matron of less than half her years. “She had on her white muslin when she came to the head of the stairs to answer me.”

Mrs. Bridger could not be mistaken. It was Angela’s habit when she returned from her rides to dismount at the rear gateway; give Punch his *congé* with a pat or two of the hand; watch him a moment as he tore gleefully away, round to the stables to the westward of the big quadrangle; then to go to her room and dress for the evening, coming down an hour later, looking fresh and sweet and dainty as a dewy Mermet. As a rule she rode without other escort than the hounds, for her father would not go until the sun was very low and would not let her go with Blakely or Duane, the only bachelor troop officers then at Sandy. He had nothing against Duane, but, having set his seal against the other, felt it necessary to include them both. As a rule, therefore, she started about four, alone, and was home an hour later. Five young maidens dwelt that year in officers’ row, daughters of the regiments,—for it was a mixed command and not a big one,—two companies each of infantry and cavalry, after the manner of the early 70’s. Angela knew all four girls, of course, and had formed an intimacy with one—one who only cared to ride in the cool of the bright evenings when the officers took the hounds jack-rabbit hunting up the valley. Twice a week, when Luna served, they held these moonlit meets, and galloping at that hour, though more dangerous to necks, was less so to complexions. As a rule, too, Angela and Punch contented themselves with a swift scurry round the reservation, with frequent fordings of the stream for the joy it gave them both. They were rarely out of sight of the sentries and never in any appreciable danger. No Apache with hostile intent ventured near

enough to Sandy to risk reprisals. Miners, prospectors, and ranchmen were few in numbers, but, far and wide they knew the captain's bonny daughter, and, like the men of her father's troop, would have risked their lives to do her a service. Their aversions as to Sandy were centered in the other sex.

Aunt Janet, therefore, had some reason for doubting the report of Mrs. Bridger. It was so unlike Angela to be so very late returning, although, now that Mrs. Bridger had mentioned it, she, too, remembered hearing the rapid thud of Punch's galloping hoofs homeward bound, as was she, at 5.45. Yet, barely five minutes thereafter, Angela, who usually spent half an hour splashing in her tub, appeared full panoplied, apparently, at the head of the stairs upon her aunt's arrival, and was even now somewhere down the row, hobnobbing with Kate Sanders. That Lieutenant Blakely should have missed retreat roll-call was in itself no very serious matter. "Slept through at his quarters, perhaps," said Plume. "He'll turn up in time for dinner." In fine the major's indifference struck the captain as an evidence of official weakness, reprehensible in a commander charged with the discipline of a force on hostile soil. What Wren intended was that Plume should be impressed by his formal word and manner, and direct the adjutant to look up the derelict instantly. As no such action was taken, however, he felt it due to himself to speak again. A just man was Wren, and faithful to the core in his own discharge of duty. What he could not abide was negligence on part of officer or man, on part of superior or inferior, and he sought to "stiffen" Plume forthwith.

"If he isn't in his quarters, shall I send a party out in search, sir?"

"Who? Blakely? Dear, no, Wren! What for?" returned the post commander, obviously nettled. "I fancy he'll not thank you for even searching his quarters. You may stumble over his big museum in the dark and smash things. No, let him alone. If he isn't here for dinner, I'll 'tend to it myself."

And so, rebuffed, as it happened, by an officer much his inferior in point of experience and somewhat in years, Wren silently and stiffly saluted and turned away. Virtually he had been given to understand that his suggestion was impertinent. He reached his quarters, therefore, in no pleasant mood, and found his sister waiting for him with Duty in her clear and shining eyes.

A woman of many a noble trait was Janet Wren,—a woman who had done a world of good to those in sickness, sorrow, or other adversity, a woman of boundless faith in herself and her opinions, but not too much hope or charity for others. The blood of the Scotch Covenanters was in her veins, for her mother had been born and bred in the shadow of the kirk and lived and died in the shadow of the cross. A woman with a mission was Janet, and one who went at it unflinchingly. She had loved her brother always, yet disapproved his marriage to so young and unformed a woman as was his wife. Later, she had deprecated from the start the soldier spirit, fierce in his Highland blood, that tore him from the teachings of their gentle mother and her beloved meenister, took him from his fair young wife when most she needed him and sent him straightway into the ranks of the one Highland regiment in the Union Army at the outbreak of the Civil War. His gallant colonel fell at First Bull Run, and Sergeant Wren fought over his body to the fervent admiration of the Southerners who captured both. The first War Secretary, mourning a beloved brother and grateful to his defender, commissioned the latter in the regulars at once and, on his return from Libby, Wren joined the army as a first lieutenant. With genuine Scottish thrift, his slender pay had been hoarded for him, and his now motherless little one, by that devoted sister, and when, a captain at the close of the war, he came to clasp his daughter to his heart, he found himself possessed of a few hundreds more than fell to the lot of most of his associates. It was then that Janet, motherless herself, had stepped into the management of

