

# Ten Years' Trial

By Gen. CHARLES KING

Continued from First Page.

stance will be over in another moment, and then, at the head of his wild warriors, he can dash in upon them in furious charge, and the train, with its helpless women, its beaten, beseeching men, its screaming savage ears, will be the prey and spoil of the Bruie. In the din and crash of battle he never hears the backward rush of the few warriors at the crest. He thinks them joining in the charge. Till White Wolf, his son, topples headlong from his pony, gasping warning with his last breath, all yelling with mingled fury and dismay, a dozen braves bear down upon him at mad gallop and sweep him away to the safety of the west, for these, striding down the prairie slope, spreading out to right and left, come the long, blue line of hated soldiery backed up by scores of fighting men all with crackling rifles. Here and there in little groups his warriors fire wildly in reply, but the defense, too, has again taken heart and, with exultant cheers, is pouring in a hot fusillade. A dozen ponies are sprawled in death agony upon the ground. Half a dozen savage braves are stricken, some even unto death. There is nothing for it but to scarp up the dead and dying brethren and then to dash away for council at safe distance. And five minutes later, laughing, weeping, cheering, hand-shaking and embracing, 500 men are mingled in joy and triumph about the bullet-riddled train. Women and children are sobbing in the arms of loved ones, and waves of quivering lips are pouring praise and blessing on the name of Eric Langdon and eager voices shouting and clamoring for him to show himself and then hushing almost to silence in awe, dismay and wild anxiety. The last seen of him he was leaping along the railway far in front of his line, waving and cheering them on. Had he, too, been snatched up in the surge and dust and swept away by the Indian hand? He had utterly disappeared. He could nowhere be found.

## CHAPTER XV.

In the valley of the south Cheyenne and close to the rugged cliffs of the Black Hills a summer camp had been pitched, and nearly a thousand troops were under canvas. After four months of bitter weather and experiences guarding thousands of morose, sullen savages, cowed into submission after their fiery outbreak, old "Cat" and his troopers were reveling in the poetry of soldiers' life in the field, and Melville, with two of the batteries, was keeping them company. They were far enough from the agencies to be free from daily contact with begging, bothersome Indians and near enough to the railway to have daily supplies from the east. Mrs. Cat had taken a notion that she should of all things enjoy a summer under canvas, and even the assurance that it meant ruin to the complexion did not deter certain regimental beauties from following her example. "Cat" would have said no to the outset had he seen what it might lead to, but he didn't, and if he had would probably have been overruled. Mrs. Cat was a woman of much mettle in all matters of domestic economy. She came, had an extra hospital tent pitched and established her little court. Several experienced cavalry women speedily followed and were soon snugly and happily bestowed in camp, the tents of the married officers being set at the northwest end of the mesa, close under the bold pine limbs, and to June, when it was fully determined that the summer should be spent there by the field command, Melville took a week's leave, a run to Pawnee, and returned with Mrs. Melville, Miss Grahame and the children, a proceeding that gave much joy to Messrs. Woodrow and Santley of the gunners and to Captain Channing and certain other cavalry bachelors, for Ethel Grahame had won the honest admiration of all the men she knew, Channing and Santley especially.

Nathan's battery was with the command, but Nathan was not. The doctors had declared a summer at the seashore indispensable in the case of Mrs. Nathan, and the captain applied for three months' leave. He and his guns had not been exposed to any extent during the brief and bloody campaign that followed the outbreak of the Sioux, but Melville and "Cat" seemed to think the battery could spare him. It left Torrance in command, a far better soldier, despite his snobbish qualities. And, though the department commander made a wry face and the division general sniffed suggestively as he tossed the application to his chief of staff, the leave was granted. The summer opened gloriously. Squadron and battery drills went on each morning in splendid shape on the broad, level flats adjacent to the stream, and shooting, fishing and picnic parties were of frequent occurrence in the hills. "Cat" entertained prominent western statesmen and railway officials one or twice in June and was not always happy in so doing, for more than once or twice they touched on dangerous ground, and if there was a topic on which "Cat" was touchy now it was that of Eric Langdon—Langdon, whom he had practically kicked out of Kansas City only to see him become a hero in Nebraska.

