Lainer of the Cavalry

Gen. Chas. King Author of "The Colonel's Daughter," "Foes in Ambush."

"Well, the old man wants to see that young Rawdon forthwith, for many people believe he's skipped." You can track anything but a ghost

In this new fallen snow." Curbit lowered his voice. "That's ex- tieth part of his offense." actly the trouble, doctor. Go to the back of the quarters and see for your-His trail starts and ends here."

in all its history Fort Cushing had never known such a day of bewilderment as that which followed. Guard mounting was held as usual at 8 a, m., office the coming of the old and the new officers of the day, directed his adjutant to drop his own work at their entrance and give attention to what took place.

All eyes were on the two burly captains who entered at 8:30, fur capped. fur gloved, in huge overcoats and arc-The wind had begun to whine

gianced at the sullen skies.
"I report as old officer of the day.
sir." said Curbit, with brief salute. tendering the guard report book.

The colonel went straight to busi-

"No sign of Trooper Rawdon?"

"His borse and kit all right?"

"All right, sir." "Police notified to watch all trainsnd stages?"

There was impressive stlence in the

Eight men had gone with Sergeant towell as escort to the paymaster nearly four weeks earlier, he had set forth on his trip. Then the little iron safe was full of money. Seven men had come back with him, when as the safe was well nigh empty, the paymaster said he hardly needed an cort. Of the eight who started, four were "casuals" who belonged to companies stationed at Fort Frayne, well up in the Indian country, and there they remained when the duty was over. Of the seven who came with Stowell, three belonged at Fort Frayne. a corporal and two men of Captain nd's troop, and they came fortiled with the orders of their post comier, a copy of which was now in

"What I don't understand," said the lonel, whirling his chair to the right about and addressing the paymaster. is how or why those men should be

"It seems simple," answered Scott placidly, he being entirely independent of the post commander. "From Frayne I had to go to the cantonments up along the Big Horn, and we doubled the size of the escort accordingly. When we got back there these three were permitted to come all the way whether to buy Christmas things for the Frayne folk or for affairs of their own I didn't inquire."

"To whom did you assign them for rations and quarters?" demanded the donel of Barker

"Captain Snaffle, sir. C troop." "Are they there-the others, at

"Corporal Watts and Trooper Ames are there, sir. Trooper Rawdon, as you know, is not. He has not been seen about the quarters since some time last evening.

Then presently. Agnin a pause. "You arrested Kelly, I see, the man who was on No. 5.

and the steward said his sickness was More may come, but this is here. due to drink. I believe he was doped."

"That he could get whisky anywhere along back of the officers' quarters." said the colonel reflectively as well as reflecting, "is not improbable. That it should have been doped, judging from the way one or two have misbehaved, is not impossible. The usual orders for the present, captain." said he to the new incumbent. "And you are relieved, Captain Curbit." to + the old. "But I shall need to see you later, so do not leave the post."

"The man that leaves the post this day." said Major Scott, with a squint through the upper and unincumbered panes of the nearest window, "may need a seven days' leave."

"And that, colonel," said a quiet voice at the commander's elbow, "is what I applied for earlier. Pardon me. oir, but I need to know your decision." It was Captain Sumter who spoke. and the colonel flushed promptly at sound of his voice.

"I had intended sending for you. Sumter," said be, "but these rather ensing matters had to be taken up first. 1-have your application." he continued. "It is an awkward time. and these are awkward circumstances. It will leave your troop without an

"Mr. Lanier will be here, colonel." "Here, but in close arrest." frowned the colonel, "and you haven't had a first lieutenant since I have been in

"My misfortune, sir. but hardly my fault," answered Captain Sumter tersely, yet respectfully. "General Sheri-dan selects his aids-de-camp where he will, and last month you thought it a troop. Our guest, Miss Arnold, is in no condition to travel alone," added aptain Sumter gravely. "My wife ad 1 desire to accompany her to Chi-

"I see," sald be. "Miss Arnold was very much shaken by what happened after she got home?" "Rather by what happened before

she got home." was the calm yet sug-"Captain Sumter," said be, flushing angrily, for no one of his officers held

he in higher esteem, "your attitude is

that of opposition, if not of rebuke, to

the official acts of the post com-"Then let me disclaim at once the faintest disrespect, Colonel Button, but -as Mr. Lanier's troop commander and personal friend, I beg leave to say that, so far as I know, his offense is

one which his comrades have often committed without rebuke." "Which simply goes to show, sir," re sponded the colonel, with glittering eyes, "that you do not know the twen-

"If that be true, Colonel Button, of course I cannot think of going. I withdraw my application." And, turn-

ing slowly, he left the office. Instead of carrying three enlisted men present as "casually at post," the "return" of Troop C had but two. and Colonel Button, awaiting in his Trooper Rawdon, whose horse, horse equipments and field kit were safely



TOU DO NOT KNOW THE TWENTIETH PART

the previous day, was himself accounted for nowhere. In view of the fact that he had not been seen and could not be found there was nothing remarkable about that. With the morning report book, however, there was handed in a copy of an order duly submitted by Corporal Watts to Snaffle's first sergeant, and by him to his captain, which read in part as follows: 3 On arriving with his detachment at Fort Cushing and in compliance with the telegraphic instructions from department headquarters Trooper G. P. Rawdon, Troop L. -th cavalry, is granted thirty days' furiously at the expiration of which

days' furiough, at the expiration of which he will report to the commanding officer of Fort Cushing for transportation to his

(To Be Continued.)

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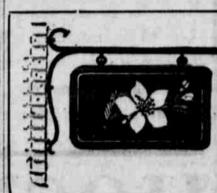
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