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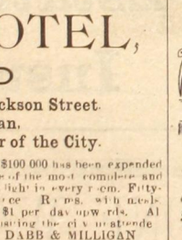
CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

FORT CRAIG, in the territory of New Mexico, stands upon a high mesa, or piece of table land, overlooking the historic valley of the Rio Grande. The view from the fort is wildly picturesque. The long stretch of river, grass-carpeted valley dotted with groves of cottonwood trees, the low adobe houses of the Mexican ranchéros, the great black bowlders and monuments of lava rock across the stream, set in beds of mesquite bushes and cactus, far away to the eastward the bold towering peaks of the San Andreas and Oscura ranges, to the southward the Fra Cristobel and to the westward the Magdalena and the San Mateo ranges of mountains, all contribute to a picture so fascinating in its rugged grandeur and beauty that it would seem as mockery for the most gifted artist to presume to transfer its details to canvas.

All of the buildings of this remote border garrison were built of adobes, or sun-dried bricks of Mexican manufacture, officers' quarters, barracks for the enlisted men, storehouses, stables, etc., being but one story in height. Around the post ran a line of earthworks thrown up during the civil war when Indian and confederate foe alike coveted its possession. The buildings formed a hollow square around a level parade ground some twenty acres in extent, and in the center during the occupancy of the fort stood a tall flagstaff from the top of which, every day in the year from sunrise to sunset gun, the stars and stripes floated proudly in the semi-tropical breezes.

At the time of which I write the fort was garrisoned by four troops of cavalry, two companies of infantry and a battery of light artillery. The commanding officer, Col. Elmore Sanford, was a dignified, gruff old veteran who had grown gray in the service of his country, a strict disciplinarian who exacted with unflinching severity the performance of every duty from officers and men alike with promptness and precision. Every infraction of military rules met with swift punishment, whether the offender wore the gold-laced uniform of the officer or the plain garb of the private soldier. He possessed a volcanic temper, at times, when angered, storming and swearing like a madman, then as quickly subsiding into his usual state of icy dignity. Those most familiar with his moods met these fitful outbursts of passion with no thought of resentment, for



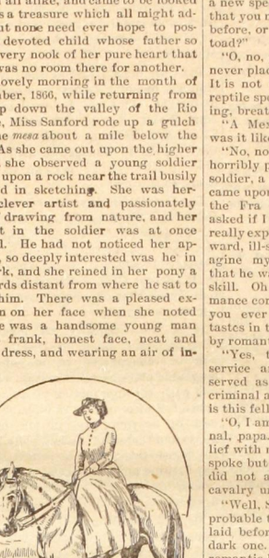
FORT CRAIG.

they knew the old man never meant the half he said, and that beneath his forbidding exterior rested a soul that was really warm and generous.

The light of the old commander's military home was his daughter Alice, his only child, who came as a ray of sunshine into his life but a week before the death of his beloved wife. At the time our story opens Alice was a lovely, sunny-faced little fairy of eighteen, full of life and spirit, as beautiful in her blonde loveliness as the lily bursting from its bud. She was devotedly attached to her stern old father, who, in her society, laid aside his air of military dignity and allowed the reflection of his really kind heart to play in genial smiles over his soldierly face. He idolized the lovely girl, the last priceless gift from his dying wife, and to contribute to her happiness and enjoyment seemed to be the one leading aim of his life. The best instructors which money could secure had been brought from the far-away east to look after her instruction, and when she reached her eighteenth year her education in all necessary branches was complete, and she possessed as fine accomplishments as she could have secured in any academy in the land. Born in a border military fort and reared in the garrisons of the far west, she became imbued with the spirit of adventure incident to frontier life, and was never so happy as when dashing over the cactus studded plain or wooded river bottom on her strong-limbed pony or exploring the gulches and canyons cleft in the breasts of the adjacent mountains.

The picture of this young border princess was indelibly stamped upon the hearts of several of the younger officers of the garrison, yet none of them were suitors for her hand. They knew how her father idolized her and held her as a precious jewel set in his crown of life for him alone, and each one felt that it would be almost sacrilege to attempt to pluck the gem from its parent setting and transfer it to another. She had, seemingly, no especial favorite among the young men of the post. The same sweet smile which would set the heart of a young officer throbbing with delight would illumine her pretty features while bending over the cot of a sick soldier in the hospital, or while thanking the humblest private who had done her a favor. She treated all alike, and came to be looked upon as a treasure which all might admire but none need ever hope to possess—a devoted child whose father so filled every nook of her pure heart that there was no room there for another.

