

# POOR DOCUMENT

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QUEENS COUNTY GAZETTE, GAGETOWN, N. B., WEDNESDAY, JULY 13, 1898.

## Literature.

### ACROSS THE DEAD LINE.

It was a disagreeable surprise to us heavy artillery men when our regiment was detailed for prison duty during the war, not only because it was distasteful work, but we thought it derogatory to our branch of the service; and indeed it is a mystery to me to this day why we were selected.

But the command having been given we were soon on the march and one sultry summer afternoon arrived at our destination.

We found that the prison consisted of a long, low shed surrounded by a palisade about nine feet high called a stockade, and this again encircled by a raised platform at such a height that sentries placed upon it could look over the top of the enclosure and observe the prisoners inside.

This was necessary because at some distance from the shed was a shallow ditch, dubbed in military parlance "a fence," although a more absurd name could hardly have been chosen, since it could be crossed by a single stride, and at night it was so indistinct that a line of lighted lanterns had to be placed near it in order to prevent the prisoners from stepping inadvertently over it.

There was another and more sinister name by which the fence was known to guards and prisoners alike; it was called "the dead line," because a prisoner found across it was ordered to be shot.

We had been encamped about a week when, one stormy evening, I visited a brother officer in his tent, and on leaving his quarters on my homeward journey found the night so dark that I lost my way and did not know where I was till I brought up against the stockade. At that moment a rift in the clouds letting out a moonbeam, I saw distinctly through the palings a man in a tattered grey uniform looking up in astonishment at a sentry who was violently gesticulating. The fellow was throwing his arms about in a way that made him resemble a scarecrow in a wheat field during a gale of wind.

I was at a loss to understand his actions till, on looking more closely at the prisoner, I observed that the line of black lanterns, whose light had been extinguished by the violence of the wind, was behind instead of in front of him. The prisoner's face was toward the moonlight, which was at my back, and I therefore could see his features plainly, and knew by the expression of them that this grim, determined-looking man was quite unaware of the danger of his position. After a second or two it seemed to dawn upon him; he stepped hastily backward and was soon lost in the black shadow of the prison shed.

I heard the sentry resume his measured tread but could see nothing further, for the moonlight was again curtailed by the clouds.

Alone and unobserved I had witnessed a dereliction of duty on the part of the sentry that if I reported it would probably be fatal to him; what was I to do? If I did not report him I myself would be as guilty as he.

I stood rooted to the spot in the still, black night, for the wind had entirely died away in an ecstasy of agony. The perspiration broke out in great beads on my forehead and my hands were clenched till the nails wounded the palms.

If the moon had only not come out, all would have been well; the prisoner, whatever may have been his intentions, would never have been discovered by the sentry or myself, and I should have groped my way to my tent in blissful ignorance of what was now causing me so much misery.

While I was thinking this, or rather immediately afterwards, a thin, small voice sounded in my ear—to this day I cannot tell where it came from—but it said distinctly, "The United States expects every officer to do his duty." And slowly I dragged myself to the officer of the watch and reported what I had seen.

Immediately on my report a posse was detailed to arrest Number Six and replace him by another man. The sentries on the platform were numbered according to their position, and therefore I knew exactly which sentry had been in fault.

In the morning a court martial was held, at which, of course, I was the solitary witness against the prisoner. He was brought in weaponless, between two armed guards. During the preceding night I had not been in a position to observe his countenance, therefore I was greatly horrified to find that this tall, thin stripling, scarcely twenty-one years of age, whose lank, sandy hair hung over the collar of his coat, and whose almost the color of his complexion, was a lad I had especially befriended, with whom I was as intimate as an officer is permitted to be with a private in the same regiment.

The boy was a most determined young fellow. He had been singularly well conducted and a great interest was taken in him by all of his officers, because it was well known that he was the son of a Southern planter, and that he had run away from home on the breaking out of the war and enlisted in the Federal ranks. He stood facing the judge, very erect, his arms straight down by his sides in the attitude of attention; but I thought I detected, notwithstanding the grimness of his features, a certain gray shadow

stealing over his face that made me shudder, for somehow or another it put me in mind of the shadow of death.

