The Story of a Soldier's Struggle By Brigadier General Charles King

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CHAPTER 1.

The sunshine of a glorious autumn morning was slanting along the valley of the Pawnee, throwing bold shadows into the flats and lighting the landscape for miles with crimson and gold. The dew sparkling on the wild "bull" berry bushes, on tufted buffalo grass and tiny flowerets mantled the bluffs with diamonds and was still so strong as to defy its one enemy, the sun god. The frost had smitten the scant foliage on the banks of the winding stream, and the leaves had donned their glorious hues, setting forth their richest color-as the swan reserves its song-to meet the universal conqueror. The mist rose slowly from the silent, shallow pools, and from distant village and from the neighboring heights the smoke of chimney or campfire soared straight to the skies. It was a morning to send the blood leaping through young veins and to brighten the eye of age, a morning in which all nature seemed to rejoice and all mankind to thank God for the joy of living. Yet in the midst of a scene of such peace and health and hope there stood alone a man, still young, from whose face hope, peace, even health, apparently, had fled and whose attitude was one of utter grief and dejection. He was leaning against a branching willow, gazing into the depths of the broad pool of the Pawnee just above the rapids with God alone knows what thoughts seething through his brain, when the silence of the morning was broken by sudden, stirring sound. Close at hand from the willows across the stream there rang out-loud and clear the call of a cavalry trumpet, followed almost instantly by the appearance of half a dozen horsemen moving at steady walk from a break in the timber and descending the gentle slope to the ford. Foremost rode a powerfully built soldier in the field uniform of the United States horse. Behind, side by side, came two young soldiers, all three evidently officers. Then followed a brace of troopers-orderlies or grooms-and a jaunty lad with the yellow braid and glistening trumpet slung from the shoulder. Straight through the ford the leader splashed, looking neither to right nor left, the sunlight peering under his hat brim and cresting with gold his bushy eyebrows and bristling mustache. Straight at his heels followed his little party, and then from the same opening in the willows there burst into view the head of a column of cavalry, moving at the

erect and martial bearing. At the first sound of the trumpet the lonely figure at the edge of the pool darted back out of view and, bending low, stood where by peering through the bushes the column could be kept in sight, but when a moment later the fluttering guidon of the foremost troop came suddenly flaunting into the sunshine, all its brilliant color instantly enhanced, some intense emotion seemed to seize upon the lonely watcher. Rising to his full height, with his clinched hands thrown above his head, he whirled about and, with an inarticulate cry, sank like a stricken bull to earth and lay face downward and buried in his arms, his whole form shaken

with sobs.

same measured pace and with the same

Troop after troop, until the fourth had passed, the squadron crossed the ford and moved steadily up the southward slope, following a winding road that led to the group of buildings crowning the height, and still the young man lay there. Over beyond the low line of bluff to the west a cloud of dust began to rise, and there was sound of martial music. A tall flagstaff, looking like a slim white arrow, pierced the sky line from that westward crest, and the little bit of bunting fluttering at its summit was suddenly lowered, only to be replaced a moment later by a symbol that told it was some unusual occasion at the post, the arrival perhaps of some dignitary of superior rank, and in confirmation of this view, as the great garrison flag swung up to the head of the staff, the earth trembled and the boom of a battery salute throbbed on the ear. Even then there was no change in the attitude of the sufferer unless it were that he buried his face still deeper in his arms, but all of a sudden he started, half raised his head and listened. Somewhere up stream a clear, power-

ful voice was shouting:

"Langdon! Eric, old chap! For God's sake, where are you?" Hurriedly the listener drew his hand-

berchief hard across his eyes, shaking his head in the effort to pull allasen together. But he gave no answer.

Presently the call was repeated, louder, nearer, and now bounding boof beats could be heard.

"Eric, I say! Eric!" There was something almost commanding in the cry, and still no answer came from the man, who evidently recognized both voice and name, to whom indeed the former seemed to bring a bit of hope or help or comfort, for the utter despond in his pale, sad face was lightened the veriest trine. Yet he turned again toward the river, as though resolute to ignore the sum-

The next instant, glad and winsome in the sunshine at the edge of the timher, there galloped into sight a young officer whose brave blue eyes and ruddy cheeks and fair, crisply curling hair would have invited more than a single glance while the grace of his strong

yet slender form and his capital seat in saddle would have made him marked even among a score of his fellows. He rode with utter abandon, leaping his mettlesome, excited horse over the few obstacles along the fringe of willows as though he and his steed had wings and this was easy as flying.

