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ASLEEP ON PICKET.

An Incident of the War in Cuba.

BY E. F. FLOYD.

It was the night after the terrible day at San Juan, and Private George Morton of the regulars was doing picket duty on the heights. Not much to make a story out of, for after the exciting events of that day, ever to be memorable in our history, anything else that can be told must seem simple and commonplace. But to Private Morton there at his post by the deserted trenches it was destined to be even more eventful than the scenes he had just been through.

Ever since the landing of his regiment, two days before, the moments had been filled with excitement and rough work that left little time for thought. But Private Morton, as a general rule, was not much given to thought. A private in the regular army must be made into a part of one splendid fighting machine. So Private Morton was content to do his duty and let the officers do the thinking.

Though apparently not over 30 years of age, he was now serving his second term of enlistment and had seen enough of active service in the Indian campaigns in Arizona and the Bad Lands to make war for him no novelty. He was counted a good soldier, and he knew by heart all the "rules of war" by which the sharp discipline of the regular army is enforced.

But tonight it seemed to the soldier that the burdens of the service were more than ordinarily oppressive. For nearly 48 hours he had been on constant duty, without rest or respite, marching through the tropical rain, wading streams, plodding in the mud, fighting, famishing; for in all that mad rush of the preceding days there had been no time for rest and hardly a thought for food and drink, for even the regulars had caught the infection and were nearly as reckless and improvident as the less disciplined and thoughtless volunteers. The one thing to do was to possess that Spanish line before it could be reinforced and before the dreaded fever should thin their own ranks. It was death in front, but just as certain death was stalking in the rear. And so during those last two days there had been no rest from duty, no moment in which to catch a little sleep or relieve the muscles or mind from the terrible strain. The line had been won and now must be guarded from surprise and recapture.

In detailing the guard for that important service there were no fresh men from whom to select; the fatigue of two days' constant marching and fighting could be no excuse, else there could be no guard, for all were equally worn and exhausted. When Private Morton heard the orderly sergeant call his name as one of the detail for guard duty he had just flung himself down on the rain and blood soaked ground beside a dead Spanish soldier. There had been no time to select a resting place; the tired limbs had refused duty the moment discipline was relaxed, and he had fallen almost as a dead man there among the really dead, with all his accoutrements still strapped about him and firmly grasping his heavy army rifle. But with the calling of his name the habit of discipline returned, and he was promptly on his feet to form one of the little squad that marched away into the growing darkness toward the front for sentinel duty.

He was stationed in the shadow of a few closely growing trees, just beyond the now deserted trenches lately so stubbornly defended by Spain's bravest soldiers, with orders not to expose himself in the open, but to note the least movement or sound from the direction in which the enemy had retreated, for it was deemed very likely that a night attack might be attempted for the recovery of the hill.

For a short time after his companions left him Private Morton did not give much attention to himself. He followed, first with his eyes, then by the ear, the movements of the little band, as guard after guard was placed, and tried to keep in mind the location of the different men. It was no new work for him to be on guard, and there was no special novelty to him in the situation. War was war, whether in Cuba or Arizona. He knew that across that dark canyon, concealed by the darkness and the thick growth of timber, was the Spanish line and that any moment a flight of Mauser bullets might come in his direction from out those dim shadows, or even a line of yelling Spaniards spring from the jungle down there a little way below him and come charging up to bear him and his comrades back from the hard-earned field. But he had been in equally bad places before and did not know what it was to fear anything in the shape of foe. He knew the importance of his task, the perils it involved and the consequences of failure.

But now the new-found strength that came to him when called to this new task began gradually to fade away, and he could realize how tired and faint he was. He could easily count up his rations for the last two days—just five hardtack, soaked in muddy water, in all that time, and as for sleep, when he came to think of it he did not believe that he had had any, unless, perhaps, he had slept awhile between the fighting and the detail for guard duty.

How tired he was now and how he would like to sleep! No, that was too risky. It meant death to be caught asleep. He could stab a hole through his shoe with his bayonet and wound his foot; the pain must awaken him. Somehow, the blood felt so warm and comfortable there—was he going to sleep after all? He took a cartridge from his belt and bit it savagely till he broke a tooth, and his mouth filled with blood; but he let it run down his face and across his blouse, with no care for the pain or relief from that terrible call of overstrung nerves for rest in sleep.

How long Private Morton fought this terrible battle with himself—a battle more dreadful than any on that bloody field the day before—we cannot tell. It seemed ages to him; it might have been only the latter part of his time of duty, but at last the relief was coming. He could not be mistaken—that was the sound of his approaching deliverance—yes, there was the head of the line within 50 yards of him. Now he could sleep. "O! how tired I am; how blessed this sleep!"