In one sense the year had done its best for Langdon. He had become the idol of a large class of the population, but that, unless a man have political aspirations, is not of intrinsic or practical value and, furthermore, is rarely of long duration. The populace needs new sensations. Shut through the leg in the dash to the rescue of the train, he had finally fainted from loss of blood while rescuers and rescuers were embracing and shouting and was found unconscious and well half dead lying in a ravine full quarter of a mile up the track, beyond the train, to which point he seemed to have followed, fighting, as though to assure himself the Indians contemplated no return attack. Frontier surgery is expert in gunshot wounds, but having little else to do with, and rude appliances kept body and soul together until the coming of experts with the troop train from Omaha.

Later, while the soldiery went on to

round up the renegade Indians, Langdon was taken back to Brentwood and nursed and coddled for long weeks. The regulars came in time for a stiff winter fight with the Sioux, but the ranch and railway people would hear of only one hero, Eric Langdon. The new manager of the Big Horn called to see him and thank him in the name of the road. The road was full of a scheme to have him legislated back into the army, and a bill to that effect was actually introduced. Langdon said it was time wasted, but Nebraska senators and representatives were confident. It was at least a good thing to push along, as it would keep him from turning up as a possible congressional candidate himself. Sitting about the campfires on long winter evenings and reading the local papers, there was no end of chaff and fun among the regulars over that possibility. The train and station hands all along the Big Horn and Seattle, both, seemed to have forgotten their grievance of the year gone by and would shout for Langdon at the faintest mention of his name. Two papers, "disgruntled," to use their own English, with their representative and to bother him probably as much as to boom Langdon openly advocated placing Eric in nomination, whereas Rodney May and Woodrow checked with joy as Channing drew out an inquiry of Nathan, "How would it do to have Langdon on the house military committee, for instance?" whereat Nathan scowled, but said naught that was audible.

There was a man not in the army who took the possibility more seriously, and that was Langdon's friend and benefactor, Cresswell, who, as had been said, had aspirations of his own. There is little doubt that had an election been possible that winter and the ex-officer a candidate Langdon would have stood quite a chance. But by the time he was hobnobbing about on crutches, in March, the railway had subsided. Cresswell, a southerner, still raged in his heart over the assault of which he had been the victim. It was not the physical suffering, but the indignity, that rankled, and he had not ceased his efforts through detectives to ferret out the guilty parties, but with little luck. Certain men once prominent among the railway hands had left the state, but no one knew just why or whether.

Langdon, on the contrary, had apparently lived down his wrath. "Fighting mad," as the conductor declared to Lieutenant Hunt, he certainly was until the peril that menaced the settlers and involved the trainload of helpless people dwarfed all personal consideration and turned his powers to their account. His story of the abduction was very brief and straight. Returning from the army, he had led himself in the front door of the office, closed it after him and almost instantly felt himself grappled by powerful arms. Gruff voices warned him that a sound meant death when sound was impossible, for a huge, coarse hand was over his mouth, to be replaced in an instant by a chloroformed sponge and silken handkerchiefs. When consciousness returned, he was in a wagon, blindfolded, bound and gagged, then was hoisted into an empty freight car and trundled miles away through the night. His gag was removed as soon as the train went on, and he was given water, was assured that no harm was intended—"the boys" thought he'd better take a little trip up the country while business was dull in Brentwood, and they made him comfortable with blankets and pillows despite the jolting of the clumsy car. At dawn he was taken from the train and driven miles across country in another wagon to a ranch where people treated him with every care and kindness, but he was kept under lock and key until the night of the 20th, when there were sounds of weeping and dismay in an adjoining room, and he learned that there was a terrible raid by the Sioux "up the river." And then, fast as horses could bring them, came three railway men—not his abductors, for two of these were men he had known in the Brentwood yards, and the voices were different. They told him of the dreadful deeds at Rosebud and the plight of the train; told him the troops were coming, that the strike was done and that all matters connected with it and damages of every kind were to be settled later. The question was what he should do at once with his company and head them to the rescue, leaving everything else to be settled later. If they would take him to the railway. He accepted instantly—there was nothing else to do—and the whole country knew the rest.