"Eric! Eric Langdon, I say!" rang out the brave young voice once more, and then, as a gleam of the sunshine shot through the willows, his eagerly searching eyes caught sight of the lone figure, the object of his morning scout. In an instant he had sprung from

"Eric-you-you"- he began in almost boyish eagerness. "Stand where you are, Ronald!" he commandingly spoke to his beautiful horse and then, unhesitatingly leaving him without fastening of any kind, fairly leaped into the timber and to the side of his friend. Whipping off his gauntlet, he held forth his bared hand. "Remember Old Spot's story, Eric;

what we used to hear from those cavalry fellows-never give a gloved hand if you want to talk business with Indian or friend? Old man, you-you," and for a moment he paused partly for breath, partly for words, and the bright blue eyes seemed suspiciously near brimming, "you've given me a bad night and a woeful morning. If it hadn't been for Melville, God bless him, I don't know what I'd done. He saw I was just all upset. He said, 'You may find him down by the river.' He said there'd be half an hour before review and for me to tell you for himfor him, by heaven!"-and here the young soldier's emotion was too much for his eyes-"that you mustn't think of going until he had had a chance to say word of friendship. Eric, what more do you need to keep you from giving us all the slip?"

Almost impulsively the elder turned, tears starting into his own haggard

"Did Melville say that, Rodney? Do vou-you're not making it better than he did-God bless nim anynow-in your loyal effort to-comfort me."

"Swear to it, Eric, if need be, and I know it's what you deserve to hear." Then, with rueful smile: "Even if you did try to pull out without giving any fellow a chance. . I missed you just after 1-just after the Brocktons' function broke up. Woodrow and I scooted over to your room the moment we could get away, and there was your luggage all packed, but no sign of you. Couldn't find Hurricane either-wish you could have seen that old nigger sitting on the back steps crying this morning-so I started through the post, scouting everywhere I thought you might be except-except"- And here an honest blush went up to the young fellow's brows. "Well, it was 3 o'clock when I left a note for you in the old roost and 5 when I got in there again and found my note there, but not you, only old Hurricane boohooing at the back. Listen! Yes, there goes adjutant's call. Eric, I may tell Melville you'll come? Steady there, Ronald!" he interjected, for the spirited charger, well knowing the call, had whirled about and was pawing and snorting in manifest impatience. His owner moved to his side, but his eyes never left the form of his friend.

It was a moment before the fatter could speak. Meantime the young lieutenant had vaulted into saddle and was



A brilliant spectacle lay before the eyes of

at once caressing and controlling his pet, who was fretting and plunging in his eagerness to gallop to his place "in battery."

"May, tell the major I thank him with all my heart. I shall be there." And now Ronald sprang away like a deer, shooting up the slope toward the west as though life had no higher joy than a hand gallop. Lieutenant May turned in the saddle to wave a friendly hand to the figure standing at the edge of the willows. Then horse and rider in long, easy curve rounded the shoulder of the bluff and skimmed out of

Half an bour later a brilliant spectacae lay before the eyes of Eric Langdon. It was one to thrill and delight even an unprofessional eye, but this was the eye of a practiced soldier, to whom every detail was familiar, a soldier who many a time had taken active and up to within three months prominent part in similar pageants. Now it was the will of the law that he should be cut off from further participation in scenes of the kind. By the stern edict

or a court martial duly confirmed by the order of the president himsel Langdon stood summarily dismissed from the military service of the United

It was a sad, sad story. It has tan its parallels; it may have more. Then was no finer young soldier in the tat talion of cadets, and great were the prophecies of class mates-indeed of in structors-when Langdon's name came up for discussion. The corps rose u and cheered him on graduation day when a great public official in handing the handsome cadet captain his diploma took occasion to say that a young gentleman who could ride and drill as he could ought to be most welcome to the finest regiment in creation, and a very pretty girl sitting close to Senator Spotts, a ponderous member of the board of visitors, whispered to that veteran beau:

"Now, there's a man I should like to

And so it happened that before the graduating class were fairly out of cadet uniform and into their first "cits" a messenger in the shape of the official orderly of the commandant of cadets came to Eric Langdon to "invite" his presence at the quarters of that high official, and there he was presented anew to the distinguished senator to whom he, in company with his classmates, had already made the orthodox and conventional homage required of the graduating cadet to the board of visitors, and now the senator, all suavity, led forward an extremely pretty and vivacious damsel. "Mr. Langdon," said he, "this young lady has fallen in love with the corps in general and your -horsemanship in particular, and I know you will be delighted to recipro-

It was an odd moment for Langdon He would have been at a loss to know what to do or say had not the girl herself, with merry words and laughter, relieved the situation of its embarrass-

That was the beginning. They met frequently that summer. They parted in the fall, when he went to his regiment, he utterly infatuated, she half delighted, half regretful. She couldn't think of marrying in the army, she said. She admired it and him of all things, but that was all. Twice in that first year he managed to get leave and to go to her and plead again. He had some little money beyond his pay. He felt that he could support her in comfort, but he little dreamed of the scope of her desires. He was kept blind to the fact that she had hopes and ambitions far beyond his. Then one day the sudden death of a senator shocked the community, and Langdon, reading the news, never imagined the influence it was to have on his life. His letter of condolence to her brought an answer that was more than kind. Their marriage was sudden, but immensely "swell." She came with him to the regiment a few months, "stunning" everybody by the elegance of her toilet and the extravagance of her ideas. Then she declared she could not bear garrison life and pined for Washington. She got him a detail on staff duty, and he would not go. His place, he said, for a few years at least must be with the regiment. She went without him, and presently he was bombarded with bills the payment of which swamped him-took his last cent. It mattered little, she said. Senator Spotts' only sister, his elder by several years, was to leave her every penny, and indeed in the hard times for him that followed more than once that he knew of and more than twice that he

knew not of that sorely tried maiden came to his rescue with checks of startling size. Then there came rumors that the lovely if volatile Mrs. Langdon was flirting desperately at the capital, and one of the very best young "duty" officers in the regiment was beginning to look haggard and shabby. She got him to sign notes far beyond his pay to meet her needs, promising that "Cousin Spotts" would meet the notes. They began to fall due just as that amiable lady was taken to her grave, and then the will was contested, the legal beirs won, and Mrs. Langdon had to begin parting with jewelry, not to meet these notes, but her own crav-

ings. Then came more bills, more debts, morphine. Such were three years of Eric Langdon's married life. The next and last was the worst. Striving all the time to stick to his duty and keep up appearances, he was wearing himself out in the vain hope that his military record for efficiency might offset the terrible stigma of these pressing debts. Now the creditors were becoming importunate and raining their complaints upon his colonel and the war department. No matter how or by whom contracted, the debts were held to be his, that he was accountable for all. By the time he was 27 and finishing his fourth year of service with the regiment Eric Langdon looked like the patriarch of the subalterns, with his lining face and sad dark eyes, and when during the next year the news came that his wretched helpmate-save the mark-had breathed her last in a "retreat" everybody said, "Blessed re-

And yet, poor lad, he mourned her

and went and wept over her grave. Then he came back to the regiment to face curious glances and those thousands of debt. Among the junior officers there were a few brave boys like Woodrow and Rodney May who strove to cheer and sustain him. But Torrance, who had "struck if rich" at For-

tress Monroe and married an inane young woman of much wealth, was intolerant of a fellow at his wits' end for money, and there was a captain in the garrison who developed into one of Langdon's persecutors. This was Felix Nathan. Nobody in 1870 could have traced Nathan's antecedents. He shunned the topic himself and left to others the comforting theory that they were in some way connected with the pawnshop. He had been commissioned in had sent for the young officer, roughly the infantry at the instance of the Hon. Mr. Steinmeyer, who represented for men as deeply involved as he, went in congress a wealthy if inconspicuous | an shout "neglected duties." frequent district in New York. He found a few

montes sojourn in a fighting regiment on the far frontier so utterly to his distaste-the mere mention of Indians would turn him livid long years afterthat when the army was reorganized he literally bought a transfer into the artillery, where the splendor of his attire and a certain Germanic cast of feature won him the title of "the Baron" or sometimes Herr von Fertigen Kleidern. Certain pecuniary loans with which he favored some of his new found comrades gave him at first a glamour as of generosity. The remorse-