And so they found him, sound asleep at his post. It might have been for a moment; it might have been for two hours. Asleep he was, at any rate, when relief arrived. His post was the most important on the whole line, and its sentinel asleep! How could they know he had fought so hard to keep awake—and he had only fallen as they were at hand? They had found him so, and it was death. He knew that. He had not been in the service six years to forget that. There was no excuse that would save a sentinel from death who fell asleep at his post in time of war and in the face of the enemy. As the grim faces of the men that fell in about him to take him to the guardhouse showed no sign of compassion, so Morton realized that he could expect none from any quarter, but must suffer the full penalty of his crime.

It did not occupy much time, his trial and conviction. The days were too busy for that—those days before Santiago, between El Caney, San Juan and the surrender.

They were grim and powder-blackened, with torn and faded uniforms, that group of officers quickly called together for court-martial, but they were stern and just. The evidence was clear—there was no defence—the sentence brief. Private Morton for sleeping on post was to be shot to death, in the presence of his regiment, the following day at noon. The action of the court-martial had been approved by the commander, and but a few short hours remained for the condemned man between this and another world.

In the old San Juan blockhouse, that served as a prison now, lay Private Morton, stretched on the rough floor and covered with his blanket. There was time enough to sleep here, and that sleep which seemed so precious but a short time ago, and which would finally cost him his life, why would it not come to him now and shut out the awful realities of his position? Why could he not stop thinking for a moment and sleep? Perhaps it would come if he would only turn on the other side. No, that foot pained too badly. Why did it not pain enough to keep him awake that dreadful night—when was it, a year ago or only last night? He could not tell, for he had lost all sense of time. Was he going crazy? It was not such a dreadful thing to die. He had faced death a thousand times and was not afraid of that. During that charge up the hill the lieutenant had called to him, "Private Morton, cut these wires." He was not afraid then, but had stepped out of the brush into that hornets' nest of lead and with his nippers cut every wire before he left—and not a bullet hit him, though the lieutenant and eight or ten other men fell dead before they got through the gap he had made. Perhaps he bore a charmed life, and they might not hit him when they came to try to kill him next day. It was the disgrace of it all, though. "In the presence of his regiment"—that had been the sentence, and the disgrace of standing before his comrades, condemned for neglect of duty, he, Private Morton, who had served six years in his regiment and had never a mark against his name before. This was worse than death. If he could only sleep a little while and forget that part of it. But that tooth would persist in paining so, and one ragged point kept cutting his tongue and filling his mouth with blood that almost choked him at times, so that no sleep would come.

With such feverish fancies did the night pass away, and then the brief forenoon seemed all too short. They would come for him in a few moments, and he would march out and meet his doom before the whole regiment. Who would come, and who would be told off for the firing party? He hoped they would be good shots. "Reddy" James would surely be one; he was always on every special detail, and that bristling red moustache would be sure to stand out stiffer than ever today. "Mealy" Mason would be another. He was the man the sergeant always detailed to shoot the sick and disabled horses the summer they were up in the Bad Lands. But before he could count up any more the lieutenant came to inform him that the time was up and he must march to the place of execution.

It struck him as a little peculiar just then that no chaplain had been sent to help smooth his pathway to the grave; but it did not give him much concern, as he never had much use for a chaplain anyway, and all the boys knew it. Another thing seemed queer. Had he not seen the lieutenant fall there at the barbed-wire fence with a bullet through his head? But here he was and did not seem to be any the worse for it, only his face was terribly white and ghastly, and a great splash of blood almost covered his once white gauntlet. Now he came to think of it, "Mealy" had fallen at the fence with the whole side of his head torn away, so after all he would not be one of the firing party. He wondered if his mother would know of his disgrace and if she would be there. He remembered now that he had heard her voice singing "Rock of Ages" some time last night, just as she used to when he was a little chap and she sang him to sleep at night.

The officer started to read something from a large roll of manuscript, but stopped with a scowl. "You know what it is," he said; "forward, march!" And Private George Morton took his blanket from the floor, rolled it up properly as became a United States regular and followed his lieutenant to the scene of his death.

He began to wonder how it would feel to be hit; whether he should know anything about it and how long it would take to die. He watched the firing squad as it slowly filed into position. He counted them as they wheeled into place. One, two, three, four, five, six, and the officer. Why did it take so many to kill a man?

It seemed to take a long time to get everything ready, though perhaps his thoughts were running a little more rapidly than usual. One thing brought him satisfaction—there would be plenty of time to sleep after it was all over.