her brother's army home, and sought to dominate in that as she had in everything else from early girlhood. Wren loved her fondly, but he, too, had a will. They had many a clash. It was this, indeed, that led to Angela's going so early to an Eastern school. We are all paragons of wisdom in the management of other people's children. It is in dealing with our own our limitations are so obvious. Fond as she had become of Angela's sweet young mother, it must be owned that whom Janet loved in this way she often chastened. Neighbors swore it was not grief, nor illness, half so much as sister-in-law, that wore the gentle spirit to the snapping-point. The great strong heart of the soldier was well-nigh broken at his loss, and Janet, who had never seen him shed a tear since early boyhood, stood for once, at least, in awe and trembling at sight of his awful grief. Time and nature played their part and brought him, gradually, resignation, but never genuine solace. He turned to little Angela with almost passionate love and tenderness. He would, mayhap, have spoiled her had not frontier service kept him so much afield that it was Janet who really reared her,—but not according to the strict letter of her law. Wren knew well what that was and forbade.

Misfortunes came to Janet Wren while yet a comely woman of thirty-five. She could have married, and married well, a comrade captain in her brother's regiment; but him, at least, she held to be her own, and, loving him with genuine fervor and devotion, she sought to turn him in all things to her serious views of life, its manifold duties and responsibilities. She had her ideal of what a man should be—a monarch among other men, but one knowing no God but her God, no creed but her creed, no master but Duty, no mistress but herself, and no weakness whatsoever. A braver, simpler, kinder soul than her captain there dwelt not in the service of his country, but he loved his pipe, his song, his dogs, his horses, his troop, and certain soldier ways that, during his

convalescence from wounds, she had not had opportunity to observe. She had nursed him back to life and love and, unwittingly, to his former harmless habits. These all she would have had him forswear, not for her sake so much, she said, but because they were in themselves sinful and beneath him. She sought to train him down too fine for the rugged metal of the veteran soldier, and the fabric snapped in her hands. She had sent him forth sore-hearted over her ceaseless importunity. She had told him he must not only give up all his ways, but, if he would make her happy, he must put the words of Ruth into his mouth, and that ended it. He transferred into another corps when she broke with him; carried his sore heart to the Southern plains, and fell in savage battle within another month.

Not long thereafter her little fortune, invested according to the views of a spiritual rather than a temporal adviser,—and much against her brother's wishes,—went the way of riches that have wings, and now, dependent solely upon him, welcomed to his home and fireside, she nevertheless strove to dominate as of yore. He had had to tell her Angela could not and should not be subjected to such restraints as the sister would have prescribed, but so long as he was the sole victim he whimsically bore it without vehement protest. "Convert me all you can, Janet, dear," he said, "but don't try to reform the whole regiment. It's past praying for."

Now, when other women whispered to her that while Mrs. Plume had been a belle in St. Louis and Mr. Blakely a young society beau, the magnitude of their flirtation had well-nigh stopped her marriage, Miss Wren saw opportunity for her good offices and, so far from avoiding, she sought the society of the major's brooding wife. She even felt a twinge of disappointment when the young officer appeared, and after the initial thirty-six hours under the commander's roof, rarely went thither at all. She knew her brother

disapproved of him, and thought it to be because of moral, not military, obliquity. She saw with instant apprehension his quick interest in Angela and the child's almost unconscious response. With the solemn conviction of the maiden who, until past the meridian, had never loved, she looked on Angela as far too young and immature to think of marrying, yet too shallow, vain and frivolous, too corrupted, in fact, by that pernicious society school—not to shrink from flirtations that might mean nothing to the man but would be damnation to the girl. Even the name of this big, blue-eyed, fair-skinned young votary of science had much about it that made her fairly bristle, for she had once been described as an “austere vestal” by Lieutenant Blake, of the regiment preceding them at Sandy, the ——th Cavalry—and a mutual friend had told her all about it—another handicap for Blakely. She had grown, it must be admitted, somewhat gaunt and forbidding in these later years, a thing that had stirred certain callow wits to differentiate between the Misses Wren as Angela and Angular, which, hearing, some few women reprov'd but all repeated. Miss Wren, the sister, was in fine a woman widely honored but little sought. It was Angela that all Camp Sandy would have met with open arms.

