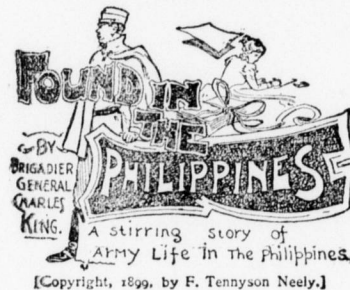


AN AIR-CASTLE.

I built a house in my youthful dreams, In a sunny and pleasant nook, Where I might listen, the whole day long, To the voice of the gurgling brook, A cottage with wide and airy rooms, And broad and shining floors— A house with the hidden charms of home, And the freedom of out-of-doors.



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CHAPTER VII.

Billy Gray was indeed in close arrest and the grim prophecy was fulfilled—Col. 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 discomfiture. Not only one important prisoner was gone, but two; not only two, but four. No man in authority was able to say just when or how it happened, for it was Canker's own order that the prisoners should not be paraded when the guard fell in at night. They were here at tattoo and at taps all right. 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. But at reveille four most important prisoners were gone, and such was Canker's wrath that not only was Gray in arrest, but the sergeant of the guard also, while the three 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 quartette.

ing the fleet off, and uncle was too tired in the evening. Indeed, we are all very, very sorry!" And poor Billy never heard or cared what the others said, so absorbed was he in drinking in her gentle words and gazing into her soft, dark eyes. No wonder he found it difficult to release her hand. That brief visit, filled with sweetness and sunshine, ought to have been a blessing to him all day long, but Canker caught sight of the damsels as they walked away on the arms of the attendant cavaliers—Miss Lawrence more than once smiling back at the incarcerated Billy—and Canker demanded to be informed who they were and where they had been, and Gordon answered they were Miss Lawrence, of Santa Anita, and Miss Prime, of New York—and he "reckoned" they must have been in to condeole with Mr. Gray—whereat Canker snarled that people ought to know better than to visit officers in arrest—it was tantamount to disrespect to the commander. It was marvelous how many things in Canker's eyes were disrespectful.

day ought not to make so great a difference. What could be the reason—if it were not that, though innocent of the robbery of the storehouse, or of complicity in the sale of stolen goods, some other crime lay at his door which the morning might disclose? All the loyalty of a Delta Sig was stretched to the snapping point as Gray paused irresolute in front of the adjutant's tent, his quest there unsuccessful. The sergeant major and a sorely badgered clerk were working late over some regimental papers—things that Morton wrote out easily and accurately.

away, while the lieutenant was out visiting sentries and presently they saw him coming back along the walk, stopping to question each sentry as to his orders. Then he returned and inquired if all was quiet among the prisoners, and then went and put out his light in the tent reserved for the officer of the guard, and once more left his post, briefly informing the sergeant of the day. Then it was ascertained that he had visited half a dozen places in search of that veteran captain and appeared much disturbed because he could not find him. In half an hour he was back, asking excitedly of the sentry in rear of the guardhouse if a carriage had come that way. It had, said the sentry, and was waiting down the street. Gray hurried in the direction indicated, was gone perhaps three minutes and returned, saying that the sentry must be mistaken, that no carriage was there. But the sentry reiterated his statement that it had been there and had been waiting for some time, and must have disappeared while he was temporarily around at the opposite side of the building. This was about 11 p. m.

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