

Ten Years' Trial

The Story of a Soldier's Struggle

By Brigadier General Charles King

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Continued from last week. "What is this news about Mr. Langdon?" she asked as soon as she had him safely cornered.

"That he is at Sheridan and has been ill, I gather," was Melville's calm reply.

"Now, I ask because Ethel came back all aflame with indignation and has gone to her room to bathe her eyes. Mrs. Nathan said publicly that Mr. Langdon had been picked up by the police drunk in the gutter of a crowded street and that the soldiers clubbed together, paid his fine and took him out to Fort Sheridan."

"I have a letter from Nelson giving me full particulars," said Melville in the same unflinching manner as he gently drew his wife to a seat by his side. "There is no truth in the story of drunkenness or police. You remember Ryan, who used to be in my battery? 'Twas he who found Langdon fainting, and they took him to Sheridan as a matter of course."

"But Mrs. Nathan says Colonel Sharpe was furious at his being brought there and has ordered him put off the post as soon as he can be moved, and the papers are full of stories about a duel. She says Dr. Armstrong declared he would publicly insult and horsewhip Mr. Langdon if he showed his face in the garrison."

The major smiled. "Never mind what Mrs. Nathan or the newspapers say, dear," he answered in the same gentle, reassuring tone. "Nelson tells me that there is some old trouble between this young doctor and Langdon, but that they have not met and are not likely to meet. Channing hopes to secure an opening for Langdon as soon as he is able to work."

"Oh, yes, and that reminds me, Mrs. Nathan said Mr. Langdon had the impudence to go to her uncle, who is vice president of something in the Chicago and Seattle railway, and demand employment, saying he was an officer in her husband's battery here, and Mr. whatever his name is—don't remember him; he was here—just told him they had no use for such a character. Now, do you suppose that can be true? And Mrs. Melville looked up at her stalwart husband as though the wisdom of the universe were centered in him."

"I dare say Langdon's grand old uncle," said Melville gravely, "the deep brown eyes softening still more at the thought of the rebel's sad, heartick fellow probably met if indeed it was to Mrs. Nathan's uncle to whom he applied. But there are other roads open to Langdon that exact less and pay far more than railroads, only Langdon always had a predilection for railway engineering and service. Captain Channing is writing to Langdon now and has written to an elder brother who is general manager of the Seattle's greatest rival, the Missouri Valley. Now, there is trouble on both roads, and men are very much needed, so I think Langdon will be provided for in the near future. I hope Ethel did not allow herself to be much disturbed?" and when the major finished in this half interrogative way it was meant to imply that while he might be hopeful he was by no means confident. He had known Ethel, a beloved sister's only child, since her babyhood and knew her to be fearless, resolute and anything but pettee. He was wondering as he stroked with his one disengaged hand the heavy brown mustache what Ethel might have said in reply to Mrs. Nathan.

But there was no immediate opportunity for inquiring. The papers that had deluged the post with Chicago's version of the scandals at Sheridan had reached Pawnee that day, some on the hour, and second in local interest were the details of the serious situation on some of the great transcontinental railroads. Officials and operatives had come to the final climax. An ultimatum had been prepared "in the interests of labor" if not acceded to by the managers within 24 hours, not only the transcontinentals complete, but the Seattle and Missouri Valley roads, would be tied up forthwith.

Before Mrs. Melville could frame her reply to the major's question, there came a step on the piazza, a ring at the hall bell, and then "Cat's" voice was heard in an animated converse with some companion. Melville himself opened the door to bid them enter—the colonel and his silent adjutant.

"Melville, here's a go!" began the commanding officer, without preliminary of any kind. "I'm ordered to send a reliable officer at once to Omaha to act under special instructions that are to meet him there, and you're the most reliable man I have. Can you make the night train?"

"Easily, colonel."

"So be it, then. I'll have the orders made out at once."

Several of the battery officers went down to see their leader off. Channing, too, was there and led the major aside a moment.

"I've written direct to Langdon," he said, "and given him letters to my brother with instructions how to find him. He'll be somewhere out on the line now, I suppose. The only question is, will Langdon be well enough?"

