

WOMEN'S LIFE WITH THE ARMY

Experiences of a Western Woman as Wife of an Officer.

HARROWING TALES OF THE FRONTIER

Association with the Indians—A Unique Wedding Trip in the Early Days—Experiences that Will Never Be Forgotten.

There is a period in the history of the regular army of America which has passed away forever, yet which lives in the memory of some who still remain, and who have not yet gone over to the great majority. It is a period so full of wild romance and thrilling adventure that it is a wonder that no great novelist has seized upon it as the background for stories which should rival any yet written in the country, perhaps for the "great American novel" itself. Sure it is that one who passed through those days can recall scenes that match any that Fenimore Cooper ever depicted. It is the period when the army was clearing the Indians from the plains, promoting the settlers who were just pushing beyond the prairie, and laying the foundations for the empire of the west.

Mrs. Frederick T. Dent of Denver, the widow of the late General Dent, has lived through this period, relates the Denver News, and her stories are so full of fairy warmth up to her subject are more interesting than any fairy tale; far more interesting than "Boots and Saddles." General Dent died in Denver in 1892, after a residence here of four years. Mrs. Dent is a lovely white-haired old woman, who loved the army, where all the years of her life were spent until the general was retired. She was born sixty-two years ago, at a fort on the site of Green Bay, Wis., then a frontier outpost. Supplies were brought up from Fort Dearborn, which stood where Chicago afterward grew up, or perhaps from Detroit. Sometimes they would pass the whole winter without a mail. When a child she lived on the site where St. Paul now stands, when the soldiers could kill deer from the fort. She remembers the French voyageurs, over whose bright page in history Parkman has cast a veil of romance, and whose ancient trading shops still linger among the French Canadians along the St. Lawrence and the Indians of the northwest.

"One of my very earliest remembrances," said Mrs. Dent, "is that of seeing a scalp dance from the stocks of Fort Snelling. I was a very small child, but I can remember watching that weird dance in the light of the moon from the walls of the fort. The Sioux and Chippewa were always at war then, though the Chippewa were long since exterminated. It was after one of their battles and the Chippewa had come home victorious. So they celebrated their acts of rejoicing over the scalps taken, in the light of their fires at night they returned. They would wave the bloody scalps on long poles, and altogether it made a scene not likely ever to fade from the mind. I could talk Sioux like a little Indian when I was a child. I have forgotten every word of it now, and since then I have never seen a completely forgotten three other Indian languages. I acquire them quickly, but they do not remain, because there is no printed page to assist in fixing them in the memory, as is the case with other foreign languages."

In those days the Mississippi river was almost the limit of civilization. The armies were transported by it largely, and Mrs. Dent often traveled upon the magnificent old river boats, in the days made immortal in Mark Twain's stories. She went east a number of times, and on the old National post road, a macadamized path for the stage coach, running east and west across the country, and connecting Cincinnati, Baltimore, Washington and other large cities. Another distinct recollection of her childhood is being packed in a trunk to sleep under a table on a canal boat. The festive canal boat was a great means of transportation in those days, and was often so packed that people slept all over the roof at night. Traveling by stage of the macadamized road, the passengers frequently were obliged to dismount and pursue their journey on foot, while the gentlemen of the party pried the coach out of the mud with convenient fence rails. In fact, Mrs. Dent believes she has sampled every method of traveling ever known in America—steamer, canal boat, stage coach, horse back, horse back and ambulance, down to the railroad which so transformed the world which she knew in her girlhood.

Unique Wedding Trip.

Mrs. Dent was the daughter of Major and Mrs. Lynde, so it was perfectly natural she should marry in the army. This happened in 1852, when she was 16 years old. For her wedding journey she went down the Mississippi and out through Arkansas and Texas to a far-off post upon the Brazos river. That was a wedding tour a little out of the common and a honeymoon spent on open prairie, in Indian and Indian tepees. They did not go to the officer post, but went not so then to a western post without an escort. Her father, Major Lynde, was in command of a party of recruits going to a post at Phantom Hill, on the headwaters of the Brazos, so that the young bride, who was just out of school, was accompanied by her father and mother as well as her husband. They went down the Mississippi in a chartered boat to Fort Smith, Ark. Then the party marched to Fort Wichita, on the Red river. The country was very sparsely settled, and they reached the Indians. They stopped at night in the houses of these Indians. All the officers and their families would occupy the house together, spreading their blankets on the floor. During the night, if other travelers came by in need of a night's lodging, they would knock at the door, and, showing the sleepers about until they made room, spread their blankets and slept in their turn. After reaching the Red river they marched and camped ten days before arriving at the post. They encountered Indians every day, and the company were not at war then they had no trouble with them. They would gallop up to the train, utter a friendly greeting and be off again. They had a terrible experience with prairie fire during this trip, however. The grass was as tall as the horses' backs, rising like a wall on either side, and they walked through it. The fire rushed across the wide, grassy plain, a billowy ocean of flame. The train scattered in every direction, running wherever safety seemed possible. Mrs. Dent and her party drove to a ravine in the distance. They fled before the flames, which singed their hair and clothing as they climbed, gasping for breath, down the steep sides of the ravine. The fire jumped straight across the ravine, in great leaps of 100 feet and more, but it skipped the interior and passed on. It was late the next day before the entire party was collected again. No one had been killed, but there were many scorched faces and burned clothing. When they reached their destination the young wedding couple took up their abode in what was called "two pens and a passage," a cabin with a hall running through the center and a room on either side. They lived on the side and a young bachelor officer on the other. The cabin was built of logs, the doors and window shutters being of green boards, which had warped and shrunk, leaving goodly places between, so that the orderly used to come and thrust his head and neck through between the boards quite handsily without opening the door. In the morning the roof was thatched and the floor was of dirt.