Since then the strike seemed to be a dropped matter. The men would not renew for the officials reopen it, both the army being content to ignore it, the officials claiming that the hands had sufficiently punished themselves and the hands professing to believe that the road was preparing to accord them the terms demanded. To the wrath of Cresswell and doubtless of other lawyers averse to all settlements out of court no proceedings were instituted. The road dealt liberally with the families of employees who had suffered by the Sioux outbreak and had sent Langdon to the best hospital in the state to be most skillfully and tenderly cared for. Here he pursued his studies in the days of his convalescence and by March was once again at Brentwood, occupying his old room over Cresswell's office and supervising from a seat twice a week the drill of his rifles, now at last in full command, being the governor's agent that commission before ever the rifles got back from the scene of their glory. Eric was Captain Langdon now and no mistake.

Mr. Burleigh stopped to see him the week he hobnobbed out on crutches and said that the read had decided to send Betts elsewhere and to tender Langdon his old place. Langdon said he had no objections to their sending Betts to the States if they wished, but declined the position.

"You still resent their trying you on account of that safe business, I suppose," said Burleigh in his attractive western way.

"I resent their treatment of me at that time on every account," was the answer. "You well know that others than I had the combination, yet they were retained and one of them promoted."

Burleigh winced. Of course he knew it, but Betts was close to the renegade by marriage and his son a pet of the connecting link. It was their story

and that of the nation's history as a condition that hardened the hearts of the management against Langdon. Now he would not return to their employ. He struck manfully to "the studies" in Cresswell's office, was able to pitch his crutch down cellar in April and to drill his men in the public squares under the gleam of the electric lights during the bright evenings in May, was at the depot to see Melville and the family the lovely June morning when they went through en route to the hills, and a week later was surprised by a letter from the major, saying that he should come up for a visit, a week's rest, fishing and camping.

There were several reasons why Langdon declined to go. First, there was "Cat," the cavalry colonel who had brought him to trial at Pawnee. "Cat" would be glad to see him, wrote Melville, but would Langdon be glad to see "Cat"? No! Langdon knew he would not. Melville didn't tell the particulars of his conference with "the studies" whose full knowledge and consent of course he would not ask Langdon to be his guest, and "Cat" did not tell Melville the real reasons of his assent. But the way in which his civilian guests spoke of Langdon had set the colonel to thinking. It had not previously occurred to him that just as certificates of long and faithful service in the army are of little aid in the rush for civil employment, so is army commendation of little help to a man displaying the traits the people want. Mr. Burleigh lacked finesse and tact. He was coarse, but far-sighted, and he told "Cat" that the road would have given Langdon a good salary to buy him back, but he would not be bought. "That fellow will be in congress first thing they know, and he won't be led by the nose." "Cat" still had an eye on that longed-for star, and supposed now that Langdon should go there and be assigned to the military committee, just how much help could "Cat" look for at his hands?

"Tell Melville to invite him by all means," said Mrs. Cat. But "Cat" demurred. Why had Langdon left Sheridan so mysteriously? Why had the Big Horn discharged him if they had not good reason to connect him with the robbery of the safe? Melville, with his grave, courteous smile, promptly disposed of the first. It was to spare Nelson a possible breach with the post commander. Sharpe felt that he ought not to allow Langdon to remain at the post one day after he was able to move, first, because of the bad blood between him and Armitstead; second, because of his anomalous position as a dismissed officer. But Sharpe knew Nelson was impatient of speech and intolerant of men of color. He liked him well and thought for him and so chose a time when Nelson had to be at stables to send his adjutant to Langdon to break to him, diplomatically as possible, his desire, and Langdon left between two bugle calls, hurt and heart sick, but convinced that the step was due to Nelson, if not to Sharpe. When fairly away from Chicago and beyond reach of Nelson's reproaches or expostulations, Langdon had written and given good reasons for his action on that count at least. The Armitstead affair was something that would have to be left for time to settle. It might crop out any moment in the future.