His imagination must be playing him false again, else how was it that he saw the white, agonized face of his mother there, breaking through that solid line of blue on the right? He wanted to rush to her and tell her it was all a dream, that he would not be hurt, but he could not bring his limbs to obey his will, and then in a moment the stern, fixed faces of the men in front brought back with sickening force the reality and awfulness of it all.

It must come to an end some time. Yes, the officer at the head of the squad had stepped a pace forward, and a command was given that he could not understand, but the guns were lowered with a jerk; another command, and with a jerk and clang the guns came to "aim" and all seemed pointing directly into his eyes.

There was a flash, but he could hear no report. Would those bullets never come, or must he stand there through all eternity waiting for the end? Could they have missed him? Perhaps he was dead already. Death had come with the flash, and death was not so different from life, after all. Then—— "Yes, I am hit, after all!" he shouted, grabbing frantically at his left arm, which suddenly seemed a mass of molten iron. "Of all those guns only one was loaded, and that has taken off my arm."

Dazed and stupid from sleep and pain, he opened his eyes to see the relief still some 20 yards away, but moving with the brisk swing of the regulars to his post. His left arm seemed on fire yet, but he managed to bring his gun into position and challenge in the usual manner.

"How is this?" said the officer. "Wounded? It must have been that shot that just came from across the canyon." "Yes, I believe I'm struck a bit," said Morton, "but it don't amount to much, and I'm mighty glad to get out of this hole even if my arm is broke. It's a sight better than having the whole six in my carcass."

With those rather unintelligible words Private Morton "fell in" and marched away to his quarters.

After the surgeon had fixed up his arm it was some time before he could reconcile his mind to dreaming so much in the time it took that relief to march 30 steps.

How sweet it was to sink down at last upon that glorious couch, his army blanket and the muddy ground; to feel the drowsiness creeping deliciously through his very soul; to smile with contempt at the futile efforts his wounded arm was making to keep him awake, and at last to fall soundly and really asleep!—Overland Monthly.

FRESH BEEF FOR MANILA

PROBLEM OF SUPPLYING IT TO OUR TROOPS THERE SOLVED.

The Refrigerator Vessel Glacier and the Novel Cargo She Carries—Five or Six Days Required to Cool the Meat Sufficiently—A Novel Defrosting Process.

Two million pounds of beef which cannot spoil has left New York for the Philippines, states the Sun. All went in one vessel for the feeding of the navy and army engaged in operations in and around Manila.

The problem of sending fresh provisions to the Philippines was much greater than Cuba or Porto Rico prevented. Two difficulties had to be overcome. One was distance, the other was climate. The simple device of keeping the meat fresh by placing it in rooms cooled to 30 degrees, which is sufficient for a short trip and moderate climate, would be absolutely worthless if attempted for a long trip and the high temperature through which a vessel must pass in going to the Philippines. To overcome the difficulty a ship specially built for carrying fresh mutton from Australia to England was purchased. She is now the United States refrigerator vessel Glacier.

She proved herself practical for that work, and is therefore not even an experiment now that she has to do similar work for the United States troops at Manila. The navy department advertised for sealed bids for between a million and a half and two million pounds of prime beef for the cargo of the vessel last month. The contract was awarded. Experiments as to the shrinkage in weight of frozen meat were made, proving that there was not more than one-quarter of 1 per cent. loss in the process of freezing. These tests showed that the whole substance of the meat must remain in it or there would have been far greater losses in weight. Orders were then dispatched to the western agents of the company to which the contract was let to purchase 28,000 of the very best stall-fed beeves. These were loaded on 100 of the best cattle cars and shipped to New York. Here they were unloaded, kept for a few days until they had recovered entirely from the trip and then slaughtered. Each animal was carefully examined, and if found in any way defective was rejected. As each carcass was passed it was hurriedly quartered and slid into the refrigerating room, where, hanging on huge hooks, it was gradually cooled. Tests had been made here also to ascertain how long it would take these quarters to freeze through to the bone.

It was at first thought that when submitted to a temperature of 15 degrees only 72 or 90 hours at most would be necessary to freeze the meat through so hard that a knife could not be pushed into it. Experiments proved that from five to six days were needed for absolute certainty, so all of the 2,000,000 pounds of beef have been frozen for six days before being loaded on the Glacier. The method of testing the freezing is itself interesting. A brace and bit is used, just as if you were going to bore a hole into an oak door to put on the hinges. At first the bit is sunk only four inches in the thick hindquarter. It is drawn out, and then a small thermometer like those used by physicians in taking the temperature, is inserted. It is left in a few minutes, and when drawn out should show a temperature of about 20 degrees. Then the hole is bored deeper, going right to the bone; the thermometer is again inserted, and if it again registers 20 degrees it is certain that the quarter is frozen through.