ARMY LIFE IN THE FAR WEST

Incidents that Enliven the Monotonous Round of Post Duty.

SENSE OF HUMOR IN EVIDENCE

How the Regimental Band Had to Play for a Corral of Mules—Shafter and Lawton as Post Commanders.

Most of the general officers of the army and the high-ranking officers of the navy, whose movements hither and yon on field and flood have of late months been filling the American eye—not to say, indeed, the vision of the world—are men possessed of an essential sense of humor. They are, for the greater part, relates the Washington Star, men into whom long years of service in command of men who are nothing if not human have inculcated the strongest sense of humanity, which necessarily means that their minds are not so harmoniously attuned to the humorous phases of their military lives as they are susceptible to be wrought upon by the darker and more pathetic features in the lives of common soldiers and sailors.

The huge, courageous, and vastly-experienced General Lawton, for example, is a man for whom old soldiers of the regular army have possessed an ineradicable affection for much more than a quarter of a century. General Lawton's Indian fighting experiences have not abated his sense of humor. They are, for the greater part, relates the Washington Star, men into whom long years of service in command of men who are nothing if not human have inculcated the strongest sense of humanity, which necessarily means that their minds are not so harmoniously attuned to the humorous phases of their military lives as they are susceptible to be wrought upon by the darker and more pathetic features in the lives of common soldiers and sailors.

What are you trying to do, Lou?" said she. "I am trying to make griddle cakes," said he. "and I can't turn them."

Lawton was in command of one of the far-western regimental posts. It was a post that was very much visited by the society people of an adjoining city and post hops were given on two or three nights a week. The regimental band furnished the music for these hops. The band was under the direction of a foreign bandmaster, who possessed a considerable contempt for enlisted men, although his knuckling affection for the man with the shoulder straps was notorious. In the army a man possessed of these characteristics is very sort of a "dog" in the eye of the general public.

General Lawton had a detestation for a dog robber. He endured his bandmaster, but he never gave him any of the best of it over any of the members of the band. The bandmaster was obsequious in his attentions upon the musical demands of the post's officers. One day the enlisted men of the post decided to give a hop themselves. A committee of the officers approached the bandmaster to ascertain if he would be willing to furnish the music for the hop. The bandmaster declined to listen to any proposition, but finally consented to give the services of the band for a night's dancing for the sum of \$10.

That's a whole lot of money, my windjammer friend," said the soldier who was at the head of the music committee. "I am free to say that I think you could take a heap of a reef in that figure. What's your idea, anyhow, in soaking it to us fellows so hard, when you play all night for the officers a couple of times a week for nothing?" "But you ain't no officers, are you?" replied the bandmaster. "You are nothing but buck privates, ain't it? Well, I shames you that I bleed. For'dy tollars."

"All right, bunnie," replied the soldier, "if you think you can make a hit in this layout by putting it onto us this way, it's up to you to make it stick. We'll say you're a for'dy, because we've got to, seeing that there's no jumper (civilian) band around this camp. But I think you're makin' a bad break, all the same."

"For'dy tollars," answered the bandmaster, "that was about the way it went. He had the bulge and he worked it. The soldier who had done the interviewing with the bandmaster was an old-time non-commissioned officer, who had soldiered alongside Lawton on a number of critical occasions. He went up to Lawton's quarters to have a word with him, "I've been the 'old man,'" about this music business.

"The boss wind jammer," said the soldier to Lawton, "surely he rubbin' it in onto us some," and he told the commanding officer of the only terms the bandmaster would accept. "Does he want it in advance?" inquired Lawton, rubbing his chin reflectively. "He's got it in his pants pocket now," replied the soldier. "We had to give up on that."

The old non-com. left Lawton's presence somewhat surprised and aggrieved at the matter-of-fact fashion with which the commanding officer took his report on the smallness of the bandmaster. The soldier's hop came off all right. It was largely attended, and the hearts of the soldiers in the adjoining city were a howling success. The band's music was only fair, however, and the bandmaster, from his platform perch, regarded the uniformed officers on the floor with contempt slumbering in his eyes. Along toward 2 o'clock in the morning, Colonel Lawton made his appearance on the floor. He enjoyed the spectacle of his men having a good time and he told the boys to go on and keep the dance going until reveille if they wanted to. Then he left the hall.

The hop broke up about half an hour before reveille and the soldiers made for their quarters to get ready to stand the first roll call of the day. The bandmaster and his musicians, sleepy and very weary, returned to their quarters to turn in for a few hours' rest. First call for reveille went in the gray dawn of the morning and then assembly. When the tired soldiers got into line outside their quarters they were surprised to see their commanding officer, who was ordinarily a late sleeper, standing in the middle of the parade ground in full uniform, and that at half after 5.

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Defeat the Dawes Treaty. KANSAS CITY, Aug. 25.—A treaty to the Star from Oak Lodge, I. T., says: In the election for an agent to the Cherokee, Chickasaw-Dawes treaty territory, the vote in this county went 80 per cent against the treaty. This is a representative county and it is believed the result given forecasts the outcome of the election.

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