The judge asked the prisoner his name, which was only a formality, he knowing quite well, being his colonel. On hearing it, the judge continued,—

"You are accused, Percy Livingston, of dereliction of duty last night; what have you to say in self-defence?"

"Who is my accuser, sir?" asked the youth, his keen, gray eyes roving round the room.

"Colonel Blank over there," replied the colonel, nodding in my direction.

The lad gave me one swift look and then turned his eyes away. There was a whole sentence of reproach in that quick glance; it said: "You, my friend and mentor, to whom I looked for advice in every difficulty! I could not have believed you would act so like a traitor!" It made me feel as if I were the real culprit.

"Private Livingston, if you have anything to say concerning the reason why you allowed a rebel prisoner to escape punishment last night, say it now."

The soldier made several ineffectual efforts to answer the judge, but each time a dry sob choked his utterance; at length he stammered:

"He was my father, sir."

I shall never forget the hoarse murmur of horror that came from those war-weary, hard-featured soldiers, gathered for a matter of life and death; it was succeeded by a silence that could be felt, that seemed to hinder one's breathing.

The majors and captains and lieutenants bit their mustaches and gazed nervously at their colonel to see what effect the words had on him; but he gave no sign, his visage being as immovable and expressionless as that of the Sphinx.

Turning to the colonel, he commanded them to search out the rebel prisoner, Livingston.

A most unsoldierly looking man came striding in; his figure was slouching, his manner ungainly, yet, for all that, no one could look at the tall stooping giant without feeling that he belonged to a ruling caste.

This man, in spite of his stoop and his slouch was accustomed to say to other men "Do this" and it was done.

There was a puzzled expression on his face as he looked at the judge; it said "What am I wanted for?"

"Is this your son?" asked the colonel.

The Southerner had not looked at the lad since he came into the room; now he turned with a perceptible start and fixed his gaze on the boy; he evidently had failed to recognize him the night before; he gazed long and sternly on him, but the young fellow's eyes were on the ground.

As they stood together in the open space in the centre of the room, no one could doubt the relationship existing between the two; six feet two, every inch of it, both of them, with square, high shoulders, long, thin neck, a figure too narrow for its height, and the same grim, thin-lipped mouth; and yet the elder turned to the judge and said,—

"No, sir."

"He says he is your son."

The old man drew himself up, folded his arms across his breast, and said in a hard voice,—

"He was my son, but I recognize no child of mine in your ranks."

"Captain Blank, is this the man that crossed the fence last night?" asked the colonel.

"Yes, sir," I answered.

"You have no doubt about it?"

"Prisoner Livingston, what have you to say?"

"It was so dark that I could not see the line, the lantern light having been blown out by the wind."

"But you saw the sentry waving to you?"

"Yes, but only when moonlight came from the clouds; it was he who directed my attention to what I had done."

"You are aware, of course, that this man has forfeited his life to save yours, as his orders were to shoot any prisoner found across the line."

"Perhaps he—he—recognized me sir."

"He will have to accept the consequences of disobedience," said the judge, in a hard, dry voice.

The planter turned and looked at his son, but the boy had never lifted his eyes.

The grimness had faded from the old man's face, and after one long, wistful look he faced the judge. The pride of the haughty ruler of slaves was humbled; it was a suppliant who said in a broken voice:

"I, too, am a soldier; let me die in his place, judge; he is so young."

"No. I forbid it!" called out the boy in a strong, stern voice. "I have broken the rules of the army and must pay the penalty."

"He is right; the army in such a case accepts no substitute," said the colonel.

The son stretched forth his arms imploringly to his father, and in a broken voice begged for forgiveness and recognition.

"It is for the last time, father."

The planter's face became gray as with out a word he opened his arms. The son flew into them as a swallow flies to its nest, and while that military crowd cleared its throat the father and son wept on each other's neck. But the old colonel still sat immovable.

Presently the father cried out in the language of David:

"Oh, my son my son, would God I had died for thee."