After the first lot of 250,000 pounds was well frozen, the task of loading began. The engines of the refrigerating apparatus on board ship had been at work, the pipes running all around the sides, the bottom and top were heavily coated with frost. If you wanted to go in there you had to wear a heavy overcoat. It was arctic and was meant to be. Night after night the work went on, 250,000 pounds of beef being packed away each night. By the use of refrigerator cars for transportation across the river not one of the quarters of beef was exposed to the air for more than ten minutes.

At Manila a tremendous refrigerator storehouse is now being completed for receiving the cargo of frozen beef. It will not be exposed to the tropical heat of the Philippines for many minutes—only long enough to put it into the refrigerator rooms. Nor will it be delivered to the navy and army immediately, for if this frozen meat were allowed to thaw out suddenly in that terrific heat it would not be in the best condition for consumption. There is a defrosting arrangement in the Manila refrigerating storehouse. It is a series of rooms with gradually rising temperatures. The first room is kept at a temperature of 20 degrees and then gradually raised to 35 degrees. The second starts at 36 degrees and carries the temperature up to 45 degrees, and thus the process of defrosting continues, gradually rising the meat to the temperature of the normal carcass. In this way the flavoring juices of the beef are preserved, so that roast beef will taste as if the ox had been killed only a day or two before.

When it is remembered that the trip to Manila from New York will occupy ten weeks, even though the Glacier goes by way of the Suez Canal, it can be easily understood that anything less than freezing the meat would not preserve it. Beef is shipped to Europe unfrozen, being kept at a temperature of about 36 degrees, and arriving in good condition, but the trip is a short one and the temperature of the air is moderate, but only a freezing temperature will preserve meat properly for so long a time as ten weeks, especially when the vessel has to pass though the Mediterranean and the Red seas, the Indian and Pacific oceans. The Glacier will stop only four times for coal and water before reaching Manila. In fact this is the only element of risk in the entire trip. The only possibility of any mishap lies in the breaking down of her machinery or the giving out of coal and water. Every precaution has been taken in these particulars, for the vessel has just come out of dry dock, where she received a thorough overhauling from stem to stern, and all arrangements for getting coal and water at Port Said and other coaling stations have been perfected.

It is the first time that frozen meat has been shipped in any such quantity anywhere in the world. The pains were taken to make this trip a success are warranted by the anticipation that it is by no means the last load of fresh beef which the Glacier will have to take to Manila. Even though Aguinaldo surrenders promptly, the army and navy will have to remain in the Philippines for many years to come, and the Glacier will solve the problem of furnishing fresh and nourishing meat.

An Ounce of Prevention.

The high death-rate among consumptives revealed by statistics easily accounts, if nothing else could, for the increased interest recently shown in the question of cures, and of hygenic measures for combating the ravages of this painful malady. Not many weeks since an account was given of a meeting held in the city of London, at which the Prince of Wales presided, and of a discussion of some of the ways and means by which the dangers of contagion might be averted.

Nothing is more difficult, as we know, than convincing invalids that fresh air is important—that it is vital to their well-being, in fact. Consumptives used to be kept in hot rooms, from which all cold air was excluded. Now they are made to sit out-of-doors, even at night, with the thermometer four degrees below zero—wrapped in furs, of course, but playing games or reading by electric lights. They dine out-of-doors. And, more than all, in some cures, they are taught not to cough. "People of refinement," one doctor is reported as saying, "do not scratch themselves in public. This tickling sensation of your throat is really an itching; it would be as indelicate to relieve yourself by coughing as to scratch yourself in the presence of others."

Heroic as these measures seem, and startling as the insistence, on æsthetic grounds, of the impropriety of coughing, certainly few of us can abstain from wishing that fresh air and the self-control which consideration for others inspires might be preached even among those whose maladies are of a less serious character.—Harper's Bazar.

Trees in Paris.

There are some things that the French do infinitely better than the English, and one of them is the embellishment of their capital city. No absolute reason exists why London should not be as cheerful and beautiful as Paris. The difference in climate is small, and it is not wholly to the advantage of the French metropolis. And if money could be a consideration, there is quite as much of that commodity in London as in Paris. Statistics, however, which have just been published, throw an interesting ray of light on the cost of keeping Paris bright and attractive. It appears that the title of ville lumiere is not as well earned as one might imagine, seeing that there are but 52,460 lanterns, more than half of which have but one burner each. The boulevards and avenues are ornamented with 86,400 trees, which is no mediocre feat to accomplish, considering the inhospitable nature of the soil. They are, to a large extent, plain trees, which have been found more suitable than most other kinds. There are, however, no fewer than 14,500 chestnut trees, whereas the number of elms is still greater by a hundred. Their maintenance costs, in round numbers, $65,000 a year. There are 8300 seats in the trees and squares, which cost the weary foot passenger nothing, and a very large number of supplementary chairs which can be had for two cents.—London Telegraph.