“R-r-robert,” began Miss Wren, as the captain unclasped his saber belt and turned it over to Mickel, his German “striker.” She would have proceeded further, but he held up a warning hand. He had come homeward angering and ill at ease. Disliking Blakely from the first, a “ballroom soldier,” as he called him, and alienated from him later, he had heard still further whisperings of the devotions of a chieftain's daughter at the agency, above all, of the strange infatuation of the major's wife, and these had warranted, in his opinion, warning words to his senior subaltern in refusing that gentleman's request to ride with Angela. “I object to any such attentions—to any meetings whatsoever,” said he, but sooner than give the real reason, added lamely, “My

daughter is too young.” Now he thought he saw impending duty in his sister’s somber eyes and poise. He knew it when she began by rolling her r’s—it was so like their childhood’s spiritual guide and mentor, MacTaggart, erstwhile of the “Auld Licht” persuasion, and a power.

“Wait a bit, Janet,” said he. “Mickel, get my horse and tell Sergeant Strang to send me a mounted orderly.” Then, as Mickel dropped the saber in the open doorway and departed, he turned upon her.

“Where’s Angela?” said he, “and what was she doing out after recall? The stable sergeant says ‘twas six when Punch came home.”

“R-r-robert, it is of that I wish to speak to you, and before she comes to dinner. Hush! She’s coming now.”

Down the row of shaded wooden porticos, at the major’s next door, at Dr. Graham’s, the Scotch surgeon and Wren’s especial friend and crony, at the Lynns’ and Sanders’s beyond, little groups of women and children in cool evening garb, and officers in white, were gathered in merry, laughing chat. Nowhere, save in the eyes of one woman at the commanding officer’s, and here at Wren’s, seemed there anything ominous in the absence of this officer so lately come to join them. The voice of Angela, glad and ringing, fell upon the father’s ears in sudden joy. Who could associate shame or subterfuge with tones so charged with merriment? The face of Angela, coming suddenly round the corner from the side veranda, beamed instantly upon him, sweet, trusting and welcoming, then slowly shadowed at sight of the set expression about his mouth, and the rigid, uncompromising, determined sorrow in the features of her aunt.

Before she could utter a word, the father questioned:

“Angela, my child, have you seen Mr. Blakely this afternoon?”

One moment her big eyes clouded, but unflinchingly they met his gaze. Then, something in the stern scrutiny of her aunt's regard stirred all that was mutinous within her; yet there was an irrepressible twitching about the corners of the rosy mouth, a twinkle about the big brown eyes that should have given them pause, even as she demurely answered:

"Yes."

"When?" demanded the soldier, his muscular hand clutching ominously at the wooden rail; his jaw setting squarely. "When—and where?"

But now the merriment with which she had begun changed slowly at sight of the repressed fury in his rugged Gaelic face. She, too, was trembling as she answered:

"Just after recall—down at the pool."

For an instant he stood glaring, incredulous. "At the pool! You! My bairnie!" Then, with sudden outburst of passionate wrath, "Go to your room!" said he.

"But listen—father, dear," she began, imploringly. For answer he seized her slender arm in almost brutal grasp and fairly hurled her within the doorway. "Not a word!" he ground between his clinched teeth. "Go instantly!" Then, slamming the door upon her, he whirled about as though to seek his sister's face, and saw beyond her, rounding the corner of the northwest set of quarters, coming in from the *mesa* roadway at the back, the tall, white figure of the missing man.

Another moment and Lieutenant Blakely, in the front room of his quarters, looking pale and strange, was being pounced upon with eager questioning by Duane, his junior, when the wooden steps and veranda creaked under a quick, heavy, ominous tread, and, with livid face and clinching hands, the troop commander came striding in.