One lovely morning in the month of September, 1866, while returning from a gallop down the valley of the Rio Grande, Miss Sanford rode up a gulch onto the *mesa* about a mile below the fort. As she came out upon the higher ground she observed a young soldier sitting upon a rock near the trail busily engaged in sketching. She was herself a clever artist and passionately fond of drawing from nature, and her interest in the soldier was at once aroused. He had not noticed her approach, so deeply interested was he in his work, and she reined in her pony a few yards distant from where he sat to study him. There was a pleased expression on her face when she noted that he was a handsome young man with a frank, honest face, neat and tidy in dress, and wearing an air of in-



ALICE, THE COLONEL'S DAUGHTER.

tellectual refinement which seemed sadly out of place in one whose lot was cast among the rough soldiers of the ranks. It must be remembered that I write of the days just following the close of our great civil war, when the ranks of the regular army on the frontier were made up of rough, illiterate men largely fished from the slums of the eastern cities, many of them having fled to the west and buried themselves in the army under assumed names to escape the consequences of crime. Alice Sanford had never dreamed the barracks of the private soldiers sheltered a man of artistic tastes, and the spectacle presented of a soldier wielding the pencil of the artist was to her a revelation.

The soldier becoming aware of her presence glanced up from his work, and, noting that it was the daughter of the commanding officer who had approached him, quickly arose to his feet, removed his cap and silently waited for her to address him should she desire to do so.

"I am sorry I disturbed you," she said. "Will you permit me to look at the sketch you are making?"

"It is as yet far from complete," he quietly responded, "and I fear you may not be able to form an intelligent idea of what its appearance will be when the details are filled in. I began it but an hour ago."

He handed her the picture, and she sat for some moments closely studying it, occasionally casting her eyes across the intervening desert to the Fra Cristobel range.

"You have chosen a beautiful study," she finally said. "In my eyes the Fra Cristobel is the most attractive of all the ranges which surround us."

"I experience great pleasure in sketching it," he replied. "This will be my third sketch of the range, and I seem to never tire of tracing its bold outlines and copying its rugged details of rock and pine."

Returning the picture, with a simple "thank you," she rode homeward. She allowed her pony to walk slowly along the trail and did not even chide him for stopping occasionally to snatch a mouthful of grass as he loitered along, so busy were her thoughts with the humble private soldier whom she had just left. She had seen in the yet crude sketch the work of a master hand, and she wondered why it was that one so gifted should be wearing the uniform and performing the duties of a soldier. His manner was that of the polished gentleman, his speech refined and pleasing, and his general demeanor was widely different from that of any of the other soldiers with whom she had been brought in contact. What could a man of his attainments be doing in the ranks of the army? The question flashed through her brain, but no reply followed in its wake. A frown swept over her face, but as quickly vanished at a rebuking thought.

"O, no, not crime," she mused. "Those clear eyes of his mirrored a clear soul. He must not be classed with those who lurk in the shadow of enlistment to escape the searching eye of justice. There is a romance strewn along his trail of life. There *must* be. Perhaps it was an affair of the heart. Yes, that must be the correct solution of the queer problem. Some cruel fair one in the far-away east, of which I have read but never seen, has crushed his happiness and he fled to the army ranks hoping to meet death at the hands of an Indian foeman. How could a girl be so cruel to so handsome a man, and one so intelligent and refined?"

Thus she mused until she reached her home. Throwing the rein to the orderly in waiting she softly entered her father's sitting-room and awoke him from the half sleep into which he had fallen in his easy chair by a feathery kiss on the cheek.

"Well, Sunshine, did you enjoy your ride?" he asked, drawing her to a seat on his knee and more forcibly returning her kiss.

"O, very much, papa. I rode clear down to the Tafoya ranch six miles below, and on my way back I found such a curiosity."

"You are eternally picking up curios. What was it this time? A moss agate, a new species of cactus, a rare flower that you never happened to come onto before, or a magnificently large horned toad?"

"O, no, papa, none of those. I could never place this one with my collection. It is not of the geological, floral nor reptile species, papa; but a living, moving, breathing—human being."

"A Mexican freak, eh? And what was it like?"