Schley's Adventure in a Balloon.

Admiral Schley likes to tell how he was once an amateur aeronaut. As a boy he visited a Maryland county fair, ascended in a balloon, which rose eighty feet in the air, was wrecked and let its occupants fall into an apple tree. All were more or less hurt, Schley escaping with a few contusions.

SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY.

The most serious epidemic of trichinosis on record happened in 1865. In the little town of Hedersleben, in Saxony, a butcher killed three hogs and made them into sausages. They were eaten by a large number of the inhabitants of the little town. Several hundred persons fell desperately ill and over one hundred died.

The record in steel rail making is claimed by the south mills of the Illinois Steel company, South Chicago, Ill., which recently rolled 1310 tons in a 12-hour run. It is stated that the best previous record for the same period of time was 1301 tons, and this record was also made by the same mills. The men engaged in the record breaking run were not selected for the occasion, but comprised, it is stated, the regular night shift.

Dr. Koeppe notes that distilled water is decidedly deleterious to protoplasm, absorbing from the same saline constituents and swelling its tissue even to the extent of destroying the vitality of the cells. Distilled water has a similar action on the cells of the stomach, producing in some cases vomiting and catarrhal troubles. He concludes that the toxic property of certain glacier and spring water is due to its absolute purity, which also explains why the sucking of ice and drinking of glacier water sometimes causes stomach derangement.

The Digboi oil wells, situated in a remote corner of Assam, turn out, with their present small refinery and plant, twelve hundred candles daily, and should, in the course of a few years, be capable of meeting any demand for oil and wax that is likely to arise. Recent drilling operations, indeed, afford conclusive evidence that the territory may be made to yield at least five hundred thousand gallons a month of petroleum of excellent quality. The spectacle of four jets spouting black oil to a height of 70 feet supplies a striking picture of the resources of these wells. The oil falls into a natural reservoir, one end of which is artificially dammed up, and the supply is considerably in excess of the capacity of the existing refinery to work off.

Flexible films have recently been employed in spectroscopic photography with considerable success, and are particularly valuable when used with large conclave gratings, whose focal planes are somewhat curved. Sir Norman Lockyer, using a Rowland grating, with 20,000 lines to the inch ruled on its surface, and having a radius of 21 1-2 feet, has recently made a number of photographs 30 inches in length, comparing the arc spectrum of iron with the spectrum of the sun. It is believed that the use of films will facilitate the making of photographs at the next solar eclipse, as the ease with which they may be shifted will enable the operators to make an increased number of exposures in the all too short time available. Even after careful practice and experimenting by two expert photo-astronomers, it was only possible to secure ten photographs of the chromosphere at the beginning and end of totality at the last eclipse, and improved apparatus is now being designed, which, by the use of films, will greatly increase the number of exposures and offer more data for researches in this department of astronomy.

A Novel Bicycle Railway.

"The greatest novelty in the way of a bicycle railway," observed an official of the naval observatory, "runs between Smithfield and Mount Holly, N. J., a distance of about three miles. The fare for the ride is five cents, but each passenger has to work his own transportation. It is simply a one-track road, about the height of the second rail in the ordinary country fence. Indeed, it seems as if one was riding on the top of a fence. Tremendous bursts of speed cannot be made on it for the reason that it is quite dangerous to go as fast as you can, for there are breaks in the rail at a half dozen places, or at least places where there would be breaks if the gates were not closed. Three or four country roads cross the rail at different points. The bicycle used is of special build, and besides having the wheel which takes the rail, has two smaller ones below, which run along on either side of the lower rail of the fence, thus keeping the bicycle on the fence rail. There is but one track, and when parties meet one has to get off and take his machine from the rail so as to let the other pass. Notwithstanding this and other peculiarities of the road, it pays, and in summer time pays handsomely. Besides three miles of country, a wide river and three large streams are traversed, via a single-rail bridge."—Washington Star.

She Was Pondering.

Mrs. Wilson—What are you thinking so intently about, Mary?

Mrs. Gilson (slowly)—I was just trying to decide whether Mr. Gilson was more eloquent in declaring his undying passion for me before our marriage or in making excuses for his shortcomings afterward.—Somerville Journal.