

# **CORA, THE PET OF THE REGIMENT**

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Cora, the pet of the regiment by Miss Laura Jean Libbey

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**MISS LAURA JEAN LIBBEY**

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The Pet of the Regiment

BY

*MISS LAURA JEAN LIBBEY*



A & L  
SERIES

THE  
ARTHUR WESTBROOK  
COMPANY

CLEVELAND, OHIO, U. S. A.

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## CHAPTER I.

"MY DAUGHTER SHALL NEVER HAVE A LOVER WHILE I LIVE!" SAID THE OLD GENERAL, FIERCELY. "I WILL GUARD HER FROM THEM, IF I HAVE TO MAKE A PRISON OF THESE FOUR WALLS, AND NEVER LET HER SEE ANY OTHER HUMAN FACE THAN MINE!"

"So you would like to enter the military school at West Point, eh?" said General Ormsby, slowly, as he keenly eyed the handsome young man before him; adding: "I am rather surprised to hear that. When you saved my precious young daughter's life yesterday, at the risk of your own, when through fright she stumbled and fell headlong directly in front of one of the trolley cars that was rushing along at tremendous speed, and would have been crushed to death in another instant of time but for your act of heroism——"

The old general's voice grew husky with emotion. He stopped short; he could not finish the sentence for a moment; words failed him.

Turning abruptly in his chair, he raised his eyes to the portrait of a young and lovely girl, fair as a dream,

that hung on the opposite wall, and his bronzed, weather-beaten old face blanched, and his strong hands trembled as he strove to control his emotions. The young man looked up at the pictured girlish face, too, and his color deepened.

After a moment's pause, the general went on slowly:

"The message I sent you was, 'Ask any favor in reason of me, and if it is within my power it shall be granted.' I supposed you would think it a good opportunity to be set up in business for yourself, as I hear you have been searching in the city for a situation, and without success. I repeat that I am surprised to hear you say that you would like to go to West Point."

"It has been the one dream of my life, sir," responded Arthur Rollins, raising his frank, dark eyes, the warm color coming and going on his cheeks, his form trembling with eagerness—"my one ambition; but I never supposed that I, a poor farmer's son, with only a limited education, would ever live to see that fond dream realized. The exciting life of a soldier has a wonderful charm for me. My heart and soul would be in it. I wouldn't mind entering the service as a private, and by dauntless courage and hard work win my spurs and my way to the front, rise to a captain, then a colonel, and perhaps some day I might be a general to rule an army, if a war should break out."

General Ormsby smiled quietly at the enthusiasm of the handsome youth of one-and-twenty standing before him in all the bravery of his noble manhood, saying to himself "that a finer young fellow would certainly be hard to find."

For a few minutes the general studied the pattern of

the carpet attentively; then looking up, he said, suddenly:

"We need more brave young men at West Point. We have too many milk-sops there who have gained an entrance through influence or money; men who never expect to see a battle, and who are so cowardly they would run if a musket were pointed at them. They think before they get there that they are going to have a lazy life of it. They soon have the starch taken out of them when they go into training, and suffer the hardships of patrol duty—shouldering a heavy musket for thirty-six hours, with never a wink of sleep; standing knee-deep in water for long hours, or lying on the hard earth, wrapped only in an army blanket, with the thermometer below zero, and exposed to the wind and weather from dusk to dawn; leaping on flying steeds; suffering hunger, thirst and privation for days; or if there is a riot, called out to face death in charging upon the mob."

"I would not mind hardship, sir," declared young Rollins. "When one is poor one is used to it in one way or another."

"And then there is another thing. No soldier should ever fall in love—or marry," added the general, slyly. "They are often ordered out upon the frontier, and their sweethearts, or even wives, must be left behind."

The general's warning, that the young man who mapped out a military career for himself should never fall in love, had been given too late. Arthur Rollins' heart had already gone from him—he was hopelessly in love at first sight with the general's daughter.

