

**I MARRIED A SOLDIER;
OR, OLD DAYS IN THE
OLD ARMY**

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I married a soldier; or, Old days in the old army by Lydia Spencer Lane

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LYDIA SPENCER LANE

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BY

LYDIA SPENCER LANE



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1893

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PREFACE.

IN sending forth this account of incidents in my army life, I claim for it no literary merit; I have simply given facts without any attempt to elaborate them.

First intended for my children and grandchildren, I afterwards thought this narrative might be acceptable to army friends, and to many of a younger generation who are interested in the old army.

To the former the scenes described may awaken long-forgotten experiences in their own lives; to the latter it will carry the conviction that they will never be called upon to endure what we did.

To-day there is no "frontier;" the wilderness blossoms as the rose; our old deadly enemy, the Indian, is educated, clothed, and almost in his right mind; railroads run hither and yon, and the great trains of army wagons and ambulances are things of the past, whatever civilization may follow.

The hardy, adventurous element in those early pioneer days will ever possess an interest of its own, and I venture to hope that the record of my own experiences will contribute somewhat to the history of those heroic times.

AUGUST 18, 1892.

I MARRIED A SOLDIER

OR

OLD DAYS IN THE OLD ARMY

I

"AND so they were married," and this is how the marriage notice read :

"In Carlisle, Pennsylvania, May 18, by the Reverend Merwin Johnson, Lieutenant William B. Lane, U.S. Mounted Rifles, and Lydia Spencer, youngest daughter of the late Major George Blaney, U.S. Engineer Corps" (or words to that effect).

The ceremony was short, the marriage feast not elaborate, and after it was over, the farewells spoken amid hearty good wishes for our future happiness, we started for Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, where Lieutenant Lane was to be stationed. Travelling at that time was not as rapid as it is now, and several days passed before we reached the end of our journey; but it was over at last, and, until our quarters were ready (two rooms), we were kindly entertained by Major and Mrs. Charles Ruff, Mounted Rifles. Our housekeeping was on the smallest scale, as we were to remain but a short time at Jefferson Barracks.

We messed with the young officers. It was a sad and anxious summer for us all. Cholera was epidemic, and scarcely a day passed that we did not

hear the solemn notes of the "Dead March." Often there were two or three funerals in the twenty-four hours.

The victims were principally among the soldiers. Only two of our friends died: the wife of the late Dr. J. B. Wright, U.S.A., being one of them, and the other, Lieutenant Ferdinand Paine, who was ill but a few hours. He had gone on as officer of the day, in the morning; at midnight he was dead.

Lieutenant Paine had an Indian boy with him, whom he had brought from Oregon. The boy was extremely ill with cholera, and Mr. Paine nursed him faithfully, which, possibly, was the cause of his own illness and death. It required more than a collapsed case of cholera, it seemed, to kill a Digger Indian. He recovered; his master died.

The boy was learning to wait on the table, at the mess. One morning, when he handed me a plate of cakes, I asked if they were hot. He took the shortest way to find out, by laying his hand on top of the pile! "Yes, sir," he said; but I did not take any cakes that morning.

Captain (afterwards Major-General) Hancock and his wife were at Jefferson Barracks that summer. He had just been appointed captain in the Quartermaster's Department. I did not meet him again until after the war, and was much surprised and pleased to find he remembered me; his memory was better than that of some of our old army acquaintances; after they had risen in the world, they "forgot the days of small things."

After a stay of three months at Jefferson Barracks,

we packed up our very few worldly possessions and left for the East, making a side trip to Kentucky, *en route* to visit our Southern relatives, and where I knew I would see many things I never saw before; and I did,—different manners and customs, different people, from any I had ever known. How kind and hospitable they all were; how they wanted to entertain us, and give us all they had! Some old family servants walked miles to see “Massa Will’s young wife.”

We went direct to Carlisle, Pennsylvania, from Kentucky, to await the return of cool weather, when we were to join the regiment, then stationed in Texas. It was unsafe to go South before there was sufficient frost to destroy the germs of yellow fever; but we went too early, after all.

About the middle of October orders were received for Lieutenant Lane to accompany a large party of officers and recruits, going to Texas. So we set off immediately for New York, and joined the command on board the good ship “Middlesex,” Captain Parmelee. When I was hoisted up on deck, I found, among other friends, General Sylvester Churchill, who was making an inspection of the ship and troops. The first thing I did was to rush at him, and he ran to me, gathered me up in his arms, and kissed me. When Lieutenant Lane appeared, he was much astonished to see what was going on; though the dear old man had known me always, he had never seen Lieutenant Lane. Explanations followed, introductions were made, and peace in the family was restored.