"No, nor was it a Mexican. You are a horribly poor guesser, papa. It was a soldier, a private soldier of the post. I came upon him while he was sketching the Fra Cristobel range, and when I asked if I might look at his sketch I really expected to see nothing but awkward, ill-shaped work. You can imagine my surprise when I observed that he was an artist of no ordinary skill. Oh! there must be *such* a romance connected with his life. Have you ever discovered men of refined tastes in the ranks, papa, driven there by romantic causes?"

"Yes, the romance of crime. The service and an assumed name have served as a barrier between many a criminal and the outraged laws. Who is this fellow?"

"O, I am sure this man is not a criminal, papa. You would share that belief with me were you to see him. I spoke but a few words with him, and did not ask his name. He wore the cavalry uniform."

"Well, Sunshine, it is not at all improbable that if his past history were laid before you, you would find it a dark one. You must not allow your romantic little brain to picture him a prince in disguise. Come, dinner is waiting, and I am as hungry as a trooper after a hard day's scout. Attention, squad! Right face! Forward, march!"

Gayly trilling the air of "The Girl I Left Behind Me" she led the way with military step to the dining-room, the old colonel marching after her with the precision of other days.

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Accommo'tion except Sunday, leaves	6:00 a.m
Hummer, daily	7:20 a.m
Express except Sunday	10:23 a.m
all daily	4:09 p.m
Joliet Accom., Ex. Sunday	6.55 p.m
Sunday Accommodation	8:45 a.m
Way Freight except Sunday	11.30 a.m

SOUTH.

Bloomington Accom. ex. Sunday	7.55 a.m
Mail, daily	11:42 a.m
Kansas City Exp., except Sunday	4:35 p.m
Accomo,tion, daily, arrives	8:45 p.m
Hummer, daily	7:15 p.m
St. Louis Express daily	12.50 p.m
St. Louis & Kansas City Ex., daily	2:40 a.m
Way Freight except unday	10.00 a.m

BRANCH TRAINS.

WEST.

Accomo'tion Freight except Sunday	7:00 a.m
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Mail Arrives except Sunday	10:15 a.m
Accomo'tion Freight except Sunday	10:30 p.m

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Passenger	5:33 p.m

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I. I. I. Time Table.

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TRAINS WEST.

No 1, mail	11.17 a m
No 7, express freight	5:17 a m
No. 15 express freight	5:21 p. m

TRAINS EAST.

N . 2, mail	5:17 a m
No 8 express freight	7:58 a. m

All trains daily except Nos. 1 and 4 Sunday. Nos. 3 and 4 stops at all stations.

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Gardner C. & A. Time Table.

NORTH:

No. 7, daily	5.25 a.m
No. 9, Accommodati n	6.20 a.m
No. 63 " Sunday	9.02 a.m
No. 5, Denver, Except "	10.40 a.m
No. 1, mail, daily	9.17 p.m
No. 17, Accommodation Ex. Sunday	7.15 p.m
Way Freight, except Sunday	12.35 a.m

SOUTH:

No. 18, accommodation Ex. Sunday	7 34 a.m
No. 2, mail, daily	11.42 a m
No. 6, Denver, except Sunday	6.30 p.m
No. 10, accommodation, daily	8.30 p.m
No. 8, daily	2.20 a m
Way Freight	9.10 a.m

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Commencing Sunday, Mar. 11th, 1894, trains pass Gardner as follows:

GOING WEST.

No. 201	10:05 am
No. 203	5:25 pm

GOING EAST.

No. 200	8:15 am
No. 202	4:10 pm

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George Cumming, Ag't. Gardner.

C. & A. Time Table.

On and after Dec 30th, 1894, and until further notice, trains leaving passengers will leave Bracevilleas follows:

NORTH OR EAST.

No. 1. Express Mail	4 25 p. m
No. 5. Atlantic Express	10 47 a. m
No. 7. K. C. & St. L. Express	5 31 a. m
No. 9. Chicago Accommodation	6 27 a. m
No. 63. Joliet Express (Sunday only)	9 10 a. m
No. 31. Way Freight	12 25 p. m
No. 17 Joliet Accomodation ex Sun.	7 25 p. m

SOUTH OR WEST.

No. 2. Express Mail	11 18 a. m
No. 6. Pacific Express	4 12 p. m
No. 8. K. C. & St. L. Express	2 14 a. m
No. 18. Bloomington Accom. ex Sun.	7 26 a. m
No. 10. Joliet Accommodation	8 15 p. m
No. 32. Way Freight	8 40 a. m

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