Sent Torrance crashing over the table. less rigor with which full payment was later exacted-at most inconvenient times and conspicuous places-removed

But the artillery works and polishes. Nathan had to work, drill and study. He was no fool. He labored with his dancing master and speedily shone in both the ballroom and in ballistics. They had sent him to Fortress Monroe in hopes of damping his desire to remain in the artillery, and he mastered the course with comparative ease. They "put up jobs" at his expense at mess by the introduction of sausage and spareribs in undue proportion, and Nathan said he feared they didn't know the good from the bad, sent "home," he said, for dainties and amazed them with the quality and

quantity of sausages shipped to him. And then in course of time he cut in and won the heiress of the season, and that marriage made him. His wife had most influential connections. They frequently spent summers at Bar Harbor or Newport. They had the most sumptuously furnished quarters in garrison and very "swell" visitors much of the time. They entertained lavishly, and so it came about that their social supremacy was established, not without protest, but it was no use

"kicking against the pricks." All the same, Nathan was mean. He lavished his cigars and champagne on certain of his callers and treated with cold courtesy the others. His wife's chums, if she had any, in the regiment were the two or three whose gowns sometimes nearly matched her own. They distinctly "put on airs" over their fellows, and for a time a weakling of a post commander permitted it, but that was before Melville's day, and Melville was a regimental adora-

One thing Nathan hated Langdon for was the fact that the latter could "take the battery" and make it do anything. He was a consummate drillmaster and handler of men. Things never went so well as when the captain stepped aside and the lieutenant took command. Regimental critics twitted Nathan with the fact, and it made him furious. If anything could have helped Langdon, it would have been service under some | More than to any man in the regiment other commander. There were three other captains who would have been glad of his services, but Nathan refused to allow the exchange. Time and again there were sharp disagreements between them, and thrice when Langdon had to appeal the decision went in

By this time the battery had been made a part of the great western garrison on the Pawnee, where two squadrons of cavalry and four "light" or mounted batteries formed the main features of the command. A veteran dragoon officer was at the head of affairs, a man with much conscience and little sympathy, and the way he "sailed in," as the boys said, to polish up the entire military establishment was a caution. The Nathans gave a sumptuous dinner in his honor about the first thing, and the colonel pitched into Nathan within 48 hours all along of the condition of his horses, to the intense joy of the uninvited, because this was the last thing that dinner was supposed to bring about. Nathan accepted the criticism and said he could not help himself, his lieutenants were so careless. It was at this time that renewed complaints came to headquarters concerning the nonpayment of those notes. Poor Langdon was setting aside a portion of his mortgaged stipend and sending it each month to "preferred" creditors, but the others kept up the growl, and it must be admitted that along about this stage of the game in his grief and despond Langdon had sought solace at times in whisky. All this Nathan reported to his chief when asked about the financial status of his subaltern. Had old "Cat o' Nine Tails," the post commander, consulted the veteran major, who had but recently arrived and assumed command of the batteries, he would have heard a dif ferent tale, for Melville knew a soldier and a gentleman when he saw one, and his sorrow for Langdon was expressed in something deeper than words. He made him come to his quarters and spend an evening or two. His wife, his children and a very interesting niece-all seemed to take a hand in Langdon's entertainment, but it lasted

lapses over liquor, all of which was grievous exaggeration, yet honestly believed by him to be true, and poor Langdon came away stung, stunned

and hopeless. That night, very late, long after every one but the guard had retired, a fire broke out near the haystacks, and while the men were at work with bucket and hose and the entire command was on duty it was observed by more than one officer that Langdon was perceptibly under the influence of liquor. Sitting up all alone and brooding over his troubles, he had probably taken to

the bottle. Three nights later came a clash. Melville's pretty niece, a wholesome, pure minded girl, was devoted to riding. Melville asked Langdon to take her out, and Captain Nathan, Mr. Torrance and two or three of their set, viewing the performance from afar, made comments thereon in presence of young fellows like May, who liked Langdon more than a little, and it all got to Langdon's ears. He marched straight to the clubhouse. It was just before tattoo, and a number of officers were seated on the veranda chatting, smoking and sipping cooling drinks. Torrance had been chief offender, and him he hailed.

