

CHAPTER V

The Cup of Kindness

TO FORT LARAMIE news had been brought by an Indian runner that the daughter of Chief Spotted Tail had died; that the body was being conveyed hither for mortuary rites; and that the funeral party, including kinsfolk and the tribal dignitary himself, had now advanced within some score of miles.

It was decided at once that the whole garrison should discreetly bestir itself to show respect, for the sake of conciliatory effect. Plainly the thing to do was to treat the coming of Spotted Tail with obsequious respect. For he was a man of high authority among his people, one of those supreme in council among the leaders of the great Sioux nation.

Hence, the military commander sent forth an ambulance to serve as hearse, and with it went a whole troop of cavalry, in addition to two pieces of artillery, a flag-fluttering processional, the chevrons of positions vividly scarlet, the underside of blue capes flapping into flashes of brilliant yellow.

Next day, in the burial plot near the frontier army post, an Indian scaffolding of poles was raised, exactly like another one, which long had held a shape firmly wrapped and sealed in furry robes, reposing there in sepulchre open to the sky. It was the final