Then he stroked the boy's head, kissed him on the forehead and gently pushed him away, and the two tall soldiers of opposing armies stood side by side, awaiting the sentence of the judge.

"Private Livingston," began the judge—"ahem." The officers glanced at each other in astonishment, and the glance said, "Our tough old colonel has broken down."

"Private Livingston," he began again, then cleared his throat for action in a very fierce way. You are sentenced to—acquittal—in consideration of your relationship to the rebel prisoner."

An irrepressible murmur of approbation broke from the court of war, and one stout and red-faced major, who had not so very long ago been a private himself and was a respectable shoemaker, burst out with an "Hooray."

"Silence, sir," commanded the colonel, "we'll have you arrested for contempt of court."

The discomfited major sat down again, while his fellow officers passed their hands over their mouths to conceal their smiles.

"Private Livingston, you can conduct your father back to the stockade."

As the two men passed out arm in arm a general handshaking took place in the court room, and everybody congratulated everybody else on the happy termination of what promised to be an awful tragedy.

The Spanish Throne.

One of the Boston papers says Don Carlos ought to be King of Spain as he is the rightful heir. I think he or whoever wrote it is in error. Princess Mercedes is the rightful heir—after the death of her brother Alfonso. At the death of her father she was proclaimed queen when only about 6 years of age, and held the title till the birth of her brother the little Alfonso of now who was born some 3 months after his father's death. The trouble began when Ferdinand VII died, though he had trouble enough while he lived. He left no son to succeed him and the Spanish law forbade a woman on the throne. He took the precaution to have repeated that law, to please his queen and to make strong the heirship of the young Isabella. This act, however, mortally offended Ferdinand's brother, the original Don Carlos, who thought he ought to have the throne because he was the only male heir, and he was not slow to dispute the rights of Isabella, for whom the law was repealed. From that day to this he and his descendants have made life a burden for all those who have since tried to rule Spain, and since the claim was originally supported by the church it is a very strong one among certain classes of Spaniards. It is the fear of this faction which has made the settlement of the Cuban question so difficult.

The crown of Spain is heavy and at present a burden and Don Carlos is waiting. Through his first wife he inherits the title to the French throne as her father was the last male heir of Louis XIV and from his second wife he has obtained a fortune which is more to the point in pressing his claim to the Spanish throne. His second wife the Duchess of Madrid is a member of the four illustrious houses of Rohan, Lorraine, Bonillon and Savoy—the last mentioned house being that which now occupies the throne of Italy. She is twenty years younger than her husband, very handsome, and takes too many of the airs of royalty. Should a Carlist insurrection be the result of the American interference in Cuba this lady would feel much gratified to Uncle Sam for his assistance. She was married April 29th, 1894.

By right of descent Isabella's title to the throne would never have been disputed if she had not been a woman and proved herself unfit for her rights. Her troubles began with the marriage which was forced upon her at the age of 16, by her mother, Queen Christina, who was in connivance with Louis Philippe of France. The husband which they forced her to marry was her inferior in almost every respect, and Isabella no sooner married him than she banished him. The Spaniards for years idolized the young queen, but her mother was continually taking money from the treasury, till it became her downfall. Isabella was compelled to flee to Paris, where she is now living—taking her children with her and for six years the country struggled between the attempts of Don Carlos to obtain the throne and the efforts of Liberals to establish a Republic. When none of these succeeded Isabella's son Alfonso, was called to the throne. There is a romance connected with the beginning of his reign. While the young king was in exile he fell in love with Mercedes, who was a cousin of his, and he would doubtless have married her whether he had come to the throne or not. Upon his accession the authorities tried to induce him to marry all sorts of Princesses—among them the present Queen Regent, but he would have none but Mercedes, and at last they were forced to let him have his way. Happy marriages among royal personages are so rare that it seems a pity this one could not have been crowned with happiness, but nothing could be sadder than the early taking away of the lovely young bride of scarcely five months. The king was then compelled to comply with the necessities of State, and to please his ministers he married the Princess Christina, niece of the Emperor of Austria. He named their first child Mercedes in memory of his first wife, and it was this

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