"Mr. Tofrance," said Langdon, his eyes ablaze, his lips very white, "you are reported to have said thus and so

this afternoon." "I did," said Torrance, rising from his chair. "What have you to say

about it?" "This!" was the only reply as a stinging blow sent Torrance crashing over

The instant action of officers present stopped further hostilities. Nathan sent Langdon to his quarters in arrest and his company clerk to work. Charges and specifications ten pages Brawn out were preferred. No plea was listened to. A court was ordered in due season, and it had no alternative. On a still October evening the order that day received from Washington was formally read to the command, and next morning when the department inspector had them all out for an early review he, without whom reviews seemed hardly complete, looked sadly on from a far corner, a practically ruined man.

But there were friends to go with him to the station after his brief interview with Melville-noble hearted Melville that day-May and Woodrow and others of the boys, besides some scores of "boys in blue" who had slipped away and were bent on giving their pet lieutenant a parting cheer, and there was an incident that became historic.

The railway station was like all far western stations of those days, an ordinary brown frame building with projecting roof overhanging the platform and a broad, open space at the gable end, and here it was, in the presence of half a dozen officers and quite a swarm of citizens and "boys in blue" off duty, the memorable rencontre occurred. The instant Captain Nathan stepped from his handsome carriage, with the whistle of the express already sounding far down the Pawnee, he found bimself confronted by Langdon, whose dark features took on no flush of the wrath that consumed him, but whose erec and s'ender form, patent in its athletic proportions even through the simple civilian suit he wore, quivered from head to foot. It was vain for Nathan to dodge. The words came like the sting of a whiplash:

"You are no longer my superior officer, Nathan, and there's only a moment to say my say. Your language at the club this morning has been told me Now hear my reply. Today we stand. you in the pride of your wealth and power, I with the world to begin again. I owe my troubles to you. Yet 1 wouldn't exchange my soldier record for yours if reinstatement were offered me this minute. No! I'm not to be intimidated by any gesture. All I have to say is that if God spares my life before ten years pass our places shall be reversed-you will be at the bottom. I at the top. Now you may go."

(Continued next week.)

Hard on the Tramp.

The young bride went to the kitch-And complied with the tramp's de-

ta the injured tramp went sadly He sighed and said with a groan;

If a poor man ask for a piece of Will ye give the poor man a stone?

Some Fashion Points For Summer Cloth skirts are made up unlined even in the medium and light weight

Filet lace in appliques and all overs dainty gowas of satin featard, India The colariess fancy bodies will

much seen this summer. The new box-pleated Eton is espially becoming to slight figures. bathing costumes, of which an atknickerbockers and a two-piece skirt. The newest lace applique designs are composed of medalitons to be applied singly or otherwise in connec-

White will be seen more than col-Smart gowns for summer evening

tion with insertion and faggoting

wear are made from Brussels net, black or white, with a foundation of between the not and elk. Moire has the post of honor for

light coats, especially for children. Mercerized goods will enjoy a great vogue for midsummer outing suits The lavish use of lace is the most striking feature of the warm weath-

er tolletter. The little protection collars of lace, only a week or so, for matters were batiste and even linen have now cuffs hastening to a climax. The colonel to match; they are usually adorned with embroidery. told him that the army was no place

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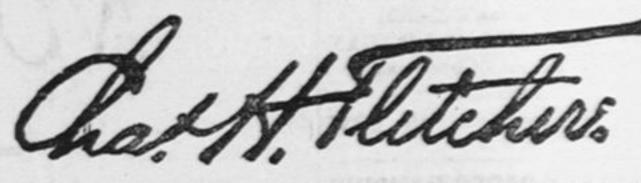
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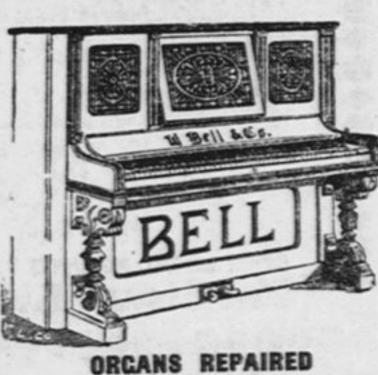
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