Melville pondered a moment before he replied: "Nelson wrote three days ago that it might be a week—that would be till Friday, say. This is Wednesday night. I fancy he'll hardly be strong enough, Channing, but thank you all the same."

Let web-stripping evening came brought a dispatch for Channing that gave him keen anxiety:

Letter for Langdon here. He disappeared during morning. No trace.

CHAPTER V.

Ninety miles west of the "Big Missouri" and in the heart of the thriving town of Brentwood the rival lines of the Chicago and Seattle and the Chicago and Missouri Valley, popularly known respectively as the "Seattle" and the "Big Horn," crossed each other and the beautiful stream that drained the valley. The Pawnee long ago had called it after the prairie wolf, but their despoilers, the Sioux, rechristened it Red Water, declaring it so thick with the blood of their hereditary foes that it had lost all semblance of blue, and Red Water it remained in name, at least, though it speedily lost the sanguinary tint and outvied all the storied streams of Indian land in that it never sulked and sank out of sight in beds of quicksand, never turned into raging torrent and tore things out by the roots, as did the mountain born "Minnes" and "Wakpas."

Then came the backward sweep of the tide. A wire from the south announced that regulars were in possession of Omaha, Council Bluffs and Sioux City and that a little battalion was on its way to the relief of Brentwood, and still the starting and imprisoned live stock bawled, bellowed and squealed for food and water. Still passenger traffic was at a stand. The division superintendent and his assistants were powerless. Though they manned engines, threw switches and "braked" cars, the rails were soaped, the boilers foamed and their engines were "killed" under their very noses, all without violence of either word or deed. The strikers liked their division chief and hated to be at odds with him now. So long as only railway hands were permitted about the yards or stock trains there had been no wanton destruction of property, but to such scenes ever loomed the black and red element of the community, and the news that troops were coming proved a relief for the separate details.

At 2 o'clock the news was whispered about the streets that a big force of strikers had gone down to the narrow of the valley where the Red Water, turning from the rectitude of its ways, lashed and foamed between rocky bluffs and heights and the rival lines, Seattle and Big Horn, twisted and turned for some 20 miles not 400 yards apart. A troop train had left the river bent on forcing a way to Brentwood, and in desperation the strike leaders had determined to topple it into the stream.

It was but a few minutes after 2 when, through the Western Union, the stranger received the following dispatch: Major Melville, U. S. A., Brentwood.

Nathan reports serious obstacles. Striking movement of trains every mile. He has only 100 men. Four companies state militia go by M. V. at once and may get first to Red Water gorge. The two commands should act in concert.

The major replaced the dispatch in its envelope, stowed the packet in an inner pocket and walked slowly from the office into the slanting sunshine without. The street was filled with men sauntering up and down or gathered in knots at the corners. It was a still, wintry afternoon, though but little snow as yet had fallen east of the mountains. Melville noted that all eyes were on him, but not in open hostility. Whatever the hands might have in store for the officials of the road or for trainloads of troops, their rancor took no shape against a single man, apparently, even actually, unarmed. Melville carried neither flask nor pistol. He was reflecting on the miscarriage of the plans for the concentration of troops so far as Brentwood was concerned and wondering by what evil chance Nathan had been chosen to command the detachment ordered thither from the south. It was odd to "think of light artillery men being so employed at any time, but these were the economical days. Companies, battalions and "troops" could rarely muster more than 80 men for duty. Pawnee's garrison had been split up and sent to three or four important points, and, being executor in date of commission to the two cavalry captains sent with it, Nathan had been given the lead, and Nathan looked anything but blissful when "Old Cat" ordered him off. "Leave enough men to care for your barracks, stables, am. gun sheds," said he, "draw 30 carbines from the cavalry, let your men leave their sabers and go with carbine and revolver, then you'll be uniform with the troopers."

