

THE LIBERTY BELL FOR THE PHILIPPINES.

BY Gen. Chas. King.

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side, stood at the entrance, playing them in the rafter's fluting to the stirring strains of "The Liberty Bell." They were still far down the long pier, the sloping riffs still visible, dancing over the heads of the crowd. No time was to be lost. More tables were to be carried, but who but that "that little army woman" could give the order so that it would be obeyed. Not one bit did the president like to do it, but something had to be done to obtain the necessary order, for the soldiers who so willingly and promptly obeyed her beck and call were now edging away for a look at the newcomers, and Mrs. Frank Garrison, perched on the carriage seat and chatting most vivaciously with its occupants and no longer concerning herself, apparently, about the Red Cross or its tables, had quite a long talk with one of the prisoners—young Morton—just after tattoo, at which time the entire guard had been inspected by the commanding officer himself. But at reveille four most important prisoners were gone and, such was Canker's wrath, not only was Gray in arrest, but the sergeant of the guard also, while the luckless men who were successively posted as sentries during the night at the back of the wooden shell that served as a guardhouse—were now in close confinement in the place of the escaped quartet.

Yet those three were men who had hitherto been above suspicion, and there were few soldiers in the regiment who would accept the theory that any one of the three had connived at the escape. As for the sergeant, he had served four enlistments in the—tenth, and without a flaw in his record beyond an occasional aberration in the now distant past, due to the poverty of the content distilled by certain Hibernian experts not far from an old-time "plains fort," where the regiment had rested on its march "cross content." As for the officers—but who

the grim prospect was fulfilled—Colonel Canker was proving "anything but a guardian angel to him." The whole regiment, officers and men, barring only the commander, was practically in mourning with sorrow for him and chagrin over its own disfigurement. Not only one important prisoner was gone, but two; not only two, but four. No man in authority was able to say just what or how it happened, for it was Canker's own order that the prisoners should not be searched when the guard fell in at night. They were there at tattoo and at taps "all secure." The officer of the guard, said several soldiers, had quite a long talk with one of the prisoners—young Morton—just after tattoo, at which time the entire guard had been inspected by the commanding officer himself. But at reveille four most important prisoners were gone and, such was Canker's wrath, not only was Gray in arrest, but the sergeant of the guard also, while the luckless men who were successively posted as sentries during the night at the back of the wooden shell that served as a guardhouse—were now in close confinement in the place of the escaped quartet.

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But there were other things that might well go toward convincing a court of the guilt of Lieutenant Gray, and poor Billy contemplated them with sinking heart. Taking prompt advantage of his position as officer of the guard, he had caused the young prisoner to be brought outside the guardhouse, and as a heavy, dripping fog had come on the wings of the night wind, sailing in from the sea, he had led the way to the sheltered side, which happened to be the darkest one, of the rude little building, and had there bidden him tell his story. But Morton glanced uneasily at a sentry who followed close and was hovering suspiciously about. "I cannot talk about—the affair—with that fellow spying," he said, with an eager plea to be sent back to the guardhouse, but Gray knew and quickly recognized. "Keep around in front. I'll be responsible for this prisoner," were his orders, and almost reluctantly, the man left. He was a veteran soldier, and his manner impressed the lieutenant with a vague sense of respect. Twice the sentry glanced back and hesitated, as though something were on his mind that he must tell, but finally he disappeared and kept out of the way during the brief interview that immediately followed. The prisoner eagerly, excitedly began his explanation—Gray might have entertained as to his innocence. But he had come from a stove-heated guard room into the cold sea wind off the Pacific—into the floating wisps of vapor that sent a chill to the marrow. He was far too lightly clad for that climate, and presently he began to shiver.

"You are cold," said Gray, pityingly. "Have you no overcoat?" "It's at my tent—I never expected to spend this night here. I've been before the summary court, fined for absence, and thought that would end it, but instead of that I'm a prisoner and the man who should be here is stalking about camp, planning more robberies. Yet I'd rather associate with the very worst of the scoundrels and dead beats inside there, and the dark eyes glared almost in horror—the slender figure shook with mingled repulsion and chill—"than with that smooth-tongued sneak and liar." There's no crime too mean for him to commit, Mr. Gray, and the man are beginning to know it, though the colonel won't. For God's sake get me out of this before morning!" And again the violent tremor shook the lad from head to foot.

"Here—get inside!" said Gray impulsively. "I'll see the adjutant at once and return to you in a few minutes. If you have to wait until the matter can be investigated by the general, it might be better so until late in the afternoon the question that agitated the entire range of regimental camps was: "How did those fellows break away from the prison of the—tenth?" Then came a clue, and then—discovery. It was the lieutenant Colonel Canker, a board of officers had been convened to investigate the matter, and after questioning everybody whom "Squeakers" had already bagged with his assertions, threats and queries, they went to the guard house and there, through inspection of the premises. The cooler building stood in the midst of a waste of sand blown in from the shore line by the strong sea wind. It was perched on something like a dozen stout posts driven into the soft soil and then the space between the floor level and the sand or gravelly bottom boarded in—chairs, benches, planks being used. Between the floor and the sand was a space of about eighteen inches vertical, and a dozen men could have sprawled there—lying at full length—but to escape would have required the conspiracy of one or more of the sentries surrounding the building and the ripping off of one or more of the planks. In his keen anxiety Canker accompanied the board on its tour of investigation—a thing the board did not at all like—and presently, as was his wont, began running things his own way. It had been found useless to question the soldiers of the guard. Not a man could be found to admit he knew the faintest thing about the escape. As for the prisoners, most of them reckless, devil-may-care rascals, they grinned or leered suggestively, but had nothing to talk.

