

### Lainer of the Cavalry

By Gen. Chas. King

Author of "The Colonel's Daughter," "Foes in Ambush," etc.

"Never, sir!" Riggs let him rest a minute, then went on, "Now, then, in your own way tell us what happened that night of the 16th."

For a few seconds there was silence. Then, suddenly lifting his head and looking at no one, Lowndes desperately plunged into his narrative. "I—I—was mad, I suppose, with debt and misery, and I began to drink. Rawdon told me he must have the money. My uncle had flatly refused to send me more. There was left me only one way, and that was through my Cousin Miriam. We'd almost been brought up together. But I saw if I could see her she would help me."

"Rawdon had changed into citizen's clothes in town, and I had pawned my overcoat, so he lent me his cavalry overcoat and a fur cap, drove me and Cary out to the fort and left us at the store. We were chilled from the ride and drank more. Rafferty told me Mr. Lanier was officer of the guard. We filled Rafferty up, for Cary had made up his mind he was going to Rawdon's wedding in 'cits' instead of soldier clothes, and he was bent on borrowing a suit of Lieutenant Lanier's. He swore he'd return them the next day, and Rafferty let him have them. Then he and I went up the rear fence and caught sight of No. 6—Trooper Kelly. Cary went ahead to 'fix things,' as he said. Kelly was suspicious. Cary to quiet him told him he was Lieutenant Lanier; that we were helping Rawdon get ready for his wedding."

"He made Kelly drink to Rawdon's happiness, and drink three or four times, and finally left him with a half full flask up the row toward Major Stannard's. Then we went to Captain Sumter's. Kelly told Cary the servants were in at Captain Snaffle's. The door was open. Cary watched below while I hunted for my cousin's room. I found it easily. I knew they had sent her money and orders to come home. Uncle had written me as much. I found her desk. I knew it well of old, and then, to my horror, I heard her voice, and in a second she was in the room. She gave one awful scream, though I tore off my cap and begged her to know me, but she fell in a faint. Others were coming. I broke out of the back window and slid and scrambled down the roof to the shed and so to the ground. I heard men come running, so I dived into the coal shed, where the sergeant grabbed me in the dark, and I had to make him let go and—said I was Lieutenant Lanier. Later I crawled through a hole in the fence and started for the store, scared out of my wits. Right at the next gate I crashed into two men. I picked myself and cap up and ran again, caught Cary at the store just jumping into a sleigh, and we lashed those horses every inch of the way, left them at a ranch gate and ran to the station. Rawdon presently came, and he took me to Omaha. He, too, had to get away or be thrown into the guard-house."

"You have that overcoat with you yet, I believe—that cavalry coat?" "It's all I have had to wear, sir," was the answer as, rising, he took the garment from the arm of his chair and laid it upon the table, exposing a rent or gash, whereupon Captain Sumter took from an envelope a sliver of yellow cloth and fitted it into the gap. "This," said he, "I found on the hook of the storm sash, and this," laying beside it a rusty sheath knife, "was later found under the snow close under the dormer window." Then, turning the overcoat inside out, he displayed on the back lining in stencil the name "Rawdon."

"And now," said Riggs, "we will hear the accused."

"It isn't necessary," began Button. "It is necessary, Colonel Button. Of course Mr. Lanier is not obliged to speak, but a few matters remain to be cleared up. There is yet the time honored problem of 'who struck Billy Patterson?'"

"The matter is quite simple," said Lanier. "I went direct from the dancing room to my quarters. The fire was low, and I went back to call Rafferty. He didn't answer, so I had to lug in some fuel. His overcoat hung in the kitchen, and I put that on, and as I opened the back door there came the scream from up the row. I saw others running toward Captain Sumter's as I started from the back gate. Then a gun rushed past me, and then somebody sprang from Captain Snaffle's yard, and I went headlong. I was on my feet in a second, but he had me round the neck, ordering me to surrender. I let him have two hard ones right and left. Somebody else collided with us. We all went down. The last man was up first and ran away. It was not. I knew of his relatives in Massachusetts and urged him to telegraph, but he said he could get some of it at least at the fort. So I drove him and Cary out in a sleigh, left them at the store and, circling the fort, spent two hours with Miss Mayhew, then, getting uneasy, as they did not come, drove round back to the store just in time to see Lieutenant Foster's sleigh going like the wind to town and found Rafferty in frantic excitement. He said there was hell in it. The lieutenant was in arrest. Lowndes and Cary had run away with some of his clothes. There'd been a shindy up the row, and just then a

soldier friend came running. "Skip for your life, Rawdon," said he. "There's been robbery at Captain Sumter's, and Sergeant Fitzroy swears it was you and that you've struck him and assaulted him. The colonel orders you arrested wherever found. The patrols are out now! There was no time to explain. I lashed my team to town, caught Lowndes in cavalry overcoat and cap, the fool, and with not a cent to his name. I gave Cary a note to Miss Mayhew, which he never delivered, and took Lowndes with me on No. 6 at 11:30."

"Then you were not at Captain Sumter's that night?" "Nowhere near it, sir."

"Now, another matter," continued Riggs—"that night at Laramie of which you told me. These gentlemen will be interested."

"There was nothing remarkable in that. I had heard of the same thing being done at West Point. I heard in the nick of time of the order to the officer of the day to inspect for Lieutenant Lanier. I imagined that something very serious would happen to him. I knew he'd gone to the post with Lowndes and why. So, with my apologies now to the lieutenant, I slipped round to his tent and into his blankets."

"Did the lieutenant know of it or of the reason?" "Never, so far as I know. I doubt if he knows it now. Lowndes told me the lieutenant before he entered West Point was a member of our fraternity. That was enough."

"And so far as I am concerned," said Riggs, "that is enough. Have you gentlemen any questions to ask?" "Not—now," answered Button slowly. "But I desire personally to see—the witness—later."

(To Be Continued.)

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