"Cat" thought that when a soldier was uniform with a trooper he couldn't be better off; Nathan thought he couldn't be worse. Next to an Indian Nathan hated a mob. Two hours from the time the orders reached him the command was ready to go, but not so Nathan. Two days from the time they started they were still two days' march from Brentwood, and their train met no detention whatever until it got well into northern Nebraska. Then it was found so easy to induce the commanding officer to believe that the track was all torn up just ahead or that strikers had blown up or burned down bridges that sympathizers with the wage-workers kept up the practice at every station, and Nathan was sending dispatch after dispatch to Omaha the findings of which, when it all came to be investigated, proved utterly untrue, as the general held them to be at the time, and naturally he grew indignant and nervous. While most of the troops had been hurried to Chicago and the Mississippi crossings, the garrisons west of Omaha had been ordered to rendezvous there or go direct to other designated points in the northwest. Brentwood was making no great trouble, was the first report. Two or three companies of state militia were all that was needed, according to the original views of the authorities, and they were sent there, with the result that jeering telegrams came back to the magnates, the marshals and the military authorities called into action. All of a sudden people woke up to the realization that Brentwood was a railroad town and the whole community practically in sympathy with the operatives. All of a sudden the news came flashing over the wires that Captain Nathan, with 100 men from Fort Pawnee, had been ordered and compelled to retire when his command was detained at Gunnison, and, though officers and men declared their readiness to push ahead notwithstanding, their cautious captain forbade any man to push a foot ahead until he could again communicate by wire with department headquarters.

"What did I tell you?" growled the veteran Indian fighter, now taking his first turn of any consequence against the mob. "You've heard the old saying. 'An army of sheep led by a lion can whip an army of lions led by a sheep,' and that's what's side tracked now at Gunnison."

And at the very moment that Nathan was holding back there, alarmed and irresolute, with 100 fighting men ready for any duty and chafing at their commander's inaction, another troop train came steaming into the station. Two short clear-eyed, sturdy men in civilian dress sprang from the engine cab, and at sight of the foremost the men who had so easily dinned the commanding officer of the first train against striking a blow were the telegraph office. He dived into the telephone and spent a few minutes in sending and receiving dispatches, and in that brief interval the platform swarmed with a laughing shouting, shoring altogether hilarious crowd of young fellows in loose, flapping blue blouses and greatcoats, eagerly seeking something—anything to eat or drink. Aboard the first train, far up ahead, was grim silence. Not a soldier showed himself outside the cars. Orders were orders. Around this second train it seemed as though, officers and men in a bunch, the battalion of militia had turned out for a frolic. It didn't last long. A grizzled, sharp featured little man in a major's uniform swung off the rear-most car and came up the track to meet the strike, his eyes popping. So were his words when he got to the platform. "Clark, get your men aboard your car instantly, Captain Gelsenheimer, this is the second time I've spoken to you. Go to the rear car in arrest! Lieutenant Melnecke, take command of the company and the company to the car. I told you supper would be ready for all hands at 5 o'clock. It's only 4. Back to the train, every mother's son of you! Back!" And, somewhat crestfallen, somewhat awed and abashed, yet realizing that the little major "meant business," back they went, still keeping up the semblance of jocularity by horseplay and racing. Then out came the first of the newly arrived civilians, followed by the younger, a silent man.

"All serene for ten miles anyhow, major, but you might put four of your best men on the pilot and tender. We will be there too. All right, Mac?" he sang out to the engineer. "We push ahead as soon as we get this gang aboard. Look at the regulars' train up the track. They're not straggling all over creation!"

"No, and they ain't gittin' ahead any too fast either," sneered the station agent. "It's taken 'em two hours to come 20 miles, and now the cap's waitin' for orders."

"Then, by gad, that gives us the right of way and the lead," was the gleeful answer. "We go on at once. How's that for high, major? Better come forward to the baggage car."

Then pandemonium broke loose on the rear troop train. The words went from car to car like wildfire that the regulars were side tracked ahead, and "the boys," as they called themselves, would have the lead. From every door and window one head at least and sometimes two protruded as the engine gathered way and presently rolled past the heavier but shorter train at the water tank. A chorus of yells, a rejoicing, cheer and fun arose from the throats of 300 lively young westerners on their first campaign. Silent, somber faces looked out at them from the other windows, though occasionally some light hearted Irishman would fling back a laughing answer. Three officers stood on the rear platform of the regular train intently eyeing the oncoming engine. The guardsmen on the pilot were hanging to their rifles with one hand and the rail with the other. The tender seemed bristling with bluecoats. The keen, bright eye face of the railway official was peering forth from the fireman's side of the cab, and he waved his hand to the trio. None knew him, but all looked and saw, veering over his shoulder, another face.