On the other matter, the safe robbery, "Cat" owned to himself with shame that he had trumped it up as an objection even when he disbelieved its truth, for Melville's clear eyes had fathomed his soul when the major calmly asked, "You surely do not believe Langdon a party to that, do you?" "Oh—no, no, certainly I don't! Oh, well, ask him by all means, if you like. I—I—I merely suggest these as matters—others might desire explained. Then—there's Torrance. Now, how do you expect them to meet?"

"They are not apt to meet at all. Mr. Torrance, you know, has never come at my quarters since that occurrence," was Melville's quiet reply, and, much to Torrance's chagrin, such was the case. He had been living with the bachelors' mess during the campaign and here in camp, Mrs. Torrance having taken that opportunity to go east, visit her kindred and replenish her wardrobe. He had partially re-established himself in the batteries by soldierly conduct in the campaign and during the mob days, but he knew Melville's household had heard all about the language which led to Langdon's assault, and how could that be condoned? He was a sorry unhappy man that summer, and May and Woodrow said it served him right.

There was another reason why Langdon didn't care to leave Brentwood just then. Cresswell was a relentless hater. He was still trying to ferret out his assailant or assassin, and he had never ceased his shadowing of Betts and his aspiring son. Cresswell worked in secrecy, blinding Langdon to silence. He had been most helpful and liberal to Langdon in every way, even when he dreaded his looming up as a competitor for congress. He was fairly well to do and could easily have been richer but for the southern temperament which made him as open handed as he was open hearted. He insisted on advancing Langdon money to meet the claims that would not wait and begged him to accept more that he might dress and live like a gentleman. He meant Langdon to grow into the increasing business and care for it and preserve it, leaving him, Cresswell, free to pursue his political path. But Langdon was obdurate. The rifles had presented their new captain with his entire outfit of uniform and equipment on his return to duty. Boniface "gave him a rate" at his hospitable board that even Langdon felt resented as not being equitable, but Boniface swore Langdon was worth more than his board; "he drew custom."

Langdon's law studies were going on uninterrupted and well. He could reasonably expect to stand all legitimate quizzing and be called to the bar within another twelvemonth provided there were no distractions. He did not allow the will-o'-the-wisp of possible reinstatement to draw him from incessant study. What was the use of going back to the army, anyhow? He could never settle those outstanding debts and keep up the proper appearance on the pay of a lieutenant, his path to competence and freedom lay in civil life. He could far better repay the nation for his West Point education by assiduous drill and instruction of the state soldiery than by pottering about another ten years as a file closer. To return to the regiment was only to place himself once more where such

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Leaves 8 p. m. daily except Sunday, on Saturday 10 p. m. for Astoria and way landings. Arrives 4 p. m. except Sunday  
Leaves daily except Sunday at 6 a. m. for Oregon City, Newberg, Salem, Independence and way landings. Arrives at 4:30 p. m. except Sunday.  
Leaves Tues, Thurs, and Sat. at 6 a. m. for Corvallis and way landings. Arrives Mon, Wed and Fri at 4:30 p. m.  
Leaves Tues, Thurs and Sat. at 7 a. m. for Oregon City, Dayton and way landings. Arrives Mon, Wed and Fri at 3:30 p. m.  
Leaves Riparia at 2:40 a. m. for Lewiston. Leaves Lewiston 5:30 a. m. for Riparia.

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The Public's "on-tickler" office in Portland is a veritable Bureau of Information for travelers—a place where they can learn what it will cost to reach ANY point in America or Europe; how long the trip will take; and what there is to see on the way. If you are figuring on an eastern trip, drop in and get full information, or, if you prefer, write me about it. Omaha, Chicago, Kansas City, St. Louis—and EVERYWHERE beyond.

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