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"Then I'll do what I can for you tonight," said Mr. Gray as he turned and hurriedly left the guard room—a dozen men standing stiffly about the walls and doorway and staring at the lieutenant's face as he passed. Again, the young officer had left the post of the guard and gone into camp, while far and near through the dim, fog-veiled aisles of a score of camps the bugles and trumpets were walling the signal for "lights out," and everybody with coat collar turned up about the ears or capes muffled around the neck, scurried about the company streets ordering laughter and talk to cease. A covered carriage was standing at the curb outside the officer's gate—as a certain hole in the fence was designated—and the sentry there, posted just outside the gate, asked the driver if he was engaged. "I'm waiting for the major," was the answer.

"Well, where can one order a carriage to-night without going clear to town?" inquired Gray. "I want a dog—that is—I wish to order one." "The dog is in the stable," said the driver and the driver who knew very well there were several places where carriages could be had, preferred loyalty to his own particular stable away in town, and so declared there was none.

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"It's not the sergeant let them fellows out," said the regimental oracle. "This is no ten-dollar-substitute business." And no ten-dollar-substitute business was it, until late in the afternoon the question that agitated the entire range of regimental camps was: "How did those fellows break away from the prison of the—tenth?" Then came a clue, and then—discovery. It was the lieutenant Colonel Canker, a board of officers had been convened to investigate the matter, and after questioning everybody whom "Squeakers" had already bagged with his assertions, threats and queries, they went to the guard house and there, through inspection of the premises. The cooler building stood in the midst of a waste of sand blown in from the shore line by the strong sea wind. It was perched on something like a dozen stout posts driven into the soft soil and then the space between the floor level and the sand or gravelly bottom boarded in—chairs, benches, planks being used. Between the floor and the sand was a space of about eighteen inches vertical, and a dozen men could have sprawled there—lying at full length—but to escape would have required the conspiracy of one or more of the sentries surrounding the building and the ripping off of one or more of the planks. In his keen anxiety Canker accompanied the board on its tour of investigation—a thing the board did not at all like—and presently, as was his wont, began running things his own way. It had been found useless to question the soldiers of the guard. Not a man could be found to admit he knew the faintest thing about the escape. As for the prisoners, most of them reckless, devil-may-care rascals, they grinned or leered suggestively, but had nothing to talk.

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"We'll have this boarding ripped off," said Canker decisively, "and see what they've got secreted under there. I shouldn't be surprised to find a whisky still in full blast, or a complete gambling outfit—dash, dash 'em to dash and dashation. Send for a carpenter, sergeant." The carpenter came and he and two of three of the guard laid hold of one end of the plank after its nails were drawn and with little exertion ripped it off the other side. Then everybody held his breath a minute, stared, and a small man, who had been lurking in the shadows, came out, cats, cans and rubbish, the space on that side was filled solid with damp, heavy sea sand—a vertical wall extending from floor to ground. Canker almost ran around to the opposite side and had a big plank torn off the ceiling, and a great deal of clothing and furniture was shoved out of the room. One member of the board and one only failed to enter with his associates—a veteran captain, who read much war literature and abhorred Canker. To the surprise of the sentry he walked deliberately to the fence, climbed it and presently began poking about the wooden cover that ran along the road, making a low retreat or retaining wall for the earth, cinders and gravel that, distributed over the sand, had been hopefully designated a sidewalk by the officers of the tract. Presently he came sauntering back, and both sentries within easy range would have sworn he was chucking. Canker greeted him with customary asperity.

And when the officer of the guard returned to the general house and went in to the prison, the sergeant saw—and others saw—that rolled in the soldier's overcoat he carried on his arm, was a bundle done up in newspaper. Moreover, a scrap of conversation was overheard.

"There's no one at the general's," said the officer. "I see no way of fixing it before morning."

"My God! lieutenant!—There must be some way out of it! The morning will be too late."

"Then I'll do what I can for you tonight," said Mr. Gray as he turned and hurriedly left the guard room—a dozen men standing stiffly about the walls and doorway and staring at the lieutenant's face as he passed. Again, the young officer had left the post of the guard and gone into camp, while far and near through the dim, fog-veiled aisles of a score of camps the bugles and trumpets were walling the signal for "lights out," and everybody with coat collar turned up about the ears or capes muffled around the neck, scurried about the company streets ordering laughter and talk to cease. A covered carriage was standing at the curb outside the officer's gate—as a certain hole in the fence was designated—and the sentry there, posted just outside the gate, asked the driver if he was engaged. "I'm waiting for the major," was the answer.

"Well, where can one order a carriage to-night without going clear to town?" inquired Gray. "I want a dog—that is—I wish to order one." "The dog is in the stable," said the driver and the driver who knew very well there were several places where carriages could be had, preferred loyalty to his own particular stable away in town, and so declared there was none.

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"What do you mean, sir, by absenting yourself from the investigation, when you must have known I was with the board and they started, and, once there, it took time to find things. "Go back to the sergeant major and tell him I sent you," said Gray, after another search. "He needs you on those papers."

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