It was only an instant's glimpse, but a flash of recognition leaped into the eyes of the nearest. He leaned forward from the step and gazed after them as they rushed by, regardless of the jocular balls of the crowd in the cars, then, as the engine was shut from view, drew back on the platform once more.

"Whom did I see?" he repeated in reply to a question asked by Mr. Torrance. "Eric Langdon or his ghost!" (Continued next week)

THE GRAND TRUNK SYSTEM.

Important Improvements and Alterations in Passenger Train Service.

It has been rumored for some time past that the inauguration on June 15th of the summer passenger train service of the Grand Trunk Railway would be marked by important new features. The details of the service have now been sufficiently advanced to permit of information regarding it of a preliminary character being furnished to the public. It is evident that the progressive policy introduced by the present management of the Grand Trunk is to be continued. Many of these improvements, in the way of additional trains, have been under careful consideration for some time past and have now only become possible as a result of the substantial growth of traffic in the districts concerned throughout which the new facilities will be greatly appreciated. While Ontario will benefit chiefly, the advantages will not be confined to the province. A brief statement of the new and altered service follows:

Montreal and Toronto. The first "International Limited" will leave Montreal daily at 9:00 a.m., and reach Toronto at 4:40 p.m., and Detroit 9:20 p.m., ten minutes earlier, and Chicago 7:30 a.m., as at present. The Night Express train will leave Montreal at 8:00 p.m., except Sunday and 10:30 p.m. daily. A new express will leave Toronto at 9:00 p.m., except Sunday and the 10:00 p.m. express will leave Toronto at 10:30 p.m., daily, reaching Montreal as now, at 7:30 a.m. The fast day express will continue to leave Toronto at 9:00 a.m. and reach Montreal 6:00 p.m. daily.

Belleisle and Brockville. The main train which leaves Toronto at 8:00 a.m., necessarily passes through the interlocking at Brockville at mid-day. In order to give an earlier service in this district a new local train will leave Brockville at 7:00 a.m. and arrive Belleville at 10:00 a.m., except Sunday. A new local train will also leave Brockville at 5:00 p.m. and arrive Belleville 8:00 p.m., except Sunday.

Toronto, Muskoka, North Bay, Etc. A new fast train will run daily between Toronto and Muskoka, leaving Toronto at 8:00 a.m. and reaching Muskoka at 11:30 a.m., and Muskoka at 11:30 a.m. and reaching Toronto at 4:25 p.m. The new night express will leave Toronto daily at 11:15 p.m. It will carry a sleeping car for Muskoka Wharf and a sleeping car for Muskoka Wharf and a sleeping car for Muskoka Wharf. A new night express will also leave North Bay at 8:45 p.m. This train will pick up sleeper from Muskoka Wharf daily and arrive Toronto 7:00 a.m. Passengers will be able to leave all principal points on the Muskoka Lakes in the evening and breakfast at Toronto next morning. Special arrangements will be made so that passengers desiring to spend Sunday on the Muskoka Lakes will be able to leave Royal Muskoka at 8:00 p.m. and reach Toronto Monday, directly connecting for Buffalo, Detroit, Chicago and all principal points in the United States. It is believed that this double daily service will immensely increase the popularity of the "Highlands of Ontario," and attract thousands of additional tourists and health seekers from all parts of the country, particularly from the Southern and Western States, where already our beautiful northern waters are so greatly appreciated.

A new train will be run each way between Collingwood and Altondale, except Sunday, affording a mid-day service to and from Toronto. A new train will be run each way between Orillia and Altondale, except direct connections for and from Hamilton, Toronto, etc. Southampton, Warton and Owen Sound Lines. New trains will be added and changes made in other trains that will afford afternoon connections for, as well as earlier arrival on these branches from Toronto, Montreal, etc.

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