It never occurred to him that he should ever see her again, or have the opportunity of trying to win her. He said to himself he had met his ideal, that he should love



her in secret, and hopelessly, until the day that he died, and never care to look upon another girl's face.

There was the sound of a sweet, silvery girlish voice in the corridor without. General Ormsby heard it and started.

"Well, young man," he said, hurriedly, "I shall see that your wishes are granted, if it be possible. There happens to be a vacancy at West Point from my district—the congressman from my vicinity informed me. You shall take the place of the cadet who has just been transferred, providing—and it is a very important proviso—you can pass the examination satisfactorily. Getting into West Point is not a question of money or influence. A young man stands entirely on his own merits. The congressman from my district shall propose your name, however, and we can but hope for the result."

"I thank you with all my heart, sir," replied Arthur, rising to his feet, "more than words can express. I shall feel that whatever I attain in the future will be due to you. Please believe that my gratitude is unbounded."

"I shall notify you in the course of a fortnight in regard to the matter," said the general, rising and holding out his hand.

There was nothing else to do but shake hands and bow himself out, although the young man would have given anything he possessed to have stayed long enough to meet once more the lovely young girl tripping lightly down the corridor; but as he was not asked to do so, there was nothing else to do but to take his leave.

The door had scarcely closed behind the young man ere the *portières* on the opposite side of the apartment were thrust aside by a white hand, and a lovely young

girl, fair as the morning itself, burst into the room like a bit of bewildering sunshine.

"Oh, here you are, papa!" cried the girl, springing into the old general's outstretched arms. "I have been looking everywhere for you, you old darling!"

"And now that you have found me, what is it you want?" he asked, drawing the girl closer into his arms and stroking back the golden curls from her dimpled face.

"I want to show you the invitation I have just received for the grand ball the cadets are going to give at West Point; I'll tell you about it later; but first I want to know who it was that was with you a moment since in the library?"

"It was Mr. Arthur Rollins, the young man who did us both the greatest service of our lives yesterday," he answered. "He came here in response to a message from me."

"It was a wonder you did not summon me to the library, too, that I might thank him in person," she returned in a tone of great disappointment. "I—I shall probably never see him again *now*."

"Your letter of sincere gratitude was all-sufficient, my dear Cora," returned the general, gravely.

That Cora Ormsby was the idol of his life, the sunshine and delight of his old age, was little to be wondered at, in addition to being as lovely a creature as poet ever sung about or artist painted. She was a bright and jolly young girl, full of mirth and coquetry, with a laugh like a joy-bell. Every one loved her and helped to spoil her.

She never remembered what having a mother was like—the girl had been brought up in an atmosphere of gov-

ernesses and tutors; but they had not clouded over the sunshine of her nature, and at seventeen she was wayward and willful, but intensely lovable.

The old general prided himself on the fact that he had never yet said "No" to his idolized darling. The time was coming when the utterance of that word was to cost him the severest pang of his life.

The general had married late in life, and his marriage had come about in a strange way. He had been known to be a confirmed bachelor; his servants were all men; he had no patience with the frivolity of womankind—he held them in supreme indifference; every woman might have been swept from the face of the earth for all he cared—he would not have missed them.

Suddenly he was called to the bedside of a dying comrade, and because he could not find it in his heart to say "No" at such a time, he found himself made the guardian of an orphaned daughter.

He was home on a furlough, and the question which perplexed him sorely was—what should he do with her when he returned to the army, two weeks later? The good minister of the parish suggested:

"Why not marry her, if she will have you?"

"But I am old enough to be her father," declared the general.

"Perhaps she would overlook that," was the reply.

"I could never have the courage to ask her such a question," said the hero of a hundred battles, desperately, and flushing very red.

The minister took the task of proposing for the general upon his own shoulders; and the general looked at him in helpless bewilderment when he was informed, a few days later, that the young girl had said "Yes."